

2014

WESTBRANCH COMMUNITYSCHOOLS

The West Branch Community School District's fifteen year master facilities improvement plan: Transforming learning environments for student success.

Vision:

A future focused community of learners

Mission:

Prepare students to live and learn with passion and purpose

Destination:

All students are career and college ready





WESTBRANCH
COMMUNITYSCHOOLS

CORE VALUES & BELIEFS

Academic accountability and results through personalized, inspired, aligned teaching and feedback practices

Collaborative, professional learning communities promoting a culture of collective responsibility for student learning

High engagement through student-centered, intellectually- challenging, quality instruction

Innovation through technology-infused learning

Energized, nurturing, professional teachers and support staff

Vibrant, award-winning extra-curricular programming for all

Equitable, non-discriminatory programming and access for all

Multiple, holistic, performance-based assessment philosophy utilizing standards-based grading and reporting practices

Effective, ongoing, quality feedback to students and parents

Non-threatening, environmentally-friendly learning environments

Technology-infused, 21st century learning experiences for all

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WESTBRANCH
COMMUNITYSCHOOLS

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I. STAKEHOLDER APPRECIATION

THE WEST BRANCH COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S FIFTEEN YEAR MASTER FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT PLAN: TRANSFORMING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The West Branch Community School District is indebted to the work and commitment of internal and external stakeholders. Two important community-infused committees have provided countless hours of time and support to help us develop a facilities plan that is aligned to the vision, mission and learning needs of our students' futures. Valued contributors to the *School Improvement Advisory Committee*, (S.I.A.C.) and the *Facilities Advisory Committee*, (F.A.C.) have been:

Chris Bower (F.A.C. Chair, parent), Marisa Stout (parent), Melissa Russell (parent, City Parks), Jodi Yeggy (parent, past PTO President), Chris Marshall, (parent), Kevin Olson, (parent, City), Lindsay Saydel, (parent, PTO President), Andy Corr, (parent, Lion's Club member), Julie Sexton, (parent) Kate Milster, (Teacher, High School), Butch Pedersen, (teacher, football coach), Nick Shimmin, (WBPL), Laura Gongora, (Parent, WBCSD Staff, Mike Owen (parent, Board Member), Kathy Knoop (parent, Present, Board of Education), Rev. Richard Paulus, (Board Member), Mike Colbert, (parent, Board Member), Deb Schreiber, (parent, Board Member), Carolyn Harold, (parent, former Board member), Mary Buol (parent, Teacher, Elem., WBEA President), Chris Reed (parent, M.S / H.S. Music Teacher), Joe Lande (Director of Operations / Transportation), Ruben Galvan, Sr., (District Maintenance), Doug Cummings, (District Technology) Angie Klinkkammer (parent, Business Manager), Administrators and parents (Michelle Lukavsky, Sara Oswald, Jess Burger, Jeff Wrede, Sara Fischer, (student WBHS, graduate), Sam McCrory, (student), Cheryl Fischer, (parent, P&G Leadership) and Struxture Architects' John Darveau and Craig Schwedtfeger (Struxture Architects, AIA Certified, lead architects)

We extend our ongoing gratitude to the many stakeholders who have contributed to surveys, architectural interviews, provided historical perspectives and attended many meetings.

Thank you!

Mr. Hatfield

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II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District's ability to provide every student an outstanding educational experience that prepares them to excel on a global stage is the single most important challenge we face.

Four leadership and communication processes have emerged as the "cornerstones" for meeting this challenge. They have created vision, mission and goal clarity.

1) Engagement of Internal and External Stakeholders for Improved Feedback and Accountability. The District will continue its use of: belief surveys, needs assessments, personal interviews, focus group interviews, community forums and input from current students and graduates.

2) Involvement of the School Improvement Advisory Committee (S.I.A.C.). The S.I.A.C. continues to provide valued guidance and helped to develop a six theme, multi-goal, transformational District Strategic Plan.

3) Formation of a District Facilities Advisory Committee (F.A.C.). The F.A.C. was challenged to develop a long-term, phased-in facilities plan. The plan should be a living document providing construction benchmarks for the building of world-class learning environments.

