

West Aurora schools plan survey

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Have something to say about West Aurora schools? Here's your chance.

The district plans to ask residents to complete an online survey on West Aurora schools and will ask specifically whether they are willing to support referendums.

"This alerts everyone that we have an issue and gives every single resident in our district the opportunity to be part of what we do about it," said district spokesman Mike Chapin.

The district adds about 200 to 250 students a year and hasn't had an operating expenses tax increase since 1988, he said.

At the end of next school year, the district is estimated to be \$1.9 million in the red, which could grow to about \$2.9 million at the end of the 2007-08 school year.

The survey gauges community support on two options for a tax increase: one for 45 to 50 cents per \$100 of assessed value, or one for about 55 cents.

That could range from \$300 to \$367 more a year for the owner of a \$200,000 house.

The higher increase would allow the district to implement part of its "teaching and learning plan," which could include more electives or lengthening the school day.

"The first one would plug the leak, the other one would make a better ship," Chapin said.

The survey also asks questions about residents' expectations for district facilities but doesn't offer specific dollar amounts.

The school board should have the results by the end of June and then decide how to proceed. The results will be shared with residents, he said.

A referendum vote could be put before voters this fall or spring, Chapin said.

If there is no referendum, the district will likely look at significant expense cuts, he said.

Letters will likely be mailed to residents this week with the Web address for the survey. Paper copies can be requested in English or Spanish.

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