



Wawasee Community School Corporation  
Community Engagement Committee  
Executive Summary

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Compass-Keynote Consulting, LLC  
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# **Wawasee Community School Corporation Community Engagement Committee Executive Summary**

## **Disclaimers**

The content of this Executive Summary Report does not contain any personal opinions or editorial comments from the process facilitator. Dr. James Halik's services were obtained by the Superintendent of Schools after consultation with the Board of School Trustees to provide professional nonbiased leadership to this study process.

Dr. Halik, through his leadership provided organization throughout the study process as a coach, mentor, and guide on the side. He contributed by bringing an outside perspective and challenged the task force members to think outside the box, resist psychological contracts, and coached participants to discuss all ideas openly without fear and intimidation in a collaborative environment.

The committee was challenged to develop data driven, goal-oriented options while remaining focused on what was best for the majority of children while remaining fiscally responsible. The core values that were driven home many times throughout the process were:

- Focus is on children
- Data driven decisions
- Instruction must drive construction
- Safety must be a priority
- Focus on the immediate needs first
- Strive for curriculum and program equity
- Maximum utilization of current facilities
- Benefits of consolidating facilities
- School grade level realignment
- Curb appeal as related to the various school's brand



## **District Vision Statement**

"Our students are confident, well-rounded citizens who positively impact their communities."

## **District Mission Statement**

"Wawasee schools partner with students, families, and communities to meet the needs of all students and empower them to reach their highest potential."

## **Purpose and Process**

Dr. Steve Troyer, Superintendent for the Wawasee Community School Corporation assembled a 44-member broad-based citizens advisory task force. Representatives from the community included parents, patrons, community leaders, teachers, support staff, and administrators. Two members of the Board attended all meetings in an advisory capacity and to add validity to the study process.

The primary purpose of this task force was to study and discuss facility needs of the school corporation and provide for the Board of School Trustees a list of "options" for consideration based on provided data and numerous studies. This Executive Summary contains many ideas and several options for the Board to consider. It should be noted that these are not recommendations and are not presented in any order of priority.

Task force members were encouraged to serve the Wawasee Community School Corporation, Syracuse, Indiana community as a think tank and brainstorm ideas to assist the Board as they move forward with school improvements through capital projects, renovations, and new construction. Committee members were encouraged to focus on fiscal responsibility while at the same time finding ways to improve opportunities for children. During the task force orientation meeting members were asked to set aside personal agendas, emotions over reason, politics over open-mindedness, and they were cautioned about their personal psychological contracts. All ideas were encouraged regardless of their popularity or political correctness. Members were encouraged to engage in open conversations that were not stymied by the status quo, past practice, and/or tradition.



Dr. James Halik, President/Founder, Compass-Keynote Consulting, LLC facilitated the task force study process. The first meeting was conducted on February 27, 2023, 5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Attention to detail was a priority. The study process began with a thorough orientation meeting for all task force participants. Committee members were divided equally into four groups by representation with a shuffled deck of cards. When participants registered, they were given a name badge that designated which group they were assigned; spade ♠, diamond ♦, club ♣, or heart ♥.

During this first meeting reports on school finance, bond capacity, and tax structure, as well as an orientation regarding the role and responsibility of the task force were presented to the group. The second meeting included a presentation from Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Shelly Wilfong, on the educational programs at Wawasee. The third meeting saw Barton Coe Vilamaa, an architecture and engineering firm, present their findings of a recently conducted facilities study. The fourth meeting allowed the group to hear from Dr. Jerry McKibben about the results of a demographic study that he did for the school corporation. Each meeting also included a tour of the school building that hosted the meeting.



## Task Force Members Equal Goups of Representation

**Process Facilitator:** James M. Halik, Ph.D.




















































**Superintendent of Schools:** Stephen M. Troyer, Ph.D.





















































Four groups with equal representation:

