

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: Annual Enrollment and Space Projections Report

Date: January 11, 2022

The district's Instructional Space Committee met on October 14, November 18, and December 9, 2021, to review district enrollment trends and five-year 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 will have adequate classroom space.

I. Current District Enrollment¹

As of October 2021, the district enrolled 5,426 students – 5,290 of these students attend R-H schools, and 136 are placed in out-of-district settings (BOCES or special schools), which is down from 129 in 2020. (Home-schooled students and those enrolled in private, charter or other schools are not included in the district enrollment data.) Compared with last fall, in-district K-12 student enrollment has increased by 29 students. This represents the third increase in the last four years, in keeping with the overall trend of stable enrollments during the past 10 years. Table 1 displays enrollments for the last five years by grade level bands.

This year's fall elementary enrollment data shows an overall increase of 79 students, following a sharp decrease in 2020 that was largely related to the COVID-19 pandemic, when the district saw an increase in students being home-schooled or held back from kindergarten. Those categories this year returned to close to the 2019 numbers. This year there also are 50 fewer students at secondary (Grades 7-12) compared to last year, as some smaller class cohorts are moving up through the system and a large class graduated.

Table 1: Five-Year Fall District Enrollments, by Level*

	Elementary Grades K-3	Elementary Grades 4-6	Secondary Grades 7-9	Secondary Grades 10-12	Total
2021	1,646	1,224	1,190	1,230	5,290
2020	1,592	1,199	1,207	1,263	5,261
2019	1,682	1,211	1,260	1,234	5,387
2018	1,628	1,235	1,203	1,254	5,320
2017	1,573	1,209	1,198	1,243	5,223

* Out of district placements not included.

¹ For the purposes of this report, 2020-21 and 2021-22 enrollments include all students in their home school of attendance, regardless of whether they have attended school in person or via the Remote Learning Academy.

II. Elementary School Enrollments and Projections

The enrollment changes this fall included an increase of 54 students at grades K-3, and an increase of 25 students at grades 4-6. According to the Office of Information Systems, these increases are at least partly attributable to students returning to regular school enrollment following the height of the pandemic in 2020-21 during which a hybrid instructional model was implemented and a larger-than usual number of students were home schooled.

Over the next five years, enrollment at the primary schools is projected to continue to increase at first, then begin to decline, for an overall projected decrease of 80 students. As shown in Table 2, enrollments at all four schools will remain relatively stable – although the gap in enrollment between Crane and the other schools will continue, as growth remains concentrated in West Henrietta (the Leary and Fyle attendance areas). 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, based on recent trends (known as the “survival rate”).

Table 2: Primary School Fall Enrollment Projections*

	Crane	Fyle	Leary	Winslow	Total
Current	333	394	474	405	1,606
2022	306	427	479	413	1,625
2023	298	434	468	403	1,603
2024	288	423	453	391	1,555
2025	293	398	444	388	1,523
2026	303	390	447	386	1,526

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

At the intermediate level, enrollment since the district-wide reconfiguration in 2017 has increased by 15 students overall. But the distribution of change was very uneven, as Sherman’s enrollment declined by 35 students, while Vollmer’s increased by 50, widening the enrollment gap between the schools. That trend is expected to intensify in the next five years (see Table 3). Overall enrollment at the intermediate level is projected to grow by 59 students, with the increase concentrated at Vollmer, driven largely by residential growth, while Sherman’s enrollment declines slightly. As a result, the enrollment gap between the two schools is projected to grow to 254 students by the 2026-27 school year.

Table 3: Intermediate School Fall Enrollment Projections*

	Sherman	Vollmer	Total
Current	499	680	1,179
2022	490	672	1,162
2023	505	698	1,203
2024	512	700	1,212
2025	521	741	1,262
2026	492	746	1,238

*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 22.² Classroom space projections also must factor in the district-wide self-contained special education programs, which are housed at elementary schools that have available space. At the primary level, two Life Skills classes are placed at Leary, and three self-contained Regents-track classes are located at Fyle. At intermediate, two Life Skills classes are placed at Vollmer, and three Regents-track classes are at Sherman. Including those special classes, and applying the class size guidelines, the total anticipated classroom use and available space at the elementary schools is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Total Required Classrooms (Including Self-Contained Classes), Grades K-6, 2022-26

	Rooms Available*	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Rooms Needed
Crane	27	20	20	18	20	20	0
Fyle	30	30	31	29	29	28	1
Leary	36	33	32	30	30	31	0
Winslow	31	26	25	25	25	24	0
Sherman	34	27	27	29	29	27	0
Vollmer	36	33	36	36	38	37	2
Total	194	169	171	167	171	167	3

*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, although Fyle will be essentially at capacity, and would need space for an additional class in 2023-24. 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 2025-26 and exceed capacity for years beyond that, especially if robust residential growth continues in its attendance area.

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 adequate space to accommodate projected enrollment over the next five years. The projected growth in residential development, combined with the turnover of housing stock in older neighborhoods, is expected to result in stable 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 there.

² The Board of Education approved a two-year adjustment to the guidelines in 2020-21 and 2021-22, due to the COVID-19 crisis. That change temporarily raised the target class size to 16 at K-3 and to 21 at grades 4-6.

