

# **RUSH-HENRIETTA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE COMMITTEE**

To: Board of Education  
Lawrence Bo Wright, Superintendent of Schools

From: Patrick McCue, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

Re: Classroom Space Recommendations

Date: January 12, 2021

The district's 2020-21 Instructional Space Committee met on October 15, November 12, and December 3, 2020, to review school enrollment trends and projections, residential development plans, current school space use, and school attendance areas to determine whether there is adequate classroom space for future enrollment and, if not, to recommend actions that can be taken to ensure that our schools have adequate classroom space.

## **I. Current District Enrollment<sup>1</sup>**

The district currently enrolls 5,390 students – 5,261 of these students attend R-H schools, and 129 are placed in out-of-district settings (BOCES or special schools), which is down from 138 in 2019. Compared with last fall, in-district K-12 student enrollment has decreased by 126 students, as shown in Table 1. This represents the third decrease in the last five years, in keeping with the overall trend of steadily declining enrollments during the past two decades. However, the enrollment changes this fall need to be examined more closely, in light of the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting shift to Hybrid and Remote learning environments, which will be discussed in Section II.

**Table 1: Five-Year Fall District Enrollment\***

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>2020</b>	5,261	-126
<b>2019</b>	5,387	+67
<b>2018</b>	5,320	+97
<b>2017</b>	5,223	-24
<b>2016</b>	5,247	-101
<b>2015</b>	5,348	

\*Out of district placements not included

Table 2 displays the five-year enrollments by grade level bands. The fall enrollments for 2015 and 2016 (prior to the district-wide school reconfiguration) are not the actual enrollments from those years but have been adjusted to reflect what the enrollments would have been based on the current post-reconfiguration attendance areas. This year's enrollment data shows a sharp decrease from 2019 of 102 students at the elementary level (Grades K-6), as well as a decrease of 24 students at secondary (Grades 7-12).

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, all 2020-21 enrollments include students in their home school of attendance, regardless of whether they are attending the Hybrid Model or the Remote Learning Academy.

**Table 2: Five-Year Fall Enrollments by Level\***

	<b>Elementary Grades K-3</b>	<b>Elementary Grades 4-6</b>	<b>Secondary Grades 7-9</b>	<b>Secondary Grades 10-12</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2020</b>	1,592	1,199	1,207	1,263	<b>5,261</b>
<b>2019</b>	1,682	1,211	1,260	1,234	<b>5,387</b>
<b>2018</b>	1,628	1,235	1,203	1,254	<b>5,320</b>
<b>2017</b>	1,573	1,209	1,198	1,243	<b>5,223</b>
<b>2016</b>	1,578	1,260	1,186	1,223	<b>5,247</b>
<b>2015</b>	1,661	1,213	1,216	1,258	<b>5,348</b>

\* Out of district placements not included. Data prior to 2017 is adjusted to reflect the current configuration.

## **II. Elementary School Enrollment and Projections**

Prior to the district reconfiguration in 2017, enrollments at the five K-5 elementary schools were becoming increasingly imbalanced. As part of the plan for reconfiguration and enrollment management, the Board of Education approved revised elementary attendance areas, to help bring the schools into closer balance in order to maintain equity in services across the schools. As Table 3 illustrates, that goal has been somewhat achieved at the K-3 level.

**Table 3: Five-Year Enrollments, Grades K-3\***

	<b>Crane<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>Fyle<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>Leary<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>Winslow</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2020</b>	337	384	468	403	<b>1,592</b>
<b>2019</b>	366	396	478	442	<b>1,682</b>
<b>2018</b>	355	411	422	440	<b>1,628</b>
<b>2017</b>	372	384	406	411	<b>1,573</b>
<b>2016</b>	373	411	381	413	<b>1,578</b>
<b>2015</b>	399	418	425	419	<b>1,661</b>

\* Data prior to 2017 is adjusted to reflect the current configuration.

<sup>^</sup> Includes students from other schools who are placed in Special Education classes.