♠Melissa Atwood	♥Jessica Barger	♣Jim Best	♦Steven Baut
♠Kristin Bonner	♥Jeff Boyer	♣Katie Conrad	♦Vince Beasley
♠Michael Casey	♥Shane Bucher	♣Andy Cripe	♦Randy Beer
♠Tabitha Corn	♥Brent Doty	♣Sara Harrison	♦Lori Dixon
♠Tom Hodgson	♥Jeff Dyson	♣Cindy Kaiser	♦Chris Francis
♠Michael Mettham	♥Patricia Gall	♣Susan Mishler	♦Kim McCreary
♠Deb Patterson	♥Phil Huffman	♣Emily Shipley	♦Mark Osmialowski
♠Doug Ruch	♥Brandon Kiser	♣Pat Tranter	♦Rick Patton
♠Holly Tuttle	♥Chris Trowbridge	♣Sarah Wegener	♦Sherry Searles
♠Geoff Walmer	♥David Wilkinson	♣Brian Weideman	♦Starr Senter
♠Andy Aebst	♥Peg Zimmerman	♣Josh Weiland	♦Karena Wilkinson



































































































## Task Force Member Attendance Record

 90%	Feb. 27	Mar. 6	Mar. 13	Mar. 20	Mar. 25
Melissa Atwood					
Kristin Bonner					
Michael Casey					
Tabatha Corn					
Tom Hodgson					
Michael Mettham					
Deb Patterson					
Doug Ruch					
Holly Tuttle					
Geoff Walmer					
Andy Zaebst					

 93%	Feb. 27	Mar. 6	Mar. 13	Mar. 20	Mar. 25
Brent Doty					
Jeff Dyson					
Jessica Barger					
Jeff Boyer					
Shane Bucher					
Patricia Gall					
Phil Huffman					
Brandon Kiser					
Chris Trowbridge					
David Wilkinson					
Peg Zimmerman					



 84%	Feb. 27	Mar. 6	Mar. 13	Mar. 20	Mar. 25
Jim Best					
Andy Cripe					
Katie Conrad					
Sara Harrison					
Cindy Kaiser					
Susan Mishler					
Pat Tranter					
Josh Weiland					
Brian Weideman					
Sarah Wegener					
Emily Shipley					

 90%	Feb. 27	Mar. 6	Mar. 13	Mar. 20	Mar. 25
Vince Beasley					
Steven Baut					
Randy Beer					
Lori Dixon					
Chris Francis					
Kim McCreary					
Mark Osmialowski					
Rick Patton					
Sherry Searles					
Starr Senter					
Karena Wilkinson					





## Charge of the Community Engagement Committee

The purpose of inviting parents, patrons, community leaders, teachers, support staff, and administrators to participate on this Community Engagement Committee is to serve in an advisory role for the Board of School Trustees. Community members will make a formal presentation at a public school board meeting in order to provide meaningful feedback regarding school facilities throughout the school district.

The committee reviewed data on enrollment based on a recent demographic study; a review of all facilities based on a recent facility study; and factors that impact the schools' financial challenges based on a presentation from bond counsel and the school district's Business Manager.

It should be noted that the committee is not a decision-making body; the Board of School Trustees has that responsibility. This task force was charged with providing a list of options for the Board to consider as they move forward with plans to renovate, build new, realign grade building grade levels, and whether the Board might want to consider to close or expand any existing facilities.



## Summary Of Options

It is important to note that the task force members were divided into four equal groups. Attendance was taken at each meeting and the record shows that participation registered at an overall ninety percent. Each group met independently from one another during meeting five to develop their lists of ideas and options. The groups of spades♠, diamonds♦, clubs♣, and hearts♥ had time to each individually focus on facility needs for the entire district. During the independent group conversations ideas for all levels (elementary, middle, and high school) evolved and were reported back to the entire committee of which has become part of the written record. Each group appointed a spokesperson who presented to the entire committee, they were instructed to not prioritize their options. The information provided in this report is advisory only.

It was evident after hearing all four break-out groups share their report that four areas need immediate consideration. It was unanimous among all four of the committee reports (see *Exhibit A*) that the following were most important in no priority order:

### Focus Area 1 (most discussed)

- a. Combine Milford Middle School with Wawasee Middle School and renovate or construct a new Milford Elementary School.
- b. New fieldhouse that could be shared by the school and community
- c. Renovate or construct a new competitive swimming pool
- d. New performing arts center

### Focus Area 2 (frequently discussed)

According to *Exhibit A*, four additional options appeared to be following closely behind those mentioned above in Focus Area 1, in no priority order:

