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On School Spending, PART 3: Statements from Budget Hearing

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Date : February 3, 2016

Here are several more statements from the Board of Education's Feb. 2 public hearing on the school budget.

All three of these statements were made on behalf of the Council of Darien School Parents. They were presented by Wendy Ward (on technology), Tara Ochman (on the capital budget) and Karen Wilber and Beth Lane on the World Language Program.

Darienite.com will publish the full text of every statement from the public hearing that we receive by email. If you didn't give your statement to the CDSP, please email it to us at dave@darienite.com; we encourage readers to send in letters to the editor on this or any other topic by emailing to the same address.

See also:

- [Superintendent Proposes 3.85% Increase in Darien Education Budget](#) (Jan. 8)
- [Support for Early Learning Program, Teacher Training at Board of Ed Budget Hearing](#) (main article, Feb. 2)
- [Mother of Autistic Child Explains How Early Learning Program Changed His Life \[VIDEO\]](#) (Feb. 2)
- [Freshman Soccer Team Captain to Board of Ed: Please, Can We Get Team Shorts That Won't Fall Down?](#) (Feb. 2)
- [On School Spending, PART 1: Statements at Feb 2 Budget Hearing](#) (Feb. 3)
- [On School Spending, PART 2: What Parent Groups Said About Special Ed at Feb 2 Hearing](#) (Feb. 3)
- [On School Spending, PART 3: Statements from Budget Hearing](#) (Feb. 3)
- [On School Spending, PART 4: Statements from Budget Hearing](#) (Feb. 3)
- [On School Spending, PART 5: Statements on the Early Learning Program from Budget Hearing](#) (Feb. 3)

Wendy Ward for the CDSP on New Technology Spending

My name is Wendy Ward, and I live at 11 Stanley Road. I am speaking tonight in support of the Proposed Budget's technology initiatives.

Parents have asked for a plan that meaningfully integrates technology into our school curriculum. The current administration has crafted a robust technology initiative that will carry our students well into the 21st century, and we are excited to support that initiative.

Specifically, we look for the technology initiative to:

- enhance delivery of current core curriculum;
- customize instruction to optimize individual learning styles for all students, including those with identified learning needs;
- facilitate instruction in computer science;
- improve the teacher-student connection through use of a device at home and in school; and
- facilitate any state-mandated testing that must be completed using a computer.

In addition to benefiting our students from an educational perspective, the proposed technology plan also will

achieve economic efficiencies.

The use of 1:1 devices will eliminate the need for dedicated computer labs at all school levels, allowing the labs to be repurposed as much-needed classroom spaces. There are also economic efficiencies to be achieved by moving away from textbooks and paper copies to electronic versions.

The proposed technology plan also makes use of existing Chromebooks. Smart use of the existing infrastructure will help defray the cost and allow for an equal technology deployment in the Elementary and Middle Schools. It is the combination of using existing resources and new solutions that will ultimately benefit all students.

While Darien High School represents the last phase of the rollout, Principal Dunn, as well as all the principals, have expressed their enthusiasm for and commitment to the technology initiative.

DHS has begun preparing for its deployment and is already engaged in thoughtful research to identify the right hardware. Teachers are employing Google classroom, having recognized the uniform qualitative benefits. We cannot delay or interrupt this momentum.

While CDSP strongly supports the technology initiative, we urge the administration to ensure that there is adequate electrical and broadband access, and to be thoughtful about how students will receive support for inevitable problems with their devices.

Because deployment of these devices will result in a steep learning curve for our dedicated teachers, we support the proposed funding for professional development as an integral part of the technology plan.

Further in addressing safety concerns, as well as appropriate use and behavior with devices, we urge the district to teach and enforce digital citizenship and literacy Pre-K-12.

In summary, we support the administration's proposal to implement a technology plan. We recognize that this is a fundamental element of a 21st Century school system that Darien is currently lacking.

We also support the proposed implementation schedule, which phases in the devices in a thoughtful way and should allow for problems to be identified and rectified before full implementation. We view this initiative as an exciting, cost-effective way to deliver a well-rounded education.

Tara Ochman for CDSP on the Capital Budget

Good evening. My name is Tara Ochman and I live at 476 Mansfield Ave. As mentioned in earlier remarks, the Council of Darien School Parents continues to advocate for a long-range plan for our school facilities that

provides adaptability and flexibility to meet the rapidly evolving requirements of our world.

As parents we have accepted substandard, outdated facilities for our children for long enough. We fully expect that the district is going to move forward with a plan for the future. In the meantime, however, we simply must address some basic safety issues in our schools.

There are three proposed projects in particular we urge you to support.

The first project is the relocation of the main office at Hindley. Visibility and safety in today's world is key. Hindley's main office is located 200 feet from the front entrance.

All visitors, including deliveries and parents, must walk past six Kindergarten and first grade classrooms, as well as the gym and common room, to reach the secretary and the main office. To address this security concern, the main office and nurse's office will be relocated to the front of the building — and the vacated space will be turned into usable instructional space at a cost of \$230,000.

The second project is the Ox Ridge gym floor. The Ox Ridge gym floor is cracked, warped to the point of unevenness, and continues to produce slippery residue - all creating an unsafe and inequitable environment for Ox Ridge students to access their physical education.

The Physical Education teachers have been forced to alter their curriculum in order to facilitate safety. This project is proposed at a much lower cost than original estimates of \$150,000 in an effort to provide for children's safety while recognizing that Ox Ridge requires a more permanent solution.

Finally, sidewalks at Holmes: Existing sidewalks are uneven and in great need of repair. We are all aware that Hoyt Street has high-volume, high-speed commuter traffic that causes additional safety risk to pedestrians and Holmes has a very high percentage of students who walk to school. A timely sidewalk fix promotes both health and safety for our many student walkers at cost of \$45,000.

We recognize these are necessary short-term patches as you work on a thoughtful, strategic approach to a long-term school facilities plan. We give sincere thanks to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Dan Brenner, Director of Facilities Mike Lynch and to the Darien Board of Education for proposing cost effective solutions and prioritizing the pressing safety needs of our children.

Karen Wilber and Beth Lane for CDSP on the World Language Program

My name is Karen Wilber and I live at 19 Birch Road. My name is Beth Lane and I live at 16 Hillcrest Avenue. We are here tonight to express our support for the proposed budget and specifically to commend the administration for its commitment to World Language.

We believe that language proficiency is a skill that will help our children succeed and adapt along with

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making them better citizens of the world.

This year's budget increases frequency of instruction in sixth grade and provides more professional development for teachers. We also appreciate the district's commitment to evaluate the curriculum over the K-12 continuum to better facilitate transitions between school levels.

The addition of World Language to our elementary schools was a very important milestone in our district. We are enthusiastic about the continued prioritization of World

Language as a content area, and we ask the Board of Education to support this budget.

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