The enrollment changes this fall included a decrease of 90 students at K-3. According to the Office of Information Systems, the district's decrease in enrollment – which is concentrated more at the elementary levels – can be attributed to several COVID-related factors. For example, as noted in Table 4, the district experienced a sharp increase in students being home schooled, up 72 students, or *34 percent*, from fall 2019. In addition, 47 students who were age-eligible to attend kindergarten this year were held back, *an increase of 123 percent* from 2019. It is clear from these factors that many families chose to keep their children home from school in light of the pandemic. Further confirmation can be found in the falloff in enrollments in the district's Universal Pre-Kindergarten program, even among pupils entitled to pre-school services as part of their special education plan.

**Table 4: Outside Placement Trends, Grades K-12**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Chg.</b>
<b>Home School</b>	171	182	184	195	212	<b>284</b>	<b>+72</b>
<b>Private/Parochial</b>	371	370	337	322	320	312	-8
<b>Charter Schools</b>	7	11	23	17	22	20	-2
<b>Special/BOCES</b>	108	122	116	116	138	135	-3

These unusual changes in enrollment – not driven by an actual increase or decrease in the number of students, but by decisions regarding where students are enrolled – must be taken into account when projecting future enrollments. Given past rates of home schooling, it is likely that a large percentage of the students newly enrolled in home school this year will return to the regular school program next year. Similarly, most of the children who were held back from kindergarten this year will need to enroll next year. The resulting bump in enrollment is factored into the five-year projections in Tables 5 and 6 (below), mostly in the cohort of students who will enter kindergarten in the fall of 2021.

Over the next five years, enrollment at the primary schools is projected to decrease by 55 students, as the bubble moves through. As shown in Table 5, enrollments at all four schools will remain relatively stable. All projections take into account current enrollments, projected residential growth, and the recent average percentages of students who enter or leave a particular grade level and school in any given year (known as the “survival rate”). These projections will need to be monitored closely going into 2021-22, especially the actual movement of students who were home-schooled or held back for this year.

**Table 5: Primary School Fall Enrollment Projections\***

	<b>Crane</b>	<b>Fyle</b>	<b>Leary</b>	<b>Winslow</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Current</b>	337	384	468	403	<b>1,592</b>
<b>2021</b>	327	411	477	446	<b>1,661</b>
<b>2022</b>	326	408	476	444	<b>1,654</b>
<b>2023</b>	319	412	459	421	<b>1,611</b>
<b>2024</b>	320	406	459	427	<b>1,612</b>
<b>2025</b>	315	376	444	402	<b>1,537</b>

\*Excluding self-contained Special Education classes (currently at Crane, Fyle and Leary).

At the intermediate level, as shown in Table 6, enrollment since 2015 has been relatively stable overall, but has declined in the attendance area served by Sherman (-67 students), while growing in the Vollmer area (+53), reflecting patterns of new residential construction and overall population growth.

**Table 6: Five-Year Enrollments, Grades 4-6\***

	<b>Sherman</b>	<b>Vollmer</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2020</b>	555	644	<b>1,199</b>
<b>2019</b>	572	639	<b>1,211</b>
<b>2018</b>	591	644	<b>1,235</b>
<b>2017</b>	561	648	<b>1,209</b>
<b>2016</b>	630	630	<b>1,260</b>
<b>2015</b>	622	591	<b>1,213</b>

\* Data prior to 2017 is adjusted to reflect the current configuration. Sherman encompasses the Crane and Winslow attendance areas; Vollmer encompasses Fyle and Leary.

Enrollment in grades 4-6 is projected to increase by 93 students over the next five years (see Table 7), as the enrollment bubble moves through the intermediate schools, peaking in 2025-26, when the expected large class from 2021 enters 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This increase, however, will be concentrated at one school, due largely to differences in residential growth: Vollmer is projected to add 96 students by 2025-26, while Sherman is projected to decrease by three.