The committee remains concerned about 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 fill its available classroom space by 2023-24. As shown in Table 4, if current projections hold, the school would need to find space for two additional classes in 2025-26 to meet projected needs within the class size guidelines. This will necessitate significant action steps, as discussed in the recommendation on Page 6.

The growth trend also is causing an imbalance among the K-3 schools. Although all those schools are projected to have adequate space, Fyle will be near capacity and Leary will continue to grow relatively much larger than the other schools, especially Crane, where one-third of available classroom space is expected to be vacant or underutilized by 2024-25. This raises concerns about the equity in student services and opportunities among schools.

III. Secondary School Enrollments and Projections

Junior High Schools

Enrollment at the junior high schools decreased by 17 students this year, distributed fairly evenly between the schools. However, since reconfiguration in 2017, while overall junior high enrollment has declined by 8 students, Burger has grown by 120 students while Roth has declined by 128. This has created a gap similar to the intermediate schools, and that trend is projected to accelerate in the next five years, as growth at Burger (like Vollmer) 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 large single-family home development near Sherman, won’t be reflected in Roth’s enrollments for several years.

Table 5 illustrates that for the next five years, overall enrollments in grades 7-9 are expected to increase steadily (+51 overall), as an enrollment bubble moves up from the elementary level to secondary. But Burger’s enrollment is projected to increase by 103 over that period, while Roth’s is projected to continue its steady decline (-52), further widening the enrollment gap between the schools, projected to be 265 students by 2026-27.

Table 5: Junior High School Fall Enrollment Projections*

	Burger	Roth	Total
Current	637	527	1,164
2022	662	515	1,177
2023	675	502	1,177
2024	703	492	1,195
2025	713	460	1,173
2026	740	475	1,215

* Excluding self-contained Special Education classes at Burger.

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. This may create some inequities in services and opportunities for students, as the enrollment gap widens.

Senior High School

Over the past five years, Senior High School enrollment (grades 10-12) has decreased by 13 students. Fall 2021 enrollment was down by 33 students compared to last year.

Projecting forward, total enrollment in grades 10-12 over the next five years (including students who may enroll in the Alternative Program or the Transition Program, both at the Webster Learning Center) is expected to grow by a modest 11 students (see Table 6).

Table 6: Grades 10-12 Fall Enrollment Projections*

Current	1,230
2022	1,278
2023	1,234
2024	1,232
2025	1,229
2026	1,241

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

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, and other variables related to scheduling. 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.

IV. Summary and Recommendation

Based on analysis of the enrollment projections and space requirements for the next five years, the Instructional Space Committee concludes that schools at three levels – primary, junior high school and senior high school – are anticipated to have adequate space to meet the needs of expected enrollments and future growth. However, the committee believes strongly that the District’s long-range space planning requires consideration of some steps to moderate the differences in enrollment – and potential space issues – between schools in the Burger and Roth attendance areas. The situation is most critical at Vollmer Elementary.

Therefore, the committee recommends that action be taken soon to ease the pressure on classroom space in the schools where enrollment is growing fastest. If the enrollment imbalance continues unchecked, the District could be in the undesirable position of lacking sufficient space at Vollmer, Fyle and Burger while classrooms sit empty at Crane, Sherman and Roth. This imbalance also could cause equity issues for the larger schools at each level (which also includes Leary), such as increasing demands on resources and services utilizing the same number of staff (e.g. counseling, AIS, administration and health services); larger class sizes in those schools, especially in electives and special areas; sharing and consolidation of classrooms and other space; and inequitable extracurricular opportunities.

In conclusion, after consideration of several options, and the advantages and disadvantages of each, the committee offers the following recommendation to the Board of Education:

- **Consider shifting some attendance areas from the Burger feeder pattern to the Roth area**, beginning in either kindergarten or 4th grade. These targeted shifts of attendance areas would address the long-term imbalance in enrollment growth between Vollmer/Burger and Sherman/Roth. Some important considerations:
 1. A small number of individual attendance areas in highly populated and geographically central areas should be shifted, rather than making widespread changes. The committee last year identified six attendance areas along the West Henrietta Road/I-390 corridor that meet these criteria. An analysis of their enrollments can provide several options that would best balance enrollment numbers as well as demographic factors. For example, some primary schools could be assigned to feed both Sherman and Vollmer.
 2. Care should be taken to minimize splitting individual neighborhoods.
 3. Consider an “age-out” option to mitigate the effects of students changing schools, as during the district reconfiguration in 2017. (Note: Members cautioned that this could cause longer bus rides and other transportation issues. Also, any delay will prolong the classroom space problem.)
 4. 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.
 5. Housing growth and sales trends should be considered.
 6. Before any changes are finalized, the district should schedule parent information meetings, a Thought Exchange, and other efforts to inform and seek feedback from families and the community, to address potential concerns.
 7. Any proposals must be evaluated for their impact on district transportation.

Alternatives: The committee considered other potential recommendations, including (a) assigning new housing developments in the Burger area to the Roth feeder pattern; (b) building a new elementary school in Riverton; and (c) reassigning services and district special education programs to elementary schools without more available space. All of these options were rejected, for reasons including prohibitive costs and disruption to programs and/or families.

**Respectfully Submitted,
2021-22 Instructional Space Committee**

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