4) Investment in our People to Support a "Culture of Collective Responsibility"

West Branch students, staff, families and community must demand world-class facilities to meet the education and career challenges ahead. The District will need technology enhanced, flexible, supportive learning spaces where intellectually challenging, high quality instruction can flourish. Most of the neighboring school districts have already made substantial reinvestments and updates to their facilities. To compete, we must do so as well.

Communities that invest in their public schools receive the valued-added benefits of: *increased community pride and relationships, stable property valuations, strong housing markets, reductions in crime and social services, improved community amenities, as well as steady growth spurred by the interests of future families and businesses.*

Your support of long-term facilities improvement processes is not only a "win-win" for families with students currently attending our schools or future students, but for the long-term stability of our community as a whole.

Kevin Hatfield, Superintendent of Schools

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III. INTRODUCTION

The West Branch Community School District is dedicated to providing every child an outstanding education. Today's students must be prepared to compete and thrive in a globally competitive environment. To accomplish the vision, mission and destination goals of the District, we must have world-class facilities, quality teaching and programming, operational excellence, strong leadership and the trust and support of the community.

Schools and school districts that are making a significant difference for children are strategic in their efforts to help all children be successful and achieve at high levels. The development and successful implement of a long-term, strategic plan for the West Branch Community School District will require disciplined, purposeful commitment, support and hard work across the District and from the community as well. If we truly want to educate all children to succeed in the globally competitive world of today (and tomorrow) we must begin now.

The West Branch Board of Education has supported the Superintendent's expressed desire of providing taxpayers with a long-term, strategic facilities plan. In the spring of 2012, the District organized a Facilities Advisory Committee (F.A.C.) designed to function as a subcommittee of the District's School Improvement Advisory Committee (S.I.A.C.).

FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S ("COMMITTEE") AGREED UPON GOALS:

1. Provide the Board of Education and internal and external stakeholders input and guidance for the development and communication of a long-term, master facilities plan.
2. Establish a facilities plan aligned to the District's vision and mission and overall strategic goals.
3. Support the hiring and work of a professional architectural and engineering firm to assist with the assessment, input and prioritizing recommendation for future facilities improvement work.
4. Formulate a plan that works to eliminate "patch quilt" facilities improvements through the implementation of an articulated, 10- to 15-year master facilities plan. The plan will recognize District resource limitations and opportunities.
5. Present a District Master Facilities Plan to the Board by last June, but the Committee revised this deadline for January, 2014

Note: To allow for greater Committee, architectural and community input, it was recommended that a facilities plan presentation deadline be re-established. The date of January 13, 2014, was targeted for the first comprehensive presentation of the Facilities Advisory Committee's findings and recommendations to the West Branch Board of Education and community as a whole.

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III. INTRODUCTION continued

FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S ("COMMITTEE") GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- All Committee members will place student achievement and the learning needs of all students first in all decision making aspects.
- The Committee will provide multiple pathways for stakeholder input.
- The Committee Chair (and select members) will provide periodic reports to the Board and community. Mr. Chris Bower was selected as the Committee's Chair.
- The Committee will develop an understanding of "21st Century School Facilities Design" designed to enhance and meet future teaching and learning needs.
- The Committee will develop an understanding of the District's Physical Plant and Education Levy (PEL) funds, the District's School Secure and Advance Vision for Education (SSAVE) funds and the District's overall debt obligations, which impact future bonding capacity.
- The Committee will encourage the Board to enlist services of facilities assessment professionals (architects and engineers) to inform decision-making.
- All facilities documentation, minutes and committee considerations will be available for stakeholder viewing utilizing the District's website, newspapers and superintendent reports.
- Committee decisions will be made using best evidence of enrollment trends (gradual growth, zero growth or declining growth) and scenarios, as well as reflection upon comprehensive facilities assessment information.
- Committee decisions will be made using projected District finance considerations.
- The Committee will look for ways or ideas to help the District be more strategic in its future resource allocations finding system efficiencies where possible.
- A long-term facilities plan should prioritize and phase in future facilities improvement work by addressing short-term and intermediate facilities projects.

