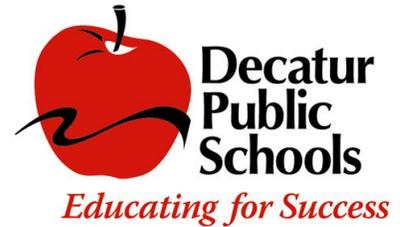


For Immediate Release

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DPS Board of Education Takes First Step in School Facilities Overhaul

Decatur, IL - This evening, the Decatur Public Schools Board of Education voted (7-0) to approve the use of Health/Life/Safety funds through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) building replacement process. Johns Hill Magnet and Durfee Magnet Schools will be taken off line, and a new building will be constructed on the Johns Hill site. Consolidation of other schools will result in additions being built on to Franklin Elementary, Muffley Elementary, Parsons Elementary and South Shores Elementary Schools. This is the first step in a comprehensive plan to overhaul district facilities and upgrade educational programming. If approved by the ISBE, the district will have the authority to issue Health/Life/Safety bonds to finance the construction.

“This is an exciting first step in a major overhaul of Decatur’s school facilities” said Beth Nolan, Vice President of the DPS Board of Education. “The recommendation was built on input from the work of the FACES committee, and the outcome of a demographic study. We are excited to finally make a decision that leads to 21st century learning for all students in the district.”

The Board of Education charged the administration with developing a plan that expands the capacity of the high demand programs (Montessori, Johns Hill, Dennis Lab School), rebuild a new school in the Johns Hill neighborhood, as well as add air conditioning all buildings to eliminate the need for heat days. The board also expressed a desire to reduce the total number of buildings in the district inventory.

“The board was committed to rebuilding a new school in the Johns Hill neighborhood, as we know it is a critical anchor to the health of that community” said Courtney Carson, board member. “We hope this is a catalyst for a renewed neighborhood revitalization for the Southside Improvement Association, and an opportunity for us to work collaboratively with the City of Decatur and Decatur Park District to make that happen.”

“A goal for the district this year is the re-design of middle school education, utilizing evidence based practices that leads to increased student achievement” said Beth Creighton, board member.

“Combining the middle school programs under one roof will provide the concentration needed for robust and creative programming and we couldn’t be more excited about the opportunities this will provide our students.”

“The facilities overhaul is driven by the desire to create 21st century learning environments for all of our students, but we know reducing the total number of buildings in our inventory will lead to a reduction in operational expenses that can then be redeployed to support the needs of our students” said Kendall Briscoe, board member.

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