

## New requirements trouble ICC teachers

Written by EMILIA TEASDALE  
Saturday, 01 March 2014 10:43 -

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KINDERHOOK – The Ichabod Crane School Board has approved placing a \$2.35-million construction project on the ballot in May, which would add classrooms to the Primary School and better security to all the school buildings on Tuesday night.

At a special workshop meeting February 25 teachers and administrators presented information about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative. Melissa Murray, principal for annual professional performance review (APPR) faculty evaluations, who has worked with district staff on the new standards and teacher assessments, said she wanted to make the clear that “the Common Core is not a curriculum.” The CCSS, according to her presentation, are listings “by grade level and by subject of skills to be taught and to be mastered each year.” School districts still have the flexibility to pick their curriculum, she said.

Ms. Murray told the board that the problems schools have had with new standards has been with federal Race to the Top funds that have required assessments of teachers being connected to student performance and the timeline set by the state for implementation for those assessments.

The Race to the Top money, about \$13,000 for the ICC District, was used for training in Common Core from BOCES/Questar III. It involved adopting the CCSS, and required assessing the performance of teachers and administrators based in part on student test scores.

Teachers who made presentations to the board at the meeting talked about the positive aspects of the CCSS, which includes emphases on deeper understanding and higher expectations. Forty-five states have adopted the CCSS, which was developed by the National Governors association and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The teachers talked about the standards this week, but they also talked about other issues, including the inclusion of more reading in math, no information sharing of test results to help teachers understand how their students are doing, and a very short timeline given to the district by the state to implement a new curriculum for testing started.

About the testing, 5th grade teacher Stephanie Bell told the board, “It’s just one snapshot of a

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child's school year. These tests are not the end all, be all."

But the tests are looked at now for teacher assessments. Primary School Principal Suzanne Guntlow said, "That has been big source of stress and concern."

Elementary and Middle School Principal Tim Farley talked about the sharing of data collected for the Race to the Top that has concerned some parents. He said that state legislators are looking into where the data is going.

Ms. Murray and others pointed out that there is information on the district website at [www.ichabodcrane.org](http://www.ichabodcrane.org), under the heading "district information."

Board member John Chandler said that he appreciated the presentation. And he says as a board, "We have taken a stand repeatedly on the testing."

After the meeting district Superintendent George Zini said told The Columbia Paper that he assumed the state would be working out the issues with CCSS. He also said that he respected any request from parents that their child not take the test. He confirmed that the decision not to take the CCSS tests would not affect a students' grade point average.

After the presentation on the CCSS, the board voted in favor of the capital improvement project proposition, which Mr. Zini said would have no impact on the district's tax levy. The project is going to be paid for with \$900,000 the board set aside for an improvement project and state aid, which could cover as much as 73% of the costs.

Mr. Zini said the Primary School has been dealing with overcrowding since the district closed two school buildings and move kindergarten to 3rd grade into the Primary School and 4th and 5th grade into the Middle School. "We didn't need two schools, but we sure need four classrooms," he said of the project.

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As for security upgrades, the project would cover adding vestibules to both the Primary and Elementary/Middle School buildings, so that visitors to the district would be held in an area separate from the students. A card swipe system would be added to entrances to the High School so that only people with district ids could enter once the school day started.

Board member Jeffery Ouellette said that a board committee had proposed upgrading security on the schools over a year ago. "I'm happy to see security [upgrades] are moving forward," he said.

Included in the project is an electric sign from in front of the school along Route 9.

If the project is approved in May construction would not start until 2015 and Mr. Zini said new students would not move into the new classrooms until January of 2016. Most of the hold-up is at the state Education Department. Approval of the design plans from the state could take up to six months.

To get the proposition on the ballot for May's annual budget vote, the board needed to approve the wording at the project at Tuesday night's meeting.

The next regular board meeting is Tuesday, March 4 at 7 p.m. The board has scheduled a budget presentation in the High School Auditorium on March 25 at 7 p.m.

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