Over the past eighteen months, Committee members have participated in multiple school improvement meetings, toured District facilities, discussed internal and external stakeholder input gathered through a comprehensive facilities survey and focus group interviews, presented to the Board, developed a deeper understanding of 21st Century teaching and learning needs, reviewed 21st Century school facility design, assessed architectural and engineering data and provided input to possible building footprint designs in our future.

The Committee's work has provided a "strategic facilities direction" for the future of our students and the community. It is aligned to and supportive of the District's Strategic Plan.

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IV. FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S VISION: A TWO-CAMPUS DISTRICT

Early Facilities Advisory Committee meetings were used to establish agreed upon committee goals and guidelines. The Committee was provided an overview of the District's past facilities work; especially related to the new practice gym, the new 5th grade classrooms which allowed for an additional preschool room, revamped special education space, elimination of the need to have students travel outside to have access to computers while maintaining the elementary curriculum and program.

Committee tours allowed for a deeper understanding of the District facilities and grounds strengths and weaknesses. The limitations of our current facilities' and system design and organization create student safety and building security concerns, scheduling issues, curricular programming concerns, loss of valuable instructional time due to unique, but needed student travel logistics and student access issues that continue to be addressed. The W.B.C.S.D.'s buildings and grounds continue to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements, but additional updates are needed and older facilities will require revenue intensive compliance updates in the near future.

The Committee was appreciative of the upgrades that included the new 5th grade classrooms and the reasons for this initial move, new carpet in all buildings, updated paint projects, Central Office's intended move to Hoover Elementary (at the time of the initial tour), the updated facilities use policy, as well as the improved, but limited visitor sign in and security protocols.

A Summary of District "Internal" Facilities Weaknesses and Concerns

- The location of each school's main office does not meet modern safety requirements

in terms of visibility of people entering our schools. Modern entry security systems (buzz-in type systems) are not present.

- The Committee came to understand that over 125 Middle School students would be starting their day (happening currently) at the high school due to middle school facility's classroom limitations and the need to centralize technology and advance curriculum and programming resources.
- The Committee saw the lack of basic educational classroom space and student travel issues at the Middle School (art, music, PE, lunch, advanced technology programs and language support classes) as a major concern. Very few school districts in Iowa have individual buildings with the security, safety and basic educational classroom and programming issues that our Middle students endure.
- The HVAC system at the high school was of course seen as a major issue. Updates regarding repair costs for the HVAC at the high school and the ongoing issues and costs related to the middle school rooftop units were reviewed. The Committee received updates and testimonials regarding how well the geothermal system at Hoover Elementary has been working.
- The current location of the District's Bus Barn (transportation center) was not expressed as a pressing matter for the Committee at that time of the tour. Note: The Committee had only a general understanding of possible West Branch Public Library's expansion aspirations at that time of the initial tours.
- Relocation of all school offices for improved visibility and security was identified as a need.

- The Committee expressed concerns regarding the auditorium's seating, stage issues, limitations of current music rooms for individual or small group lessons and extremely limited storage space.
- The Committee expressed concerns regarding limited music practice rooms and instrument storage space.
- The Committee noted a lack of specialized classrooms to meet specified learning needs and little to no "flexible learning space" for meeting 21st Century learning needs are currently available.
- It was apparent that the schools have limited storage.
- The Committee also noted that major classroom and restroom remodels are needed; especially at Hoover Elementary.
- The Committee gained a deeper understanding of the District's commitment for offering increased opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programming, as well as increasing con-current credit (college credit) programming courses for students. The need for more hands-on, project-based, flexible learning spaces is having a major impact on 21st Century learning facilities designs.
- The Committee has held multiple discussions regarding the impact that the Johnson County Regional Academic Center will have on District programming and facilities.

A Summary of District "External" Facility Weaknesses and Concerns

- Parking concerns at the high school and other District facilities received a major

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IV. FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S VISION: A TWO-CAMPUS DISTRICT continued...

portion of the Committee's attention.