**Table 7: Intermediate School Fall Enrollment Projections\***

	<b>Sherman</b>	<b>Vollmer</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Current</b>	555	644	<b>1,199</b>
<b>2021</b>	540	669	<b>1,209</b>
<b>2022</b>	523	680	<b>1,203</b>
<b>2023</b>	535	702	<b>1,237</b>
<b>2024</b>	521	702	<b>1,223</b>
<b>2025</b>	552	740	<b>1,292</b>

\*Excluding self-contained Special Education classes at both schools.

## Elementary Classroom Space Requirements

District Regulation 4020-R establishes class size guidelines for elementary schools. At grades K-3, the class size target is 15 students, with a maximum of 17; at grades 4-6, the target is 20 students, with a maximum of 22. Using these guidelines, classroom space requirements over the next five years are expected to be as shown in Table 8.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 8: Required Classrooms, Grades K-6, 2021-25**

	<b>Rooms Available*</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Rooms Needed</b>
<b>Crane</b>	<b>28</b>	20	22	21	21	21	<b>0</b>
<b>Fyle</b>	<b>31</b>	25	27	27	26	24	<b>0</b>
<b>Leary</b>	<b>36</b>	29	30	29	29	28	<b>0</b>
<b>Winslow</b>	<b>32</b>	26	28	26	26	25	<b>0</b>
<b>Sherman</b>	<b>34</b>	24	25	26	25	28	<b>0</b>
<b>Vollmer</b>	<b>35</b>	30	32	34	34	35	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	154	164	163	161	161	<b>0</b>

\*Rooms available = Total Classrooms – 3 rooms (for related services, such as Speech, ESL and Reading)

The five-year classroom space projections require placing district-wide self-contained special education classes at elementary schools that have available space. As of the 2021-22 school year at the primary level, two Life Skills classes will be placed at Leary, and three self-contained Regents-track classes will be relocated to Fyle from Crane, which houses the K-3 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICoT) inclusive education model for the district. At the intermediate level, two Life Skills classes are placed at Vollmer, and three Regents-track classes are at Sherman. Including those special classes, the total anticipated classroom use and available space at the elementary schools is shown in Table 9.

<sup>2</sup> The Board of Education approved a one-year adjustment to the guidelines in 2020-21, due to the COVID-19 crisis and budget uncertainties. That change raised the target class size to 16 at K-3 and to 21 at grades 4-6.

**Table 9: Total Required Classrooms (Including Self-Contained Classes), Grades K-6, 2021-25**

	<b>Rooms Available*</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Rooms Needed</b>
<b>Crane</b>	<b>28</b>	20	22	21	21	21	<b>0</b>
<b>Fyle</b>	<b>31</b>	28	30	30	29	27	<b>0</b>
<b>Leary</b>	<b>36</b>	31	32	31	31	30	<b>0</b>
<b>Winslow</b>	<b>32</b>	26	28	26	26	25	<b>0</b>
<b>Sherman</b>	<b>34</b>	27	28	29	28	31	<b>0</b>
<b>Vollmer</b>	<b>35</b>	32	34	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	164	174	173	171	171	<b>2</b>

\*Rooms available = Total Classrooms – 3 rooms (for related services, such as Speech, ESL and Reading)

The projections indicate that the primary schools will continue to have more than adequate space to meet anticipated needs over the next five years. However, the growth at the intermediate level will put pressure on available space, and, if all other factors continue as is, Vollmer may be short by up to two classrooms in 2023-24 through 2025-26, while the enrollment gap between Vollmer and Sherman is projected to reach 188 students.

## Discussion

Given the enrollment projections and available classroom space, the Instructional Space Committee believes that – with the exception of Vollmer – the elementary schools will continue to have more than adequate space to accommodate projected enrollment over the next five years. And although elementary enrollments decreased by more than 100 students this year, that is likely an anomaly due to the COVID-19 crisis, and follows two years of consecutive enrollment increases. These factors must be accounted for in the district's long-range planning.

The projected growth in residential development, combined with the turnover of housing stock in older neighborhoods, is expected to produce continued moderate growth in overall enrollment. Henrietta officials consulted by the committee predict that new home construction will continue at its recent pace in the next five years, especially in the Riverton area, which feeds Fyle, Leary, Vollmer and Burger. In Rush and West Brighton, population growth and housing developments will continue to be minimal, according to town planners.

