

Rockford Public Schools, District 205
Facilities Master Plan 2025 – 2030
Program Meeting – Student Support Services
Meeting Minutes

Teams Meeting
Monday, February 12, 2024

DLR Group members present:

Korey White, AIA, pK-12 Planning Leader/Senior Associate
Keri Vansant, AIA, Project Manager/Senior Associate

Rockford School District Staff Present:

Mike Phillips, Chief Operations Officer
Greg Brown, Chief Financial Officer
Ryan Nachreiner – Auburn HS Principal
Kimberly Nelson – Executive Director of Early Childhood
Hillary Cook-Harris – Director of Early Childhood
Alvena Ivy, Certified Director of Curriculum
Alla Harnish, Director of Bilingual
Jennifer Lawrence, Chief of Student Services
Don Rundall, Jefferson HS Principal
Andria Mitchell, Executive Director of Curriculum
Amy Gannon, Executive Director of Academics
Blake Hand, Executive Director of Curriculum
Heidi Dettman, Chief Academic Officer
Ryan Brown, Director of Bilingual
Scott Sevey, CCR Director
Gus Carter, Guildford HS Principal
Adam Cengiz, Secondary Special Program Principal
Sarah Brenner, IB Principal
Cory Shrank, Flinn MS Principal
Ben Stover, RESA MS Principal

Ms. White opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. She explained that the goal of the meeting was to talk through different strategies for student support services at each cohort level and how that translates into facility needs, Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle School, and High School. The outcome for this portion of the planning process is to identify those baseline needs for each cohort, identifying approximate square footage and some of the spatial qualities of those spaces.

Ms. White asked the participants to introduce themselves.

Ms. White asked what those student support services are and what staff this includes. We realize that everyone probably defines it a little differently, but we also want to understand what some of the commonalities are between the different areas. I should preface that this is going to be a Q&A and we need to interact.

Ms. Vansant commented that the group is free to unmute themselves and jump in. We are just making sure that we are informed in the process when determining your needs for student support services at each grade level, pre-K through high school.

Ms. Nelson: I'm not sure that I'm understanding exactly, because I might be thinking about this very differently. For us (Early Childhood), it would be environmental supports. When I look at this from a three-year old or four-year old level, the environment itself is a support. What we need are classrooms that have the space to support five or six interest or play centers with a teacher, paraprofessional working in those spaces. Sinks are a must in every classroom in Early Childhood for washing hands, things like that. As far as other supports in the building, just like all the other levels, we would have staff that would provide special education services. So, office space for resource teachers, speech and language, other related services, a space for teams to do testing if needed, children meeting spaces, or for conferences with families, parents. If I was dreaming big, space for teachers to collaborate with desks and things like that. Desks are not necessary in a classroom, the space for Early Childhood is to be more child related. Obviously, if we can't do that, that's fine. Other supports would be playgrounds that support the size of the child, so it needs to meet our level of student. Gross motor is a huge part of our daily routine. If we can't go outside, we need spaces large enough to hold probably two to three classrooms in an Early Childhood center. If we're running with twenty or more classrooms, we would need gross motor time every single day. Again, the environment itself is a support, so one or two large spaces for that. Is that what you're looking for?

Ms. White: I think for right now we are really trying to understand, when we talk about spaces for student supports, what are those? Is it small group rooms, space for psychologists? So yes, that would be it, because the classrooms themselves are the support.

Ms. Nelson: We need spaces for Special Education team members there. For my folks we have a birth to three home visiting program that is homeless. At the moment they don't have a spot for the professionals that do home visits. They don't serve the children birth to three in our buildings, they serve them in the homes. However, they need office space, administrator space, and conference meeting space. They need a dedicated storage area for all the materials, and a place to clean those materials. So that attached to an Early Childhood center, or something like that would be something to keep in mind. I'm sure I'm missing something, but at least conversations started for Early Childhood.

Ms. White: Thank you for starting us off. How about those who are on here from an elementary perspective when we're talking about student support services? What sort of services and staff does that include at the elementary level? It's okay if you're repeating

anything that has just been shared. Jen Lawrence, who represents student services, do you want to go first?

