

Lynchburg City Schools

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Facilities Study Summary

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE FOR ALL



LYNCHBURG CITY SCHOOLS

Revised:06/13/22

Lynchburg City Schools hosted a series of Community Conversations in April and May 2022 to discuss the Facilities Study and future decisions regarding new construction, renovation, consolidation, and rezoning. At each session members of the community joined Dr. Crystal Edwards and other school administrators to provide comments and questions.



Meetings were divided into four topics: demographic information, facilities condition assessments, educational programming and potential recommendations. Data was reviewed and participants were asked for replies to the following:

1. Share your comments/feedback.
2. What questions arise?
3. What additional information is needed?

This summary includes the responses that were received at the meetings and from the comment form posted on our website. This is a working document that will be updated as the LCS team continues to analyze the community's input.



Community Conversations Dates & Locations

April 25, 2022 - Sandusky Elementary

May 2, 2022 - Linkhorne Elementary

May 9, 2022 - Paul Munro Elementary

May 16, 2022 - R. S. Payne Elementary

May 23, 2022 - Providence Transformation Church International



Task 1: Demographics

Comments/Feedback

Age/Condition/Capacity of Buildings:

- We are in need of a new elementary facility (no new buildings since 1966)
- Some buildings are quite old and do not meet the needs of today's students
- RSP and DESI are among the oldest buildings with the least capacity and in the worst condition
- 4/5 of the schools in worst condition were lower performing schools (C-D)
- Hutcherson is over capacity
- Dearington's population is too small, so increase zone
- Capacity data doesn't match what we hear about space in the community
- Functional capacity seems higher than realistic and effective

Rezoning:

- Reevaluate school zones to consider numbers, transportation, convenience, diversity
- School zones don't always allow students to attend the closest school. Need to be revisited.
- LCS is still under court ordered desegregation from 1974

Considerations:

- Developers turning homes into rentals
- Rental homes are more geared towards college students vs. single/families
- Homeschool numbers are rising
- Larger class size equal increase in behavior (support structure for large class sizes)
- Additions to buildings could be a solution
- Consider how schools fit into neighborhoods and sidewalk availability
- Student needs have changed, social and emotional needs can impact functionality
- Trend: population (city) going up but school population going down
- Consider logistic challenges for parents based upon zoning or specific program attendance
- Consider where areas of growth will be in the future
- More access and opportunities for prek
- Resource teachers need space, not just on a cart (arts, movement ed., etc.)
- Need privacy spaces for health issues
- Need rooms that have collaborative space
- I don't want them to close down schools. Small does not mean bad, small equals community.

Questions

- Why is there a discrepancy between previous plan to build/replace SES and the current study findings?
- Why have there not been any rebuilds of elementary schools in over 60 years?
- Are we using our space appropriately and wisely to meet needs?
- Are renovations on the table for schools that need more space?
- What's the difference between a renovation and an addition? Is one more costly?
- How do we determine the focus of a renovation – adding technology, classrooms, etc.?
- How much input will Community Conversations have in the final decisions?
- Does space at Bedford Hills Elementary include modular units when looking at capacity and utilization – are the modular units seen as temporary or permanent?

- Why is Perrymont rated “D” for the facility if they just renovated/added on?
- Could students be redirected to a nearby school while their zoned school is being renovated?
- Could we instead add additions/wings to create more space?
- What is the plan for district 2 ward 2?

Capacity/Useable Space:

- What are classroom sizes vs. capacity?
- How does technology impact functional capacity?
- How much space is “wasted” in the buildings?
- How do we define “usable” space?
- How often is functional capacity reviewed?
- For larger schools net usable space efficiency is low, but does that number include gyms, cafeterias, etc.?
- What is the impact of the “GO Center” on the functional capacity?

Rezoning:

- How was rezoning done as it was during the 70s?
- What is the funding for rezoning/upgrades? Will it be local? Will it be grants? Will it be tax increases?
- Can the federal mandate be reviewed and the census population be reviewed when making decisions of rezoning?
- What creates the difference between gross school and net usable space?