- a. Expand STEAM/STEM/Robotics/CTE/AP Programs and Classroom Space
- b. Update or replace the planetarium
- c. Wawasee needs a marketing/communication strategy
- d. Evaluate "Alternative Learning" facilities



## Summary Of Options, continued

### Focus Area 3 (somewhat discussed)

When you disaggregate the data in *Exhibit A*, other areas that should be considered that are not at the same level of urgency but worthy of consideration include:

- a. Expand preschool space
- b. Improve parent dropoff/pickup areas at the elementary schools
- c. Playground Updates – Equality, Modern, and Safe
- d. Make necessary improvements as needed to HVAC units

### Focus Area 4 (additional consideration)

Additional options to consider that may be of equal importance to those mentioned above in Part 3 of this summary include in no priority order:

- a. Expand the middle school industrial technology areas
- b. Turf baseball and softball fields
- c. Consider outdoor classroom(s)
- d. Improve and update entrances to all schools (curb appeal)
- e. Update district wide radio system for emergencies.



**Task Force Options  
Analysis of Data  
(list is not in any order of priority)**





<b>Options</b>				
Performing Arts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Combine Milford Middle School w/ WMS	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Fieldhouse – School / Community use	✓	✓	✓	✓
New / Renovate Competitive Swimming Pool	✓	✓	✓	✓
HVAC and Roofs Where Needed (WMS)		✓		✓
Wawasee Pride – Marketing Plan	✓		✓	✓
School Facelifts – maintain our grounds				✓
STEM/STEAM/Robotics/CTE/AP/Alt Learning	✓		✓	✓
District-wide Radio System for emergencies				✓
Build a New Milford Elementary School		✓	✓	✓
Update the Greenhouse		✓		
Update or Replace the Planetarium	✓	✓	✓	
Expand Preschool Space		✓	✓	
SES Expand the Vestibule or parent pick-up		✓	✓	
SES Storage Space – Reutilize & Renovate		✓		
Turf WHS Baseball & Softball Fields		✓		
Expand Parking NWES & Parent Pick-up Area		✓	✓	
Expand Parking at Milford		✓		
NWES – Playgrounds and Outdoor Classroom			✓	
Updated Entrance for High School – Inviting			✓	
Updated Entrances to all of the Schools			✓	
Milford Renovation instead of New School	✓			
MS Industrial Technology			✓	
Update the radio system district-wide				✓

Exhibit – A



## **Committee Evaluations Summary of Participant Comments**

It is important to remember that the process is as important as the outcome. Every attempt was made to guarantee a thorough study process and provide all participants with a positive experience; it was as near perfect as we could get. At the conclusion of the last meeting, all participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the process. The following comments were written by the committee participants:

### **List things you especially enjoyed:**

- I really like being able to tour the buildings with the administrators.
- Touring the schools.
- The last day free talk in our groups.
- Learning about school funding.
- Working in our groups on Session 5.
- Dr. Halik's upbeat attitude and presentations that were informative – I like that he did not linger too long on one slide – he kept moving.
- The informative slides – I am a visual learner
- Building tours – seeing and hearing what would make each school better for our students.
- The weekly presentations – I like that it wasn't all squeezed in on a couple of days but yet it was not spread out too long either
- Liked all the tours and hearing from each of the school leaders.
- I was amazed with the finance presentation – I did not know a lot of that.
- The conversation at the end.
- Presentations of all topics (programs, demographics, projects, etc.).
- All voices were heard and all communities were well represented.
- Touring all buildings.
- Great discussions.
- Valuable information shared to prepare for conversations.
- The professional approach.
- On the front-end we got started on an upbeat note.
- I enjoyed the engagement with individual community members.
- Seeing the true facts and figures.
- Being able to walk through each school.



## **List things you especially enjoyed, continued:**

- Being able to speak with school administration on the how to improve the school system.
- Learning state funding specifics and the impact on the local public school district.
- School tours.
- Engineer and demographic studies and just the opportunity to participate 😊.
- Tours with the principals.
- The presentations.
- Touring each of the school facilities and the needs of each school.
- Demographic projections for the school district – if it was static/growing/declining.
- Touring the schools to see what exists and what it needed.
- Data and stats of the population and the easy to read charts about the students in each of the age groups.
- The information provided at each meeting.
- Walkthroughs.
- Seeing the effect of facility form and design and function.
- Learning about financials – how bonds work.
- Adults in the room 😊 and freedom to speak across communities calmly.
- The information given was helpful.
- Community involvement.
- The meals.
- Tours of each school.
- The guiding questions to help dig deeper.
- The professional presentations helping to understand.
- The facility tours.
- The opportunity for open communication.
- The information on the various topics – finance, facilities, education, and enrollment.
- Learning about each building and being with everyone from our community.
- Long term (10 year) study was helpful.
- Building tours.
- The discussion and hearing the ideas of others.
- Information on building needs and building tours.



