

Next steps for renovated Early Learning Center

The holidays are in full swing, and so is the design process for our Early Learning Center. Since district residents approved a \$16.96 million referendum Aug. 9, we've worked hard to move the project forward. It's important you receive project updates, so here's a snapshot of what's been done so far.

– The Project Oversight Committee was established to provide direction, guidance and leadership to ensure the project is implemented well and consists of district staff, administration and members of the project design and construction teams.

– Our school board officially purchased the former Albany Hospital in September.

– The district's existing bond rating, A+, was affirmed through the S&P's bond rating process in October. Ehlers, the district's financial advisor, received and evaluated bids for the bonds. Bond sale results were presented and awarded at the October school board meeting.

– Design parameters for the renovated spaces were established to guide the design process.

– Abatement services for the existing hospital were awarded to the Institute for Environmental Assessment, Inc., and abatement is tentatively scheduled to start in Jan-



**Albany Area Schools
superintendent**
By Travis Okerlund

uary 2023.

– Verifications for architectural work and mechanical and electrical scopes are underway and ongoing throughout the preliminary design process.

We're extremely grateful to our community for their support of this project. To compare, only 39% of all proposed bond referendum questions in August passed. Our referendum passage rate landed in the 89th percentile with 59% of our community supporting the plan. We understand our current environment and are thankful residents said yes.

User group meetings, which will include a variety of school district staff from various departments, are scheduled for mid-December. This is the next step in helping to refine the building's overall layout and solidify details for specific spaces in the facility. We will continue to provide updates along this journey and will provide opportunities for community members to ask questions and share their feedback in the near future.

In the meantime, if you have questions or feedback, I would be happy to hear from you. I can be reached by email at tokerlund@district745.org or by phone at 320-845-5050.