

Board of Education Meeting Recap

The Township High School District 211 Board of Education met on Thursday, October 16, 2014, in the Anne Koller Board Meeting Room at the G.A. McElroy Administration Center. The following is a recap of important items that were acted upon at the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

The Board of Education approved the minutes from its regular meeting on [September 18, 2014](#).

District 211 Professional Development Opportunities

High School District 211 develops and implements a variety of opportunities to support and sustain teacher learning in a culture of continual improvement. Differentiating professional learning opportunities for active learning, building content knowledge both within the curricula and best practices, and the overall coherence of staff development opportunities have led to a deeper understanding and implementation of best practices. District 211 provides multiple professional learning experiences to increase educator effectiveness and to ensure that educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their careers. Such activities may include university programs or coursework; participation in expert and peer facilitated workshops; engagement in blended, face-to-face and online courses or workshops; attendance at local, state or national conferences; interaction virtually or in person with researchers and leading educational experts; or individual development through webinars, texts, personal learning networks or blogs. Teachers have also engaged in curriculum writing, peer collaboration, study groups, and peer coaching or mentoring.

Not only are District 211 teachers seeking best practices from experts, they are also sharing their expertise at local, state and national conferences. Teacher leaders from across the District are presenting how they are creating opportunities for all students, innovating instruction through a digital learning environment, or implementing literacy strategies across the curriculum at local, state, and national conferences and workshops. District 211 staff members have created Professional Learning Networks (PLN) to connect on-demand with educational professionals across the world,

The Board also approved offering “The Connected Educator,” a professional learning opportunity, for in-district credit as proposed.

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Federal programs. Historically, the CPI-U average increase has been 2.1%. As a comparison, over the past six years, the District's total levy extension increase has averaged 2.0% compared to the CPI-U average for this same period of 2.1%. The difference reflects the positive Debt Service levy reduction plan implemented since 2007 which equates to \$26.3 million dollars in levy reductions. The debt service levy abatement plan allowed the District to reduce the total levy extension through the use of existing operational fund reserves while still fulfilling its operational needs. The net result was a lower tax rate for local taxpayers that would not have occurred otherwise.

As the Board considers a proposed 2014 tax levy amount, we recommend that the levy amount be set at the established aggregate extension amount of \$212,648,268, which is an increase of \$3.9 million or 1.7% compared to last year's tax levy. Several important factors serve to support the recommendation to levy at the proposed levy amount this year, including continued support of our instructional program and avoiding permanent loss of tax revenue accessibility based on the tax cap formula. The aggregate levy amount is capped in relation to the previous year's amount the District levied. Anytime that a tax levy amount is less than the allowable limit, the District loses that same amount every year going forward.

Other factors to consider include anticipation of major pension reform that could shift normal costs for pensions to the District in the amount of approximately \$8 million annually and the potential for Senate Bill 16 to become a reality resulting in a reduction in state funding of \$8 million annually. Finally, District 211 continues to average \$5 million in annual property tax refunds, some of which are based on several past years. Though the District's levies are capped by CPI, net collections are adversely affected by refunds from prior years being assessed against current year collections. While the District budgets conservatively for this potential loss, it is impossible to accurately estimate the amount of potential loss in a given year. Each of these are important financial planning reasons in relation to the recommended levy amount. Most importantly, the loss of these revenues would directly impact the instructional program and the opportunities provided students.

The Debt Service Levy is used to pay outstanding bond principal and interest payments. Currently, District 211 has approximately \$11.5 million of outstanding debt from its 2012/2013 Life Safety Bond issues. Since 2007, the Board of Education has reduced the Debt Service levy by \$26.3 million by using existing reserve funds to pay an apportionment of outstanding bonds. Given the District's strong financial position, a continuation of the levy reduction plan for 2014 and further lowering the debt service levy from \$5.4 million to \$3.4 million is recommended. The levy reduction plan has been very positive for District taxpayers, as we have lowered the overall tax levy without adversely affecting our operating funds.

As part of the 2015-2016 budget, the District will include a plan to transfer \$2.0 million from the Working Cash Fund to the Debt Service Fund in order to continue the levy reduction plan that began in 2007.

At the next Board meeting on November 13, tax levy information will be presented again for further review and discussion. The Board also will review a resolution to determine the proposed levy amount for 2014.

The tax levy information received by the Board is available [here](#).

Resolution on Proposed Detachment and Annexation of Property Between Districts 211 and 214

The Board of Education approved a resolution for annexation and detachment of certain territory (Arlington Downs Annex); and that the Board publish notice of a public hearing on the proposed detachment and annexation of property between Districts 211 and 214 to be held at the Board meeting on November 13, 2014.

Additional information is available [here](#).

District and School Improvement Plans for 2014- 2015

In 2010, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) moved to a continuous school improvement reporting system known as Rising Star, and District 211 is required to use the Rising Star school improvement system. The Rising Star system guides District and school improvement teams in monitoring and managing the continuous improvement process. In addition, the Rising Star system serves as a reporting and monitoring tool for State-regulated programs, including Title I, English language learners (ELL), special education and related services, Race to the Top 3 (RT3) and response to intervention (RTI).

Departure