- The dropping-off and picking-up of students on Oliphant Street at Hoover Elementary School remains a major concern. The Committee noted improvements to parking and bus issues, but recognized the limited nature of these improvements Note: The separation of buses from vehicles and students is a major priority in modern school facility design for obvious reasons.
- The Committee recognized ongoing deficiencies regarding parking, ticket taking, limited concessions and poor locations, ADA compliance issues regarding access to fields and full access for all community members, maintenance equipment storage, press box space, lack of water to concessions.
- The lack of public facilities for outdoor events (washrooms and restrooms) was a major topic of discussion and concern.
- Concerns regarding the location and condition of the maintenance buildings north of the Oliphant Street football field were noted.
- The Committee expressed an overall concern regarding the "patch quilt" appearance of our fields; especially regarding the baseball, softball and youth fields at our high school.
- Electrical issues and poor lighting at the Oliphant Street football field were noted.
- The Committee made note of our 6 lane track, the current bleacher location and limited access to storage and restrooms there.
- The Committee noted that our current competition gym (seating capacity) and the track (only 6 lanes) do not meet State of Iowa regulations for hosting most competitions that qualifying teams and individuals for most state tournaments.
- Discussions were held about the use

of water to irrigate the fields and rising cost. Note: Many school districts utilize underground irrigation systems on performance and practice surfaces. Modern irrigation systems monitor water use through consistent, scheduled watering intervals.

Major Themes of Facilities Weaknesses from Committee Tours

- Building security and student and staff safety issues due to required outside travel scenarios must be addressed
- Limited classroom capacities for meeting 21st Century teaching, learning and programming needs must be addressed
- Limited parking across the District facilities must be addressed
- Dangerous drop-off and pick-up concerns at Hoover Elementary School must be rectified
- Inconsistent heating and cooling issues at the high school must be addressed
- Limitations of the Middle School building for meeting basic programming and curriculum needs is creating multiple issues and must be addressed
- Inadequacies and limitations of our current performing arts facilities i.e. music classrooms, stage, lighting, auditorium seating capacity, musical instrument storage, as well as poor individualized and small group lesson space(s) need to be addressed.
- Restrooms updates across the District (indoors and outdoors) need updated, improved or provided; especially at Hoover Elementary School.

Enrollment Projections

The District expects relative enrollment increases over the next five to ten years. Architectural calculations indicate a slightly more aggressive increase in students over

the next few years than the State of Iowa projections. The District's leadership is one of moderate growth that parallels the enrollment increases of approximately 45 students over the past five years.

The Facilities Committee's position regarding the idea of having a "Middle School Concept," which includes the placement of 5th grade students as part of future high school plans is not recommended due to limited growth, curriculum and developmentally appropriate setting and enrollment needed to conduct a "Middle School Concept" model.

Stakeholder Input

From the beginning, the Committee has been charged to advise and assist the District with the development of a long-term master facilities plan stemming from high levels of public and professional input. The District has consistently encouraged members of the community to attend these important meetings. The District will continue to provide opportunities for additional input as the plan will be viewed as a "living facilities document" working for consensus and final detail.

Two comprehensive input processes were utilized by the District:

- 1) Structure Architects Focus Groups Interviews: These interviews involved over sixty people and also included input from included middle and high school students, school staff, City officials, parents, community organizations, business leaders, Board members and administrators and
- 2) The District's Facilities Survey: This survey included contains input from 117 stakeholders regarding providing input and recommendations on what they perceived to be the short-term and long-term facilities needs of the District.

Over time, the Committee became more educated as to the long-term financial



IV. FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S VISION: A TWO-CAMPUS DISTRICT continued...

position and capabilities of the District. Initial "phasing plans" of current and future District resources was shared by Mr. Hatfield, Superintendent of Schools, at the October, 2013 and November, 2013 F.A.C. meetings. Revisions have been reflecting additional "project prioritizing" considerations.

Lengthy discussions regarding the HVAC system occurred again at the November facilities meeting. Short-term and long-term stakeholder input also identified it as an area of future improvements and redesign at the high school.

The inconsistent heating and cooling capacities of the (original) HVAC system at the high school is well documented. The district has received multiple assessments and quotes for fixing or improving the high school's HVAC capabilities. The Committee learned that the geothermal system currently heating and cooling the new practice gym has been operating effectively and the District will continue to monitor the geothermal systems in use.

