

Facility Update: GRCC and Castle

I am sure most of you know by now that as a result of action taken by the school board during the regular October meeting, the Great River Community Center and the Castle were closed on December 1, 2009. Currently the facilities are not being used for school or community related activities. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant After-School Program continues to operate under the district's contingency plan at the elementary school building. In consultation with the State Board, the grant program is in the process of being amended to further accommodate the change in facility usage and insure availability of the grant over the next few years.

Discussions regarding the future of the facilities continue as the school board works to evaluate the limited options for the GRCC and Castle that are available to the district. A special board meeting to address this particular topic was held on November 9, 2009; this was also an agenda item at the regular monthly meeting on November 24. District facilities are again an agenda item for the monthly meeting scheduled to be held at 7:00 p.m. on December 17, 2009. Basic options available to the district regarding the facilities include sale of the property (or portions thereof), transfer of ownership to another government entity, raise the buildings from the property, and secure the facilities and discontinue all use and access. Recent communications with the State Board of Education indicate that the status of our Illinois School Construction Grant application will not be negatively influenced by proceeding with any of the options for the property.

Until a more long term decision is made regarding the GRCC and Castle, the property is receiving limited maintenance during the cold winter months; maintaining heat for the buildings at a level to prevent damage to equipment. Also, regular walkthroughs of the buildings are being conducted.

Additional contacts have been made with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) in an effort to obtain as much information as possible regarding potential use of the Castle. Our hope is that an onsite visit by a representative from the IHPA might occur in the near future.

The decision making process is proceeding in an environment of economic uncertainty that is influencing many aspects of Illinois state government, including public education. Illinois is using \$1 billion in federal stimulus funding for FY 2009 and FY 2010 to support General State Aid, which is a major source of our district's revenue. To maintain education funding levels next year, FY 2011, the state will have to come up with an additional \$1 billion. The current budget projection includes a \$12 billion budget shortfall. This includes the loss of ARRA funds, the debt service on this year's pension notes, and \$3 billion in delayed payment to state vendors. The state is also obligated to increase the pension payment by an estimated \$1.2 billion for FY 2011. On top of that we have learned that State Income Tax revenue is coming in less than expected due to the high rate of unemployment; running an additional \$900 million short of projections.

We are in the midst of making some difficult decisions, but be assured that the direction taken will be one that we believe is best for our students and our school community. I will try to keep you updated with any future developments regarding this topic, and please contact me with questions you may have.

Jo Roger Campbell  
Superintendent