## **List things you especially enjoyed, continued:**

- Forecast assumptions – a wealth of important information.
- Curriculum and program offerings.
- Tours
- The school tours were especially helpful and informative.
- The financial and demographic reports.
- Touring the schools and learning more.
- The funding overview – this was all new to me.
- The interaction and discussion during meeting five.
- Important information – Thank you!

## List one thing you thought was missing:

- Time to discuss and debrief each of the topics among the group.
- Needed more time than four hours on today (the last meeting).
- Staff attrition.
- Additional time to discuss the options wishlist.
- Input from the younger generation.
- I wish we could have heard ideas from others before the last session.
- Perhaps more time for questions at each session.
- Maybe a driving question or two for the last day.
- I know last week's slides addressed our work today (last day), but we need those last couple of slides at each table to focus our initial discussions.
- Nothing.
- Maybe recaps from each meeting. We did one but would have liked after each session.
- Investment or bond project example, step by step, year by year, of another school district.
- More school board participation would be nice, but I understand that it was not possible.
- Current approved spending projects.
- I would like to know what decision(s) we would be making in more detail at the the beginning of the first session.
- More group discussion earlier in the agenda.
- Being more prepared on the future plans.
- More time and longer meetings.
- Maintaining and retaining and attracting our staff.
- More discussion time throughout the process.
- The presentation from Barton Coe was rough; the slideshow was great but the presenters were rough.
- As an employee I felt like some admin were eavesdropping & will use it against employees.
- More group interaction before meeting five.
- Always need more time 😊.
- Missing you, wish you could have stayed in our small breakout group.
- We needed more time to talk/come up with more ideas.
- I wish we would have a study done on our pools; similar to the architects.





## General comments:

- We are losing teachers at a rapid rate; what can we do to keep our great teachers?
- Thanks for opening this process to the public.
- We needed more staff feedback.
- Interesting considerations, most on the committee were over 30; needed to have younger people even with or without kids who could share what they are looking for.
- Thank you!
- A map of how to navigate session five would have been helpful; took our group awhile to gain traction.
- Really enjoyed this process.
- Good mix of community members, staff, and parents. However, some community members/parents are upset they didn't have the opportunity to be part of the group. How were parents/community members chosen?
- It was a great experience, I am glad I was a part of it and I learned a lot from the process.
- I appreciated Dr. Halik's leadership and objectiveness.
- Need a way to bring community jobs to the middle income families who want to move to our community along with middle income housing.
- This committee was a beautiful necessity. Voices are being heard and change is coming.
- I would love to be involved in the future.
- Keeping the community involved consistently would create positive word of mouth communication to other community members.
- Overall a positive event; at times school admin was not open to ideas different to their opinion.
- Thank you for your time and leadership!
- Was really looking forward to the demographic study – that kind of fell flat.
- Powerful 5<sup>th</sup> session with great conversations from start to finish.
- This is a great idea. I am asked by community members often what is going on – this really helps.
- Attended 4 of the 5 sessions and enjoyed all sessions!



## General comments, continued:

- Jim did a great job defining the scope and parameters of the project. Speakers all gave a great picture of the issues. I appreciated that the staff didn't "recommend" but instead informed.
- This format was well organized and easy to follow; data shared was interesting.
- Very well organized from picking community members and dividing them between the 4 groups. Informative meetings – I did not feel like it was a waste of time.
- Thank you for leading this to better help our school corporation.
- The importance on process leaves room for innovation and positive change.
- This was great! Very thankful that Wawasee has taken time and energy to invest in bettering our school system! Thank you!
- A lot of good information was provided.
- This committee was a great thing for the community. It gets a large number of local residents and leaders to have a voice in the decisions.