Considerations:

- Looking at the findings (finances, projected enrollment, conditions, etc.), what factors will be considered to determine which school(s) will close?
- Will the land surrounding the building be considered in keeping/closing the school?
- Will this affect the class sizes in a negative way?
- How do we maintain diversity and consider length of transportation?
- Can we consider why people are being drawn to private schools and what is private school enrollment?
- What impact will closing schools have on jobs?
- Is the RS Payne building historical in nature? Does it contain hazardous materials?
- How do we address accessibility?

Programming:

- Will potentially “closed” schools be repurposed for other division needs, such as pre-k?
- Could we provide alternative education programs or career tech programs?
- Are schools of innovation really innovative and how are they funded?
- Is year round schooling effective?
- Why did pre-k get pulled out of the schools?

City:

- What is the city doing to keep or attract people?
- Why are young people moving out after high school or college?

Housing:

- How are we accounting for temporary housing and apartment dwellers (not just homeowners)?
- Has “true” home ownership been explored?

Data:

- What are the years for the population data?
- Were COVID impacts considered in the 21-22 data in terms of enrollment changes?
- How do schools for innovation numbers impact enrollment?
- What is the projected timeline for decrease in enrollment?
- How are projections made? Where do the numbers come from? How much will projections “weigh” in the final decision?
- How is the LCS Virtual Academy affecting these numbers?

Task 2: Facilities Condition

Comments/Feedback

Spacing in Schools:

- functional capacity of HES
- Spaces for other services, gym
- Width of hallways
- smaller class sizes and schools for innovation
- an assistant principal (space)
- Building a smaller (specialty and office)
- Flow of traffic – parking needed

Bringing up to Code:

- Look at cost to bring up to code
- ADA compliance

Condition of Schools:

- Showing their age
- Windows leaking (need to be fixed)
- Heating and A/C not working
- Trailers (are a disaster)
- Roof leaking (need to be fixed)
- Schools need to be fresh and inviting

Environmental Conditions:

- Attention to air quality, HVAC (ECG)
- Classroom environmental conditions impact learning. Eg. Restroom, temperature fluctuations, maintenance, lack of facilities (gyms, sinks, cafeteria)
- Any findings that would affect health and safety of buildings
- Hazardous materials in older buildings
- Air filtration systems needed for cleaner air

Isolating Classes:

- Instructional impact of isolating classes (ex. 1 pre-k per school, PLCs, collaboration)
- Pre-K in every elementary school (zoned) or one city-wide Pre-K (could help with space)
- New schools provide ability to make up grades to facilities, technology, spacing, gymnasiums and theaters.

- Need to provide space for growing programs; preschool consider growth in population of students in 3-5 year old range.

Every School to have an Innovation:

- CTE
- Journalism
- Theater
- Government

Community Schools an Option:

- Loss of community school could people to buy into those districts

Repairs to Schools:

- What is the break-even point between maintenance and upkeep vs. new construction?

Trailers & Pod Usage:

- Trailers (are a disaster)Roof leaking (need to be fixed)

Gyms/Kitchens:

- Not having full kitchens
- Gyms are needed for schools

Staffing:

- Recess needs/staff to student ratio

Prefer “using what we have and making it better” vs. new construction:

- Concern that old buildings but do we really need to get rid of them
- Temporary consolidation

Questions

- If buildings had been renovated on schedule...they would not be in their condition. Is there an opportunity to revisit renovation needs?
- Is new school more cost effective?
- Transient rate
- Is 80% ok?
- What is the role of “schools for innovation” in the future?
- Will schools meet the needs of special education (sensory rooms, etc)?
- What are the implications for the teachers, staff, and administrators?
- Options: how will teachers, staff be assigned if schools consolidate?
- How can parents advocate for the schools they love?
- How will rezoning happen?
 - Demographic study for each zone
- How is the age of the building determined?
- Who does property assessment?
- How do you grade schools? What are the standards for conditions?
- What will pre-k look like as a division?