Struxture Architects has recommended, due to estimates of close to or over one-million dollars, to tie an upgraded or new HVAC into possible future building additions to avoid new or future capacity issues. The management team and superintendent will continue to look at adjustments and possible pneumatics updates that will support adequate heating and cooling for the near future.

After initial meetings and facilities tours, the pros and cons of a two-campus (two building) school district began to emerge. The concept appeared credible as a resource responsible, teaching and learning supportive concept for the District's future, but without professional assessment data to support it, the Committee wanted to remain open to all options.

Architectural designs showing a new office, gym, lunchroom, art, health and music

room additions to the Middle School were provided. Discussions were held regarding the limited availability of land for even basic Middle School expansions were demonstrated through architectural design. The additional traffic and safety issues on Foster Street were discussed.

The Committee engaged in the comprehensive review of engineering, architectural and district provided data. Struxture Architect's "Facilities Condition Index" scores provided summative assessments data for all three buildings. The scores of buildings are defined on a 0.00 to 1.00 scale.

Note: A facility score closer to 0.00 equates to sound, adequate facility capable of meeting current and future mission needs. A facility score closer to 1.00 is equated to facilities of poorer in overall quality and often recommended for demolish or repurposing (even to other organizations) as opposed to remodeling or reinvestment.

Professional engineers and architects equate high facility index scores to buildings that have poor functional adequacy for meeting current and future service needs. They have questionable value regarding the long-term investment of resources or for repurposing of use. While still serviceable, the proverbial "pouring good money at bad" might be the best way to summarize the condition of the middle school facility as it sits now.

- West Branch High School – 0.29
- West Branch Elementary School – 0.52
- West Branch Middle School – 0.79

In the end, construction and ongoing maintenance to the current Middle School was seen an irresponsible budgetary proposition in terms of the long-term financial stability of the District. Additional resource allocations into current Middle School facility, beyond basic maintenance, would certainly hamper the District's ability to meet critical facilities

and educational needs at the elementary and high school buildings, rated as much more viable learning centers for the future.

At the November 12, 2013, Committee meeting, a vote was taken as to the credibility of this two-campus concept. The Committee was nearly unanimous in their support (vote of approval) for a two-campus (two-building) concept regarding future facility and resource planning and allocations. The Committee recommended that District make this the centerpiece of a master facilities plan supported by a phase-in fiscal planning timeline.

Committee officially endorsed the two-campus concept (PK-5 Elementary, 6-12 Junior - Senior High School) as the most cost efficient, educationally sound use of long-term district resources. The Committee sees it as the best way to support 21st Century teaching and learning needs of the future. Thus, the repurposing and eventual elimination of the Middle School in the near future is recommended.

All minutes from the Committee meetings continue to available on the District's website have been enclosed in the report.

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IV. FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board of Education, Superintendent, district leadership and staff should approve and begin implementation of an articulated, 15 Year District Master Facilities Plan as develop through Facilities Advisory Committee and stakeholder input.

- The centerpiece of the District's long-term facilities plan should be the development of a two-campus (two-building) school district which would require the eventual elimination of the current middle school facility.
- The District should plan for the development of a 6th grade through 12th grade West Branch Junior - Senior High School
- The District should update Hoover Elementary School to be organized as a Pre-K – 5 learning center for the future.
- The long-term facilities plan should focus the majority of its resources on building upgrades that support 21st Century teaching and learning and improved instruction.
- The long-term plan should be accompanied by a phased-in project funding time line using a combination of District PPEL and SSAVE funds; especially for the accomplishment of needed, aligned short-term project completion goals.
- The District should continue to work with the City and local housing unit developers regarding the positioning of a new entry way(s) to future high school updates and plans and use information from the proposed City sponsored traffic study(s).
- The District should plan for a bond referendum vote in the spring or fall of 2016 school year with contingency plans for spring of 2017.

- The long-term building improvements should have an immediate impact on student and staff safety.

- The long-term building plans should create flexible learning spaces that support 21st Century programming.

- The long-term plan should help the District find resource efficiencies from the reduction of an entire building.

- The long-term plan should is not a plan for reducing staffing levels per say, but efficiencies from reorganization will be required and determined by the administrative leadership for meeting the needs of students.

