

# LAKE COUNTRY NOW

## Mukwonago Chief

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### Eagleville Elementary Charter School gets nod for three years, STEM, 5K

With a five-year charter agreement expiring this year, students and parents at Eagleville Elementary Charter School packed the Jan. 25 Mukwonago School Board meeting hoping to sway the board to keep the doors of the school open, despite declining enrollment numbers at the school.

After hours of discussion the board approved a three-year agreement with the charter school that included two new elements added to the school's repertoire — 5K and a STEM-focused curriculum.

With the changing climate of education where people have variety and choice for educating their children, Eagleville Principal Ron Schlicht asked board members if the school would be "given the opportunity to continue to make changes and adapt to the current educational environment or will it be stomped out?"

Mukwonago Area School District Superintendent Shawn McNulty said with eight board members present instead of nine, he thought the board was divided on the issue. To work together to come to an agreement to move forward would require that "everyone may have to give a little bit tonight."

The last charter agreement, made in 2011, required Eagleville enrollment to be above 75 students or the school would close, McNulty explained.

"To be brutally honest, unless something changes, I don't believe Eagleville will remain open after two years," McNulty said. "The enrollment decline at Eagleville is significantly greater than what we've experienced in the rest of the district in the last 10 years."

Going from an enrollment as high of 125 to 81, is the "wrong kind of trend," McNulty pointed out.

"Something has to change," McNulty said.

### Changes to school

Schlicht asked to change the educational program to meet the needs of students, continuing the environmental focus and Spanish enhancement, but offering an elementary STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) curriculum to "help move our district in the right direction" to attract students to the district.

Additionally, Schlicht said many families in the past have decided against sending their children to Eagleville since the school did not offer 5-year-old kindergarten and they couldn't keep all their children at one school. With a teacher on staff certified to teach kindergarten and space available for students, Schlicht said adding 5K "doesn't change the makeup of the facility."

Weighing what is best and most fiscally responsible for the entire district, school board members haggled over the minimum number for total school population and for kindergarten enrollment.

In the end, the board approved a three-year charter agreement with an evaluation after the second year. As the school rolls out its STEM curriculum and 5K program, minimum attendance requirements will go from 70 in the first year, 75 in the second and 80 for the third year.

By the third year at least five kindergarten students will be required to continue offering the program at Eagleville.

With kindergarten registration information for the district already published, Eagleville starts a little behind the game for enrollment for the 2016-17 year.

## Learning STEM

Perhaps the biggest addition for next year will be the STEM-focused elementary curriculum.

"Over the next several months, the teaching staff, administration, and parent group will research and develop STEM enhancements, projects, and inquiry-based learning opportunities," a school news release said. "This curriculum will further enhance the enriched education students already receive from multi-grade level classrooms, environmental conservation awareness, and Spanish language lessons already in place."

Eagleville parents and students talked about learning first hand how to pan for gold, research frogs in Jericho Creek, and the multi-grade environment provided at the school.

Mukwonago High School teacher and SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere) adviser Sarah Dianich, whose son started attending Eagleville last year, has spent years researching how to figure out what a safe school is like.

"Eagleville is a model for that," Dianich said at the school board meeting. "It's a family and it supports every kid. There is not one kid who walks into that building without feeling safe."