- Go back to local buildings or keep at a larger school like Hutcherson?
- How about “primary” schools? PreK-2, 3-5
- C – “lowest capacity utilization”?
- Is the economic impact of closing a school(s) being taken into account?
- Where does the money come from?
- What happens to the staff?
- What is the City debt ratio? Will it allow for a new school?

Additional Information Needed

- What are surrounding towns doing, what can we learn? (i.e. farming, community garden)
- What additional information do you need?
 - Partnership between city council and school
- Who makes the decision as to which schools will be repaired/remodeled/rebuilt? City council or LCS?
- What is the criteria for “grades?”
- Is it cost effective to make our current schools better or to build new?
- What will pre-k look like as a division?
 - Go back to local buildings or keep at a larger school like Hutcherson?
- How about “primary” schools? PreK-2, 3-5
- C – “lowest capacity utilization”?
- Is the economic impact of closing a school(s) being taken into account?
- Where does the money come from?
- Details around how the assessments was calculated
- How does the upkeep cost vary from lower rated school to higher rated cost?

Task 3: Educational Programming

Comments/Feedback

- Parents, teachers, admin – lead the conversations for programming as a focus instead of just the buildings
- More options for students to explore
- Cross-disciplinary (inquiry based) cross-curricular
- Active learning (outdoor)
- Year round schedule conflicting with other schools
- Small class sizes
- Consistency and equity between schools (Ex. Opportunities, access, safety)

Considerations:

- Art rooms with kilns
- Dedicated space for music and art program space in elementary for orchestra and band
- Violin and music combined (Suzuki method)
- Violin as part of resource schedule
- Language classes at elementary level
- All elementary schools need gyms and kitchens
- Food service – green house, gardens
 - Quality

- Bring back kitchens
- How many kitchens do we need
- Community partnerships
- Staffing major positions equitable
- Alt. ed. School to house all levels (community school)
- Elementary transition program – separate and isolated
- Behavior & trauma needs – space needed
- Plan for Pre-K programming for all (3 and 4 year olds)
- Classroom management skills needed
- Focus on physical space to do right by kids
- Base furniture size on students
- Placement of areas of building
- Plan – exit/entry – use of space
- Plan – safety design
- Plan – zones – there would be less school change with larger schools
- Can the building offer in building programming on rainy days
- Prioritize kitchens/gyms
 - Offer better lunches
- Well rounded students
- Find designers that know modern educational design
- Flexible seating
- Use student feedback
- Flexible furniture – for mobility and to accommodate the needs of different students – sizes, ages
- Float the innovation!! All schools have specialized programs!
- More year round school options
- Media centers with new technology and innovative practices (ie. 3D printers)
- Outdoor learning space
 - Natural light, fresh air, nature
- Cultural arts for all – space/availability – after school
- Primary schools – more PreK dispersed throughout city
- Is it essential to have a stand alone gym?
- Areas for not only building growth but program growth.
- Does every school need a kitchen/gym/etc?
- What plan is in the best interest of our students, faculty and community? (cost aside)
- Secure/safe entrances (vestibule) for visitors should be considered.
- Possible adjustments needed to make safety updates prior to conclusion of this facility study. (ex. Stairwells at RSP)
- Year long schools can feed families more consistently and allow students to get back on track more quickly (after shorter breaks)
- Food service – Wow! (kitchen situation)
- Grading criteria for ed. suitability scores? (comparing?) (weighted similarly?) Rubric used? (more data would be helpful)
- Primary – K-2nd – upper elementary 3rd-5th grades
- Having a daycare on site at schools.
 - Assist with childcare onsite would assist with teacher retention and staff retention.
- We need accessibility (all buildings)
- Build up the downtown area

- Need rezoning

Questions

- Are primary elementary schools on the table as an option? (PK-2, 3-5)?
- Considerations for attendance zones?
 - Transportation?
 - Mandated busing?
 - Future population growth?
- Where is money coming from?
- How to teach nutrition in schools?
- Who will make the final decision?
- Wifi/internet access in neighborhoods if schools close down?
- Alt. ed. – how will it be impacted?
- How can we be flexible with renovations to allow for changing trends in technology? Ensure we are not boxing a school in to being dependent on a particular type of tech?
- How will virtual learning impact school needs?
- Is educational suitability score a good indicator of what is needed for students?

Additional Information Needed

- What schools have satellite kitchens? And no gyms?

Task 4: Propose & Evaluate 3 Options

Comments/Feedback

- Professional should look at all aspects
- New state of the art schools would attract people to city
- New buildings would have state of the art technology
- Buildings more attractive to community (branding)
- Larger schools not necessarily better
 - 700-800 elementary schools too large
- Students served now are different than when the schools were built. The needs are different now.
- Parents don't care about scores as much as experience.
- Spend money that has longevity
 - Option 1 – May be too expensive for city
 - Option 2 – good for innovation using smaller schools and having one larger school
 - Option 3 – something has to change – costs of all the schools – repair, renovation – too much
- As a parent let's focus on potential option #3
- Each option would have a different TIMELINE. (This is too broad.)

Zoning:

- Attendance zones
- Condition of schools in zone
- It's necessary no matter the option

- Desegregation Act compliance

Considerations:

- Bring things up to code – if you can't, then need new buildings.
- Upper elementary and a lower elementary school
- Eliminate leases
- Additions for schools with modular
- Consolidation is necessary
- Equity issues should drive decision
- Space for students who have special needs
- Reduce the displacement of students while doing renovations/builds?
- 911 to expand alternative ed.
- Strengthen community partnerships to assist with construction.

Impact:

- On community
- On “community”
- On staffing
- Family workers/wrap around resources
 - Community resources (access and equitable)

Questions

- The city owns the school buildings. What say does the community/school division have?
- Zoning is based on the Desegregation Act. Are we currently in compliance with this?
- What is the projected maintenance cost per building? (BandAid issue)
- Will one new school solve all issues? Can we truly afford more than one school?
- How will closing a small school with quality education due to small classes receive the same quality education as a larger class size?
- Where can mega schools be placed?
- What will determine the location of new construction? (acreage? demographics?)
- Will the city designate new land for school?
- Does the neighborhood model meet the community's needs?
- If you build larger capacity schools, how do you “create” that sense of community?
- What does an empty building do to a neighborhood/property value?
- What will be done for students and families to help mitigate the effect of closing a school?
- Why is 850 the magic number?
- What will happen to schools during building phase?
- Can building expansions occur?
- How do the costs impact the residents of the city of Lynchburg?
- Are some renovations crucial to the health and safety of individuals in the school?
- We need clarity of “mix larger and smaller elementary schools”
 - What happens to “community” if schools close?
 - What happens to class sizes if buildings combine?
- Why is there not an option to keep all the schools and renovate?
- Can we consider PreK kids going to their zoned school?

- Does a new building represent/foster the most quality education?
- If consolidation happens, could PreK – 2 and 3-5 be at different building sites depending on population?
- Why have some schools been renovated and others not?

Additional Information Needed

- Exploring pre-K numbers and access
- Need more demographic information
- What is the number of students in non-public schools
- Why are people leaving? (How do we get the “why?”)
- Adding private school numbers.
- What are the thoughts and options on redistricting
- Lynchburg is booming – there should be more revenue.
- Cost vs. opportunity comparison
- What is the data about students in large vs. small schools?
- Fiscal estimates for the three choices
- Research on how this affects students and staffing
- Need to see geography overlay of school
- City to designate new land for school

Next Steps

Analyze feedback and develop areas of focus	End of June
Collaboration with school and city officials to determine answers	Mid-July
Update the document	Mid-July
Communicate updates to all stakeholders	End of July