Ms. Lawrence: For the Special Ed point of view, we need spaces for our related service staff. In elementary, we would need office space, and that can be combined office space with psychologists, social workers, speech/language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. We also need therapy spaces that could be individual or up to six students. Kim already alluded to this, but a conference area where we would have interactive technology for parent meetings so the parents could either attend in person or remotely. That's really it for special education.

As far as discipline for elementary, again we need spaces for therapy. That would be with potentially a behavior intervention professional or a member of the MTSS team, a behavior coach, or an MTSS Dean to meet with individuals or small to large groups. The large group would probably be no more than twelve students at a time.

Ms. Gannon: I would say the same thing. There are Title I teachers, Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavioral specialists we should consider space for if they are working with five to eight students, if they are working with Tier 3. But also, their own location and home for some of the behavior interventionists, or if we have outside consultants who provide some kind of therapy. There really isn't a closed space that's private for them to do that to provide some of those supports. Some of the buildings have a calm classroom, or a Restore, Reset, Refocus classroom. That would be something to look at, how that classroom is set up where students are able to regulate or dysregulate their emotions and get back on track. That is a space that some buildings have had difficulty acquiring or being able to set up because there is just no more space left in the room.

Ms. Harnish: We need those things that have already been mentioned. We need to make sure the classrooms have all the right things for learning approaches for instruction centers in elementary and for secondary, just to ensure we have place for the materials in the classroom because they use both English and Spanish materials. To make it harmonic to accommodate those students at an appropriate age level.

Ms. White: Alla, in addition to the classrooms, are there office spaces or smaller rooms that you need to support, in addition to the classroom space, or is it just all happening within the classroom space? And is there adequate space within those classrooms?

Ms. Harnish: The teachers need to collaborate with the faculty members, the same with the students that have IEP's or learning disabilities, they need to be accommodated as well. It's nothing different than the others, they overlap.

Mr. Ryan Brown: Can I add something really quick? The majority of elementary ESL is pull out, so they would need a space to bring students to.

Ms. Vansant: How many students, small group, medium group?

Mr. Ryan Brown: Small group, I would say at max ten. It varies by site, but I would say that is a good number.

Ms. Vansant: So, if you had several small to medium group sized spaces that could be flexible, and used by the different support services, do you think that would be beneficial, or do they need to be dedicated in any way?

Mr. Ryan Brown: I think a shared space could work for sure, but obviously take into consideration the specific needs of EL instruction, it is all instruction.

Ms. Vansant: Okay, thank you.

Ms. White: Any other perspectives for elementary school before we move to middle? Okay, let's go ahead with the same question for middle school. What is it meaning when you say student support services and what are the types of spaces that support that need, in addition to the staff that would be using those spaces?

Mr. Stover: I guess I am the only representative from the middle school. So, everything listed for Special Ed, and then we have a lot of types of family liaisons at middle school level. As mentioned, BIS's, Parent Liaisons, specialists, all of those positions need office space. I would say that definitely the Behavior Interventionalists need room to do small group interventions. I think most of what a Parent Liaison does can be done in an office space if they had a private office. But a lot of times they are kind of in a pool.

Ms. White: So, is there generally one Parent Liaison per school?

Mr. Stover: I have four.

Ms. White: Okay, do they each need their own office or is it a shared office space?

Mr. Stover: It is best if they have their own office, if they have to share, they have to share. But when they are trying to meet with kids and learn possibly personal and private things, while they are not necessarily counseling, they may still find out things. They are asking about their home life and about personal stuff that kids are less likely to share in a group office space.

Ms. White: Okay, very helpful information. Thank you. Just to be sure we caught everything you said, same for Special Education as for elementary, and then Parent Liaisons need office space, and Behavior Interventionalists need small group spaces. Did we miss anything?

Mr. Stover: We have counselors who have offices and small group spaces as well. I'm not sure if you're looking at things that are newer or what's always been a part of the middle school environment.

Ms. White: I think we're trying to understand, holistically, what are the functions that when we're talking about student support, that if we are to ensure that every facility had these as a baseline, what would those be.