The committee's major concern again this year is the growing imbalance of enrollments between the Burger and Roth feeder patterns. Burger and Vollmer are growing much faster than Roth and Sherman, and Vollmer's enrollment is projected to exceed available space as soon as 2023-24. As shown in Table 9, if current projections hold, the school would need two additional classrooms over the next several years to meet projected space needs. This will likely necessitate significant action steps, as discussed in the recommendations on Page 8.

### **III. Junior High School Enrollment and Projections**

As shown in Table 10, enrollment at the junior high schools decreased by 53 students this year, with Burger growing modestly (+23) but Roth declining significantly (-76). Since 2015, junior high enrollment growth has been flat but imbalanced, with Burger growing (+82) and Roth declining (-91), a trend that seems to be accelerating.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the gap between Burger and Roth is expected to widen further in the next few years, as growth at Burger will continue to be driven by new home construction in West Henrietta. Any growth from housing turnover in older east-side neighborhoods, and a planned new single-family development near Sherman, won't be reflected in Roth's enrollments for several years.

**Table 10: Five-Year Junior High School Enrollments\***

	<b>Burger</b>	<b>Roth</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2020</b>	689	518	<b>1,207</b>
<b>2019</b>	666	594	<b>1,260</b>
<b>2018</b>	591	612	<b>1,203</b>
<b>2017</b>	537	661	<b>1,198</b>
<b>2016</b>	590	596	<b>1,186</b>
<b>2015</b>	607	609	<b>1,216</b>

\* Data prior to 2017 (when these were grade 6-8 middle schools) is adjusted to reflect the current grade-level configuration.

Table 11 illustrates that for the next five years, overall enrollments in grades 7-9 are expected to decrease and then begin increasing modestly, as the enrollment bubble moves from the elementary level to secondary. But Burger's enrollment is projected to increase by 31 over that period, while Roth's is projected to continue its decline (-23), further widening the enrollment gap between the schools (projected to be 225 students by 2025-26).

**Table 11: Junior High School Fall Enrollment Projections\***

	<b>Burger</b>	<b>Roth</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Current</b>	689	518	<b>1,207</b>
<b>2021</b>	682	511	<b>1,193</b>
<b>2022</b>	679	504	<b>1,183</b>
<b>2023</b>	683	504	<b>1,187</b>
<b>2024</b>	707	509	<b>1,216</b>
<b>2025</b>	720	495	<b>1,215</b>

\* Excluding self-contained Special Education classes at Burger.

### **Junior High School Classroom Space Requirements**

District Regulation 4020-R establishes class size guidelines for junior high schools. The class size target at grades 7-9 is 24 students for core content instruction, with a maximum of 26. Based on these guidelines, both schools have adequate classroom space for projected enrollment. However, Burger will grow increasingly full, while Roth will likely experience an increased amount of unused or underused space – a disparity that will need to be addressed.

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<sup>3</sup> The data on home schooling and other outside placements at junior high are comparable with the high school level, where enrollments are stable, so the Roth decrease this fall is more likely the result of the expected population decline in its attendance area than factors related to COVID.

#### **IV. Senior High School Enrollment and Projections**

Over the past five years, Senior High School enrollment (grades 10-12) has been very stable, increasing by 2 students, as shown in Table 12. Fall 2020 enrollment is up by 21 students compared to last year.

**Table 12: Five-Year Senior High School Enrollments**

	<b>SHS</b>
<b>2020</b>	1,195
<b>2019</b>	1,174
<b>2018</b>	1,186
<b>2017</b>	1,176
<b>2016</b>	1,162
<b>2015</b>	1,193

Projecting forward, total enrollment at grades 10-12 over the next five years (including students who may enroll in the Alternative Program or the Transition Program) is expected to grow by about 30 students in the next two years, then level off, with an overall decrease of five students by fall 2025 (see Table 13).

