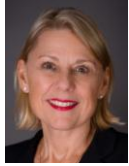


Why the Wausau school referendum is needed

11:02 p.m. CST February 27, 2015



As you all are likely aware, the Wausau School District Board of Education unanimously voted to ask our constituents to weigh in on two referendum questions on April 7.

The first question addresses whether or not Wausau School District community members will support bricks and mortar needs. The second question specifically addresses current and future needs outlined in the Board of Education and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction approved WSD Technology Plan.

Because initial feedback indicates a lack of clarity regarding what question two truly is addressing, I would like to highlight the following information.

First and foremost, the technology plan is not just about “devices,” such as iPads, Chromebooks, or laptops. Certainly, in part the plan addresses the tools our students need. However, the plan is about so much more.

The plan is about addressing our aging, and in some cases not repairable, district infrastructure. This infrastructure includes our entire phone system, switches and servers that are old and/or obsolete and no longer support the technology we already have in schools.

This plan is also about addressing insufficient Internet bandwidth and storage. Bandwidth is the volume of information per unit of time that a wire or fiber cable can transmit. In the simplest terms, bandwidth capacity is similar to plumbing capacities. Essentially, data are to available bandwidth as water is to the size of a pipe. The more volume you need to send or receive, the larger the capacity you need. With more and more educational content and resources accessed via the Internet, we need pipes within and between buildings capable of supporting the need. Our district is in desperate need of more bandwidth.

The plan is also about expanding digital learning environments at all district schools to support student learning, as well as the associated professional learning for teachers, and business/operations in both time and cost efficient ways.

Finally, the plan is, indeed, in part about adding devices for students, so that one day each child will have a device that will serve any where/any time as a repository for all content and resource books (such as dictionary, thesaurus, journals) and materials, writing device, camera/video, communication tool, language lab, calendar, watch, translation reference, and schedule...to name a few. For students with special needs technology can allow non-verbal students to vocalize and communicate with others and can allow our visually impaired students to ‘hear’ what they are writing.

For more information, please call the Wausau School District at 715.261.0500.

Kathleen Williams is the superintendent of the Wausau School District.