Mr. Stover: What I would say, what you might do, is look at each school. Maybe my school uses four Parent Liaisons, and another school may not have that, but they may have more Behavior Interventionalists. It really does not matter which one is which, from your perspective, because it's this many offices. So as far as staffing positions that need offices, we have Assistant Principals, we have counselors, we have all the SPED things, we have Behavioral Interventionalists, one attendance specialist, Parent Liaisons, Title One teachers, and I know that elementary has Instructional Coaches that are going to need offices. Any flexible space we can pull kids into to do small group interventions is helpful.

Ms. White: So, sized to hold five to eight people? (Yes) Great, very helpful.

Ms. Lawrence: Can I add one thing to that? For the middle schools we definitely need an in-school suspension room, and it would really be nice if that room were attached to a smaller therapy room.

Mr. Stover: And had a bathroom.

Ms. Lawrence: Or somehow a suite of rooms that you could move students through internally instead of putting them out through a hallway.

Mr. Phillips: Ben, when we are talking about in-school suspension, who many students are we talking?

Mr. Stover: I would argue we need two in-school suspension rooms. We need one for in-school suspension and we need one for reset and restore. The one for in-school suspension needs to be a full-size classroom. Even though it may only be sixteen students, they need a lot of space in between them to be able to spread out and also get up and move around in there as needed. A reset/restore room would be significantly smaller with five to six kids at most.

Ms. Lawrence: I would say just the opposite of that in terms of size. Refocus/Reset/Restore would have a couple of different areas where the students would move around to, would not be a seated all-day program, and in-school suspension would need to be a kind of isolated type of classroom for no more than fifteen students. Reset/Refocus/Restore is really built around fifteen students as well.

Ms. White: A follow up question on the smaller therapy room, would that be a small space with one adult working with one student, or does that need to support a different combination of people?

Ms. Lawrence: That would be a support of a different combination of people. A small group could be six to eight students. It would be nice if it were big enough so students could separate

and work in small groups within that small group. Just enough space that you could divide as needed. Some flexible seating for kids to be able to separate.

Ms. White: Okay, great. Anything else on middle school?

Mr. Stover: I know our Registrar needs to have space, that's one of our clerical, they would need to have space for themselves and all the student files that need to be locked up in there – same office is ideal. I know at RESA we are sorely lacking storage space. We have open Sci-Ed that has a lot of curricular materials and a lot of things, and we really do not have a good place to store all of those things, because they may be used first quarter and not again until next year. Storage is something to think about as a whole building, but then also within classrooms.

Ms. White: Moving on to high school.

Mr. Nachreiner: When it comes to educating the whole child, having those counseling support services, and a MTSS spot, I call it a war room, or a meeting room where we can talk about kids. We could have our social workers, our counselors, our MTSS team in one space so it is easier to collaborate and easier to have conversations about kids. I think in the five-year plan, they named it a wellness clinic or something like that. Just so everyone is in that same area so that when a kid's in distress they have one spot to go for help, they are not running around to six different areas to try and get that help. Another thing, we are a unique building as we have more parent liaisons than any of the other buildings and they are all kind of stuck in little cubes here. Being able to put them in a space where they could pull groups and do small group restorative circles, working on social interactions, peer monitoring, peer leadership type activities would help. Gus, Don, do you have anything you want to add in, or do you want me to keep talking?

Mr. Rundall: I agree with everything Ryan has said and I agree with Ben. We do not have a lot of area for any type of private intervention for kids. I think the five to eight range was perfect. I have a Tier 2/Tier 3 Intervention Specialist who needs to narrate with groups and right now she switches every hour to an unused area. Sometimes it is accommodating, sometimes it is not.

Ms. White: And would that still be in the five to eight range?

Mr. Rundall: Yes. I would like to have some type of area where we could do teacher training. I get it when we do the whole building, that's different. I have a Tier 2/Tier 3 Intervention Specialist who needs to meet with six teachers on this strategy, a place where they can get together. Every room, pretty much every hour, is used here so we don't have a room to do that. Sometimes they go to the library, but the library is a public place where there are a lot of people around. That is what I have.

