



## Morton Community Unit School District #709 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM *A Planning Process*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

## INTRODUCTION

*This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is provided as reference information for the Morton Community Unit School District 709 Planning/Community Engagement Program. It is updated as needed to keep it current with regard to key questions and comments that emerge on a regular basis during the duration of the program. Individuals wishing to suggest additional questions should email those to Carol Jankowski, internal coordinator for 709Connect, at [Carol.Jankowski@morton709.org](mailto:Carol.Jankowski@morton709.org). Suggestions for updating and editing the FAQ document will be reviewed by the 709Connect co-chairs.*

### **What is community engagement?**

Community engagement connects the District and the community in a way that creates open and honest communication. This communication occurs through a series of community workshops and other venues that are open to the public. The process results in community consensus around a set of recommendations, which is then presented to the Board of Education.

### **What is the goal of this process?**

The goal is for the community to come together and learn about topics that concern the District and then use that information to develop consensus on a direction for those areas. To view a copy of the actual charge statement created by the Board of Education for the program go to [www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org) and click on the 709Connect logo.

### **What is the time frame for the 709Connect project?**

This community engagement process is scheduled to begin in August and continue through the end of 2012. There will be a community-wide workshop session about every three weeks. The goal is to make a summary report to the Board of Education in December 2012.

### **Who is invited to attend the community workshops?**

Everyone! The public is invited and encouraged to attend. It is important that citizens participate so recommendations developed through this process represent the views of our entire community. Each session will work toward building plans for the future of our schools.

### **What will happen at community workshop sessions?**

Each session will be structured so that participants can work efficiently and accomplish key tasks in under two hours. Each workshop will include opening remarks, a speaker that presents information regarding the topic for that evening. Then, working in small groups, participants will arrive at consensus or general agreement to complete a work project. The session will conclude with each group reporting the results of the discussion/work project. All reports from each table will be compiled and used in developing the final recommendations.

### **Will this process lead to another referendum?**

There is not a preconceived notion that this process will lead to another referendum. The answer depends on the collective decision of the participants. Participants will decide if a referendum should or should not be part of the recommendations that will be presented to the Board of Education at the conclusion of the process. This process is, in part, related to the results of the referendum held in the spring of 2011. The community expressed concern to the Board of Education about not having a voice regarding the future of facilities. Through community engagement, the community will be able to hear information about the facilities in District 709 and be part of creating a plan for the future of our schools that may or may not involve a referendum.

### **What topics will be addressed in the community engagement process?**

Several topics are being considered. In fact, at the first workshop session participants will have an opportunity to have input regarding the areas that might be addressed during the community engagement program. Topics could include communications, curriculum, safety/security, facilities, finances, technology and others.

### **Can I suggest a topic that will be covered in community engagement?**

Yes. Participants will have the opportunity to suggest topics during the process, especially at the first session.

### **Who is organizing this process?**

A Coordinating Group comprised of community members, a teacher, a member of the Board of Education and District staff members is facilitating the process. Two community members have volunteered to serve as co-chairs for this process.

### **What is the role of the Coordinating Group (CG)?**

The Coordinating Group plans and organizes the community sessions. The CG will assist in identifying topics to be covered in the community sessions and will host these sessions. The Coordinating Group will collect the information at the community workshops and summarize all input collected.

### **Who will serve on the Coordinating Group?**

The District administration and Board of Education compiled a list of community members that would consider serving in the community engagement process. The goal was to bring together a group of people that represented all ages and all schools/attendance areas in the District. It is important that people on this Coordinating Group have diverse opinions and are willing to hear and facilitate conversations that result in a set of recommendations to the Board of Education. Every member of the Coordinating Group cares deeply about our schools and is committed to involving the community in building a plan for their future. To view the list of CG members go to [www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org) and click on the 709Connect logo.

### **What role will District staff and the Board of Education play in the Coordinating Group?**

The Board of Education wants to hear input from the community, and the community members on this group will be leading this effort. One Board member will serve on the Coordinating Group and act as a liaison to the entire Board. The Board will also provide support to the Coordinating Group throughout the process. The Board will do so by providing the space and necessary technology for the sessions, assisting with posting information on the District 709 website and helping to provide the tools needed to ensure the success of this effort. Participating District staff members will also assist community members in this way.

### **With whom will the District be working to facilitate the community engagement process?**

District 709 has hired UNICOM·ARC. This firm specializes in providing a structure for community engagement. The firm will provide the tools, process and support to the community members on the Coordinating Group so they can facilitate the process. UNICOM·ARC will *not* have a voice in the recommendations that are presented to the Board of Education.

### **Why do we need community engagement?**

District 709 has a reputation throughout the state of Illinois for academic achievement and financial stability. Community engagement will allow that legacy to continue. Through this process the citizens of District 709, the school district and the Board of Education will have open, meaningful dialogue and create a vision for the future of our schools and our community.

### **How can I learn more about the community engagement process?**

Please contact the District to learn more about the process (contact information is below). We urge you to learn more and make your voice heard as part of this important effort!

Website:

Facebook:

Twitter:

Email:

Phone: