

**Rockford Public Schools, District 205  
Facilities Master Plan 2025 – 2030  
Educator Workshop  
Meeting Minutes**

**College and Career Education Center  
Early Childhood and Elementary Schools  
Tuesday, October 10, 2023**

Leanne Meyer-Smith opened the meeting at 3:45 p.m. and the DLR Group introduced themselves.

Leane Meyer-Smith, K-12 Studio Leader/Principal  
Laura Beth Cochran, Architect/Principal  
Dr. Tim Shimp – Educational Learning Designer/Associate

The meeting began with an ice breaker activity. Participants then introduced themselves.

Present were:

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Position</b></u>	<u><b>School</b></u>
Amanda Lenox	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher	I.B. Conklin
Laura Schult	K-12 Fine Arts Curriculum Dean	Administration
Carla Mayor	PreK Teacher	Fairview EC
Erin Reid	Special Education Teacher	Spring Creek
Kelli Girgradin	PreK Teacher	Summerdale EC
Nancy Kuhl	Special Education Teacher	Beyer EC
Brett Vosburgh	Director of Special Education	Administration
Melanie Dalton	Principal	Brookview
Dawn Granath	Assistive Tech Specialist	Administration
Erika Powers	PreK Teacher	Summerdale EC
Ashley Sjostrom	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher	Brookview
Sara Bruce	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher	Riverdahl
Laurie Davis-DeVries	Early Childhood Teacher	Montessori
Miriam Ramirez	Kindergarten Dual Language	Barbour
Heather Psaltis	Executive Director of Schools	Administration
Desi Wrightsel	Principal	Nashold EC
Leslie Hamilton	Early Childhood Teacher	Montessori
Elizabeth Hand	Instructional Coach	McIntosh
Susan Uram	Ed Tech Director	Administration
John Schmelzer	Principal	Ellis
Heidi Dettman	Chief Academic Officer	Administration
Greg Brown	Chief Financial Officer	Administration
Michael Phillips	Chief Operations Officer	Administration

The group's goals and aspirations for attending the meeting included:

Kindergarten playtime	Create space for staff and students
Looking for cohesiveness	How to fix the buildings
Give ideas, if possible	Bring change to buildings for better environment
Teachers' voices heard	More inclusive and safer environment
Representing Building	Voice for West side of Rockford
Give input	Here to listen & get motivation
Other ideas	Something to catch students' attention
Looking for positive input	Offer input for self-contained education

DLR Group's presentation included participant engagement opportunities throughout.

### **Why change?**

Saturation rate is when something has reached 25% of the U.S. population. The timeline for saturation is happening quicker every day. We are currently preparing students for jobs that do not exist today. Yet 80% of all businesses will still need that human aspect.

A video was shown of work being completed by robots/AI intelligence. Participants were then asked to discuss at their tables how that video made them feel.

#### *Feedback included:*

You can change the classrooms, but you also need to give support to teachers to learn how to use the tools and spaces effectively.

Rather than having the kids just memorize information, because they can get information on their phones and computers, we need to teach how to problem solve. How to trouble shoot the issue and figure it out using tools such as phones or iPads for the math, communication, etc.

From the teachers' lens, at the Early Education and Elementary level, they need spaces and furniture for adults to work and collaborate in.

### **What is our future? Pathways and Academies**

Staff were asked to discuss at their tables what pathways and academies are needed in the next ten years, and what barriers stand in the way.

*Feedback included:*

We seem to be forgetting the human element – we need to keep that in the classrooms.

Will there be a place for the Life Skills kids?

We still need to broaden the opportunities and look at them every year. CAO Heidi Dettman responded that the District does review annually and leans on labor market data to determine pathways. The culinary and hospitality pathways were recently added.

Offer Internships.

Schools are islands – we need vertical paths between Early Education to Elementary to Secondary.

It would be nice to have Highschool teachers visit Early Childhood to see where the littles fit in.

## **A Day in the Life of a Student at Rockford Public Schools**

Small groups were asked to develop a student persona based on a typical RPS student.

They were then asked to graph how much time is currently spent in a typical school day on specific categories such as large group, small group, collaboration, active, creating, presenting, experiencing, inquiring, evaluating.

*Feedback included:*

Lots of large group time – direct instruction. Kids tend to sit longer in large groups as they progress through the grade levels.

The new curriculum is very leader directed.

Time is lost in transition between activities/classrooms.

Approximately 10% of a day is wasted with teachers dealing with behavior issues and transitions between classrooms and activities.

*DLR showed classroom layout options using the FINNS (flexibility, individualization, Naturalness and Nature, Stimulation) model.*

**F**lexibility – Furniture for a variety of postures.

**I**ndividualization – Student center design that allows them to make choices

**N**ature and **N**aturalization – Daylight, acoustics, temperature control, lighting

**S**timulation – Active corridors

Currently in our schools, the emphasis is on grades and scores – sit and get. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the emphasis should be on mastery of skills.

*Feedback included:*

One size doesn't fit all. Example – two new schools. Constance Lane and Cherry Valley use spaces differently. Is there an opportunity for a focus group from each of the two new schools to give input as to what is working and what is not working?

Pod concept is not working – does not contain sound, set up at odd angles.

Walls that replaced Pods in several buildings are currently too thin and you hear the other classrooms.

We will need training on how to operate in new spaces – expectations and procedures.

Kids in our District don't get a lot of space of their own outside of school. Kids want something that they can call their own. Is it possible to have individual desks that can be moved into modules and small groups?

Need adult friendly chairs. Need extra chairs in classrooms so students do not have to sit on wobbly chairs or other places if they prefer to sit in a regular chair.

Concerns about controlling the littles in large open spaces.

Oddly shaped tables do not accommodate four students doing work on paper – not enough space per student.

*Small groups were asked to discuss and graph a day in the life of a future RPS student, if there were no barriers.*

*Feedback included:*

Less large group time was a common theme among the groups.

More time creating, writing and presenting – creates ownership of their learning.

Need more active time – more fresh air.

More combining of categories within the small groups – small group/collaboration, presenting/evaluating, creating/collaborating, inquiring/experiencing

*Barriers that need to go away:*

Curriculum is too teacher driven

Mix age levels (as in Montessori classrooms)

Smaller class rosters

Sinks in classrooms

More bathrooms in buildings and bathrooms in every Early Childhood classroom

Spaces need to be safe

Space for storage – outside of the classroom

Kindergarten classrooms should be closest to music, art, gym, cafeteria

Dr. Shimp thanked everyone for their time and participation and asked that they answer three questions on a handout before they left. The meeting ended at 5:45 p.m.