Ms. White: I have a question on that training area, or that space to support that. If we could envision a space that would have the right hook-ups, the technology, and the table space to accommodate an instructor and six teachers, is that a similar space in size where you would

see a Parent Liaison pulling groups of parents together? Could that be the same space, or would there be an overlap in use so they would need to be separate?

Mr. Rundall: I would say that could be the same space, we would just have to schedule the stuff.

Ms. White: Others on high school? Are there any needs that relate to bilingual for the high schools? Are the needs the same as in the middle schools?

Mr. Rundall: I'm the bilingual high school. We do not have any more classrooms, we're tight right now. Our bilingual population is increasing day by day so eventually I am going to need more classrooms to house all of these students.

Mr. Stover: Same, with the bilingual middle school and we are just overcrowded. I do not know if zoning factors into this, but overall, it eats up our capacity quickly. We have constantly got new students coming in.

Mr. Rundall: I think along with bilingual, it would be the same need. I have a bilingual tutor that comes in and just pulls them into the hallway or pulls them aside in the room. If I had another area where she could pull a few kids and work with them, that would be great.

Ms. White: Small group spaces could work with that?

Mr. Hand: There have been some discussions in our building about a large number of newcomers coming into our buildings, so whether that is in existing buildings to support that, it seems like they are coming from all over the world with some really difficult circumstances, before we just start putting them into classrooms.

Ms. White: Now that we have heard from each of the cohorts, anything else before we move on to the next set of questions?

Mr. Rundall: I have one thing. I would love to have a parent area in the high school. I say that with the hope that we get more parents in the high school. If the parents come in, it is because it is a discipline issue. I would love to be able to house parents for a listening session, have a parent room with different resources for them, as long as we are talking space.

Ms. White: I have a question about that Don. How many people would you see that serving?

Mr. Rundall: Ten to fifteen I think would be ideal. We are an academy setting, so we could take a few from each academy.

Ms. White: Would the resources be physical, or digital as well?

Mr. Rundall: I think it would be both.

Ms. Vansant: I'm assuming the same administrative, BIS, Title One teachers and things like that are also appearing at the high school level.

Ms. White: This is a hard question; we are just going to put it out there. What would be the must haves, the top priority when you think about these spaces? And we can go cohort by cohort again. If there is something that is critical, let us know what that might be. I am going to go back to Early Childhood.

Ms. Cook-Harris: I think Kim talked about the size of the learning environment and that type of thing. As far as the extras, I think the critical is the common space, especially for our home visitors. That is with everything else, those other rooms, those therapy rooms, and that type of thing. I think, like everyone else, those will go right to the top.

Ms. White: Thank you. How about elementary school level? And I know we are coming from a few different directions, SPED, Bilingual, therapy, behavioral, and I'm not going to make you choose between each other, each can feel free to share.

Ms. Brenner: I would say for us, we would need space at elementary's for interventions, whether that be academic, or like Jen spoke on, our Reset/Refocus/Restore room. Right now, my building has two classrooms, but as we continue to increase sections and they're full-sized classrooms with multiple adults in those spaces, but in order for us to deliver Tier 3 interventions, we need a space for that. And like she said, a space large enough, not a small area so that when students need to calm down, they can walk or pace and have space within the classroom. So, for me, I think those would be the two that are most prioritized.

Ms. White: Any other perspectives? And we would love to hear if you support the other perspectives.

Mr. Hand: Sarah is on point with that. Also, I think making sure that as strands fluctuate from year to year, based on enrollment, so if you have two strands one year and you're able to have that space for intervention, but then you have three strands or four the next year, it comes at the cost of the space for the intervention. So, we really need to decide what is our max and go with that to have that intervention space included, and if there is a year or two where it is empty, it will be used for other purposes, I can assure you. But it cannot come at the cost of doing intervention. I know a lot of schools struggle with that.

Ms. Lawrence: We do have to have separate, private therapy rooms for one-to-one support for Special Education.

Ms. White: What about at the middle school level? Again, the question is what are the must haves or priorities of all the spaces that you have shared?

Mr. Stover: If I were going to pick a priority, it would probably be classroom space. To have enough classrooms because I do not. I am doing better this year because I'm having more

teachers teaching in overload, but if we were fully staffed, we wouldn't have enough space. Also places to do intervention.

