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Earlham CSD Voters to Consider November 5 Bond Referendum

EARLHAM, IOWA — Registered voters in the Earlham Community School District will consider a \$10 million bond referendum on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.

If approved by at least 60% of voters, the bond referendum would fund a series of improvement projects that would provide more career and technical education for high school students and create new academic space to accommodate growing enrollment at all grade levels.

“Unlike many rural school districts throughout Iowa, the enrollment trend in Earlham continues to be steadily upward,” said Superintendent Steve Kaster. “A record number 677 students were registered in August, which means we must find practical and cost-effective ways to accommodate our student population both today and in the future.”

More than two years of facility assessments and planning lead to the School Board’s decision to place a bond referendum on the November 5 ballot. This included the creation of a facility committee that counted community members among its ranks, ensuring a variety of feedback and input was gathered.

Should the bond referendum be approved, the district would move ahead with a three-phase improvement and expansion plan.

Phase I calls for the creation of a new Career Academy on a 30-acre property owned by Earlham CSD. This land is situated on the western edge of the community and would become the new home for all agriculture and industrial technology programs, with enough space for future growth. The district plans to partner with Des Moines Area Community College to establish a work-based learning program at this site.

DMAACC leaders have [formally endorsed](#) the proposed Career Academy, with President Rob Denson saying the college and Earlham CSD have missions that are “closely aligned.”

Should the Career Academy become reality, Phase II of the district’s plan would see the current agriculture and industrial technology space repurposed into classrooms serving the district’s middle school students in grades 6-8. This transition would create available space in the three-story building, allowing the elementary school to expand its number of sections.

Phase III would be the construction of a practice facility for Earlham CSD’s wrestling program, which has seen its participation rise and outgrown its existing space. This has been helped in part by the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union sanctioning girls wrestling. Other Cardinals teams and physical education classes would also use the space.

The district's maintenance department would occupy the existing wrestling room if the new practice facility is created.

Earlham CSD has seen its overall tax levy rate decrease by more than 20% in the past five years, to stand at \$13.02 per \$1,000 of taxable property value. This ranks among the lowest levy rates in the West Central Conference and region.

An approved bond referendum on November 5 would have a tax impact of \$2.70 per \$1,000 of taxable property value. For a home with an assessed value of \$200,000, the impact would amount to an additional \$19.76 per month. Based on the Madison County average value of \$1,103 per acre, the monthly impact for agricultural property would be \$0.18 per acre.

The district will host community meetings on October 7 and 23 to provide information about the bond referendum and to gather feedback from residents. Both events will begin at 6 p.m. in the school auditorium.

More information about the facility challenges Earlham CSD faces and the solution on the November 5 ballot is available at www.earlhamcsdfuture.org.