



Geary Public Schools

Factual Information

It is not surprising that when considering something as serious as the construction of new school facilities, many have strong opinions. It is our aim in this document to provide factual information to aid you in deciding what you will do on February 12.

1. We've heard it stated that the quality of education offered in Geary isn't deserving of a new school. This statement was supported by an assertion that for the last three years our schools were rated as D's or F's on their state report card. What, though, are the facts?

Facts: Geary Public Schools has not received a report from the state of Oklahoma at any point in the last 3 years. (The last one we received was in 2016.) In fact, no school in the state has received a report card in the last 3 years. Thus, we can only take this statement to mean that the last 3 years in which the Report Card *was* produced, our schools received D's or F's. The problem with this logic is that the head of instruction for the state of Oklahoma, State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister, said in 2015 (and has repeated many times since) that while by law, the state was required to produce the report cards, the way they were produced made them **"too flawed to be useful."**¹ This is to say that the report card did not actually provide an accurate measure to the public of how schools were doing. Thus, they have not been produced in the last 3 years. It is this same type of unreliable information most internet sites that provide "reviews" for schools take their information from. For a more reliable view of how our schools are doing, please speak to building administration. (Hint – the data looks fantastic!)

2. We've heard it stated that the quality of the actual school facilities does not impact a student's ability to learn, that all that is needed is to improve the quality of the instruction delivered. What are the facts?

Facts: As a district we are always seeking to improve the quality of instruction administered, this is something we take very seriously. However, decades of documented research² supports our knowledge of how schools affect:

- **How students hear:** Trying to determine what their teacher is saying, through excessive reverberation and background noise from equipment, can distract students and make it harder to concentrate on learning materials.
 - **How students see:** Access to daylight affects hormone production and other chemical processes in the body that impact how alert and ready to learn students are. Additionally, long distance views, such as those from classroom windows, are well known to keep eyes healthy and prevent eyestrain.
 - **How students feel:** Students who are comfortable in their classrooms, not too hot or too cold, can concentrate on learning.
 - **How students think and learn:** All of the environmental factors in a classroom affect how a student takes in and retains information and how well a teacher can effectively communicate with his or her students.
3. We've heard it said that the superintendent's salary is too high, and the funds used for this salary should be used to provide fixes to current school building issues. What are the facts?

Facts: The funds that are used to provide educator salaries, and in this instance, superintendent salary, would not and could not be used to pay for building repairs. The money used to pay for fixes comes from a separate, designated fund for repairs.

4. We've heard it said that we should simply repair the buildings we are in now, instead of building new ones. What are the facts?

The issues with our current facilities are many. Plumbing, electrical, telecom, ADA compliance, safety, and so on. The cost associated with replacing and bringing up to standard all of the necessary items *would likely exceed the cost of new construction.*

5. We've heard it said that we shouldn't pay for a new school when we don't have enough textbooks for students. What are the facts?

Geary purchases textbooks on a cycle that is followed by all the schools in the state. Since 2013, district leadership has approved more purchases in textbooks for all the schools/subjects in the district than what is actually allotted by the state. This is allowed by the law, but not all schools do this. The district has also added supplemental material for all the classrooms that have requested additional materials. We make such decisions because we want teachers and students to feel they have the basis of a curriculum that will allow for learning.

6. We've heard it said that for many of our community's residents, taxes are simply going to increase too much. What are the facts?

While it is true that in tough economic times, any additional expense can be difficult, before a decision of this magnitude is made, a community should know, as closely as possible, the actual financial impact that will be made. The office of Stephen McDonald financial advisors provides the following information...

The average tax payer burden in Blaine County averages \$364 /yr. Their research also tells us that this number is typically lower for residents of the Geary community. But even by using the number for the average Blaine County Resident, the tax increase be approximately \$139.00/ year or \$11.58/month. Stated another way, the cost of this new building is an additional \$0.38 a day.

7. We've heard it said that many schools have passed bond issues for less money than this bond would be for. What are the facts?

The amount of this bond would provide a comprehensive new facility for all students grade PK – 12. Many of the communities used in examples like this built a new grade center, or similar facility. Building a comprehensive new facility is actually a more economical method to providing across district facilities, because construction costs rise with time.

These references are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but are provided to supply some context to statements made above.

¹ https://www.enidnews.com/news/school-report-cards-released-called-too-flawed-to-be-useful/article_dcbsd1d4-78f6-11e5-bd25-63f2ba0bc2b9.html

² <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1086689.pdf>
<http://www.ncef.org/pubs/outcomes.pdf>
<https://www.centerforgreenschools.org/school-buildings-have-remarkable-effect-how-students-learn-and-teachers-teach>