Ms. Lawrence: Korey, one other thing that I need to say is at all levels, and ADA accessibility, we need to have a bathroom that maybe has one stall where you could have a Hoyer lift. Whether it is needed at that time, or whether it needs to be retrofitted, so we are not shipping students outside of their zones based on bathrooms.

Mr. Schrank: I have rooms right now that are extremely large. They are old shop rooms because Flinn used to be Jefferson High School when it was built. I would like to possibly make classrooms equal in size, maybe put in a partition wall, obviously you would need to get out of the areas as far as fire safety, but I have really large rooms that could be made into two.

Ms. White: I saw in the chat room from Ryan Brown, that for elementary ESL the rooms to be quiet to delivering ESL services. I assume that is probably a need for any of the therapy or one on one rooms. Moving on to the High School level, priorities and must haves there.

Mr. Nachreiner: I believe that space where we can do peer mentoring, peer interactions, the peer conversations in my setting is the greatest need. Then move into the individual office space.

Mr. Rundall: I would say that my greatest need is the small intervention rooms and then shortly behind that would be the classrooms for the increasing number of bilingual students.

Ms. White: Ryan and Don, just one quick question. We talked quite a bit around in-school suspension areas in the middle schools. Is there any need for that at high school or are you fine when it comes to spaces to support that?

Mr. Nachreiner: It all depends on how the next two weeks of our conversations go.

Ms. White: Okay.

Ms. Lawrence: To answer your questions, I anticipate the same model as middle school where you have a larger area for Refocus/Reset/Restore type of a group and then a smaller space for in-school suspension that just looks different. Kids aren't going to get up and move around as much in in-school suspension. Again, it would be really nice if those were connected to student services positions like a BIS, school counselor, related service staff, etc.

Ms. White: Thank you.

Mr. Rundall: With that being said, I have an ALE room that's small, but I don't have an area for the larger room as of right now.

Mr. Nachreiner: Jen, would this be the appropriate time to talk about the space for the Tier 3B onsite? If we're talking about building a Tier 3B placement, an adaptive learning placement for

all four high schools, just like their own little shop, two classrooms or one classroom, or what ever it is going to get built into, it would definitely be a need where it is accessible from outside the school, bathrooms either inside or outside the area, water, if it's a half-day program, basically a school within a school. A classroom that we call a school within a school.

Ms. Lawrence: It would be nice if it was near the cafeteria for access that way. We are looking at probably thirty students that would primarily be of individual learning, but with some collaborative space, like a small group type space where students could collaborate together and/or with a teacher.

Ms. White: And you said this is a discussion at every high school?

Ms. Lawrence: Correct. Every high school is looking at this type of programming for next school year. I do anticipate that potentially being two classrooms over time, but that would be a few years down the road.

Ms. White: Those two classrooms supporting 30 kids in total?

Mr. Nachreiner: Eventually that would be 30 kids per classroom, right Jen?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes, did I say it backwards? Thirty per room, so a normal-sized classroom.

Ms. White: Okay, then up to sixty. The next question is, and this may vary between the cohorts, but as far as how these spaces are looking, you've shared with us some of the adjacency needs, but we're curious if these spaces are best dispersed throughout the school or consolidated to one area, perhaps near the main entry, etc. We know there will be some instances that we will have to adapt it to what your building is, but when we think about the functionality of it, that is what we're really trying to get to with this question. Is it better for the student's need if these are dispersed throughout the building so that it may reduce the time it takes for students to get to some of these intervention spaces or are they best consolidated so you can have as much adult support surrounding the grouping of spaces as much as possible.

Ms. Lawrence: I just want to say that there is a really clever idea that is going on at Woodstock High School, the new high school. Amy Gannon, you have probably seen this, they have offices outside of the cafeteria with collaborative space right there, so all of the student support services are right off the cafeteria. It is like a central hub, not necessarily in the center of their building, but it feels like the center of the building when you're in that space.

Ms. White: Any other thoughts?

Ms. Harnish: For newcomers especially, it would be great if they were all located together to sort of have this community because it's a new environment for these children.