- The elimination of the current middle school is needed to create a safe parental drop-off, pick-up and general parking that are aligned to the repositioning of Hoover Elementary School's building entries.

- The District's plan should include the eventual elimination of the outdated, aging maintenance and supplies buildings located north of the football field

- Any relocation of the District's Transportation Center (Bus Barn) should be done as in the later phases of the long-term plan. New high school parking lots and possible building expansions should align to possible positions for a new transportation center in the future.

Benefits found from the eventual elimination of the current Middle School:

- Streamlining of District resources and focus future allocations on the care and maintenance of two buildings as opposed to three.

- Create staffing realignments.

- Support improved energy management and consumption through efficiencies found in a two building campus.

- Reutilized space will be developed as a large, new parking lot that supports the repositioning Hoover Elementary School's main office and student / parent entries.

- o It would successfully address dangerous drop-off and pick-up concerns currently happening at Hoover Elementary School.

- o The creation of a new parking lot in the space currently occupied by the middle school facility would allow for the separation of buses from vehicles.

- o The creation of a new parking lot in the space currently occupied by the middle school facility would provide needed, additional parking at football games.

- Use phased-in funding plans should allow for short-term parking lot improvements at the high school aligned to the long-term building improvements.

- Needed, short-term upgrades to the District playing surface and fields would be aligned with the long-term facilities construction and reorganization.

- Future parking lots or parking lot additions should be aligned with the Meadows Addition and future housing developments with guidance from the City based on traffic studies and recommendations.

- Additional parking lot upgrades at the high school should attempt to eliminate access to the current youth fields by way of the Johnson-Cedar County Road (a class b road)

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IV. FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS continued...

- Professional input gathered to date indicates that eventual overhauling or removal of the current HVAC system at the high school should be connected to the possible development of new Jr. / Sr. High School additions and construction upgrades in the near future.

- The Superintendent, Business Director and Board of Education should continue work to manage school tax levies and time a future School Bond Referendum with the elimination of the current Elementary School Geothermal General Bond, in 2018.

Note: Elimination of the current General Obligation Bonds for the Hoover Elementary geothermal system would reduce the school district's tax levy \$1.21 per \$1000 of assessed valuation in the future.

Safety:

- While the District has improved overall student and staff safety, the fact remains that regardless of our current security protocols, the need to have students traveling outside between the middle and elementary buildings to meet basic curriculum requirements is a safety and security issue that long-term facilities planning must rectify.
- The location of each school's main office does not meet modern visual monitoring requirements for safety and long-term facilities planning could dramatically the current logistical concern
- Industry standard security systems (example; buzz-in door systems and night alarms) should be comprehensive aspect of facilities construction in the future
- Currently, over 125 Middle School students begin their day at the high school

for required curricular programming needs. Long-term facilities planning could benefit instructional time if a two-campus, two-building facilities plan was enacted.

Instruction and Curriculum

- West Branch Middle School does not have its own art, music, PE, lunchroom or space for current 21st Century technology-infused programming and curriculum or future flexible spaces to support project-based learning needs of the future. Long-term facilities planning should eliminate this issues through the development of a two campus, two building District.
- Hoover Elementary School will undoubtedly need additional preschool classrooms and an updated technology infrastructure to support student learning and increased preschool programming demands.
- Moving the 5th grade classrooms (at a cost of \$170,000) was not scene as the panacea for solving the District future space and possible re-organization goals into the future. The goal was to keep 5th grade students in an elementary setting to the extent possible. Continue to deliver elementary level curriculum and programming.

Performing and Fine Arts Concerns that a Long-Term Master Facilities Plan Should Address

- Limited seating in the auditorium for major productions generally creating the need for three days of performances
- Limited stage and storage space for production efforts
- Limited practice room space for music

instruction; especially for individual or small group lessons

- Poor, unsecure instrument storage

The Facilities Advisory Committee will continue to provide input and monitoring of the District's work to implement a long-term plan. The Committee encourages the public to provide additional input and think about the long-term commitment that will be needed to realize the vision, mission and goals of the District for our students' futures.

Thank you,

Chris Bower, Facilities Advisory Committee Chair

Jodi Yeggy, Committee Representative

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