**Table 13: Grades 10-12 Fall Enrollment Projections\***

<b>Current</b>	1,263
<b>2021</b>	1,227
<b>2022</b>	1,297
<b>2023</b>	1,260
<b>2024</b>	1,257
<b>2025</b>	1,258

\* Includes students who may be enrolled in the Alternative or Transition programs

#### **Senior High School Classroom Space Requirements**

District Regulation 4020-R establishes class size guidelines for the high school. At grades 10-12, the class size target is 25 for core content instruction; a maximum class size has not been established, due to single-section electives, Advanced Placement courses, etc. Based on these guidelines, the Senior High School will have more than adequate classroom space for projected enrollment over the next five years and beyond.

#### **V. Summary and Recommendations**

Based on analysis of the enrollment projections and space requirements for the next five years, the Instructional Space Committee concludes that the District's long-range space planning continues to be sound. Schools at all levels – primary, intermediate, junior high school and senior high school – are anticipated to have adequate space to meet the needs of expected enrollments and future growth, except for Vollmer Elementary School.

Nonetheless, as the current elementary enrollment bubble moves through the intermediate schools (and eventually to the junior high schools), options must be considered to ease the

pressure on classroom space. If the enrollment imbalance continues unchecked, the District could be in the undesirable position of lacking adequate space at Vollmer and Burger while classrooms sit empty at Sherman and Roth. In addition, the imbalance could cause equity issues for the larger schools, such as increasing demands on resources and support services with the same number of staff (e.g. counseling, social work, administration and nursing); larger class sizes, especially in the non-core areas; widespread consolidation and sharing of classrooms and other space; and inequitable extracurricular opportunities.

**Therefore, the committee updates and reiterates several of its recommendations from last year for the Board of Education to consider:**

1. Consider shifting some attendance areas from the Burger feeder pattern to the Roth area, beginning in either kindergarten or 4<sup>th</sup> grade. These targeted shifts of attendance areas would address the long-range imbalance in enrollment growth between Vollmer/Burger and Sherman/Roth. Making this change at 4<sup>th</sup> grade rather than kindergarten would preserve the neighborhood attendance areas for the primary schools. However, ***the committee did not reach consensus on this***, as some members felt that while changes to K-3 attendance can be disruptive to families and neighborhoods, it may be less jarring than forcing students to separate from their neighbors when entering fourth grade.

Some important considerations:

- a. There should be an analysis of individual attendance areas to identify a few highly populated areas that can be shifted, rather than making widespread changes. Moving about 100-125 students could close the projected enrollment gap between Burger and Roth, which is expected to be 225 students by 2025-26. The committee last year identified several attendance areas along the West Henrietta Road/I-390 corridor to consider.
  - b. Care should be taken to minimize splitting neighborhoods between schools.
  - c. Consider a phase-in or an “age-out” option to mitigate the effects of students changing schools, as during the district reconfiguration. (Members cautioned that this could cause longer bus rides and other transportation issues.)
  - d. Potential changes must take into account socioeconomic and demographic factors, in order to ensure a diverse population in all schools and to avoid exacerbating the higher concentration of need in the Roth/Sherman area.
  - e. Housing growth and trends should be considered, including the potential reassignment of future developments to schools outside their current area.
  - f. Any changes need to be evaluated for their impact on district transportation.
  - g. A parent survey should be considered, to gather families’ concerns and their input into any potential redrawing of attendance lines.
2. Utilize the 2018 elementary space audit to evaluate the use of classroom space for related services, Cub Care Zone and non-essential functions (conference space, etc.) in the elementary schools. Some services and offices can be combined or reassigned to smaller spaces that are not suitable to be classrooms and still meet the various needs while freeing up classrooms, especially at Vollmer. The committee would encourage that these changes be made with input from the respective school staffs, to ensure that essential spaces are



preserved, especially for academic intervention and other student services. Members also cautioned that these types of changes may constitute a “band-aid” rather than a long-term solution to enrollment imbalances.

3. Continue to consult with town planners and real estate agents to monitor the growth in residential building, and to assess trends in sales of existing homes in established neighborhoods, especially in the Winslow and Fyle areas.

**Respectfully Submitted,  
2020-21 Instructional Space Committee**

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