Ms. White: We have talked about ISS and the Reset/Refocus/Restore as a suite of spaces. Beyond those being in a suite, is there an adjacency that makes sense, like near the main office, near an exterior entrance, or does it not matter?

Ms. Lawrence: Near the cafeteria would be nice, near support services, so students may fluctuate in and out of those classrooms based on need.

Ms. Vansant: The intervention spaces, I know a couple of your newer elementary models are distributed, does it make sense to have those small group spaces for varied use distributed around the school so they can be checked out for whatever use might be needed throughout the day?

Ms. Brenner: I think it would kind of depend on school size. Because I have been at a large building and I've been here in a smaller strand school, so it depends. You don't want kids walking super far down, but also generally, being by the office might not be the best place, but it might, depending on the floor plan. Is it a multi-level building? Some of the schools have gone to not a physical classroom, but more of an open classroom pod like concept within each grade level outside of where your classrooms are. That is nice because it could be used utilized in a multi fashion for resource, title one, etc. I am not sure that could be universally applied, but that other kind of concept I just talked about would be helpful also, but some of the standard older buildings weren't set up in that fashion.

Ms. White: Okay, very helpful, thank you. We heard in the chat that there is a need for certain spaces to be quiet, where they are delivering certain services. Are there any other general qualities around the space that is desired? This could be anywhere from lighting, types of lighting, acoustic privacy, visibility, or no visibility? Anything that comes to mind for some of these spaces that you've shared with us today?

Ms. Vansant: And it could be down to like colored lighting, control of dimming, changing color functions and thing like that as you start to get into things like sensorial spaces and behavioral intervention spaces, because it might help with that calming nature.

Ms. Lawrence: For the in-school suspension and the Reset/Refocus/Restore, the lighting would be important to not have the glaring overhead lights and have the opportunity to do some sensory with that room. Not necessarily sixty-four colors, but it would be nice to be able to dim.

Ms. Gannon: I would really love, and hopefully eventually, as these dialogues continue, to revisit Ryan's mentality around a wellness area and to be thoughtful on how we set that up for students who are in a range of emotions, whether that be feeling anxious, to regulating their emotions, overwhelmed, whatever the case may be. But I think that looks different for secondary than it does for elementary, and I just want to be thoughtful and think that would be awesome, if we want to shoot for the moon moment, around the supports around that area and then what does that look like aesthetically for an inviting environment for the student.

Ms. Mitchell: Can I just tag a thought on to that? Also, what does that look like culturally? Because state of wellness looks different culturally. So, for some students to regulate, it may be prayer, it may be something else culturally, so I think we are going to need to go at this with a culturally responsible lens when we're talking about that wellness area as well.

Ms. White: Thank you. We have time for maybe two more. From a facility perspective, what would you say is most inhibiting your ability to function well when it comes to student support services right now? Other than what we have already heard, we know classrooms and lack of intervention spaces, as well as a few other things. Is there anything we have not heard from you yet that you would like to share with us? From a spatial perspective, we understand there may be staffing issues or concerns, but from a facilities perspective. (Nothing additional).

Then the last question I have is work areas, are there any schools within your district that are great examples of good spaces that we could reference as we move forward with this process as it relates to either the Refocus/Reset/Restore rooms or intervention spaces, that sort of thing.

Mr. Nachreiner: I have a pretty good set up for an ISS room right now and for Refocus/Reset/Restore.

Ms. Brenner: I was going to say for those spaces for me, obviously Constance Lane is newer, and they are set-up more in the structure that I was saying for intervention supports to be outside of or near classroom. But one thing I did not mention, even for their supports, it needs to be setup in a secure fashion, so I think from a safety perspective, some of that can be added to more of our schools as well in some of these conversations that just aren't intervention related.

Ms. White: Thank you. Those are the questions we had for today. Thank you for your input and feedback. Is there anything else before we close and wrap up here?

Mr. Nachreiner: That wellness wing I was talking about, we have Room 100 that is kind of a bare bones start of it, so you can check that out and basically make it a bigger, more usable space.

Ms. White: Thank you all so much, we really appreciate it. We may be following up as we start to synthesize some of this, but I think we got what we needed from all of you today. I know you all are quite busy, so have a good rest of your week.

The meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.