



Criteria for Elementary Facility Option Development, Evaluation, and Recommendation

Endorsed by the Board of Education 8/12/24

The Wausau School Board of Education has designated an Elementary Facility Plan Citizen Task Force to develop, evaluate, and recommend one or two preferred elementary school facility options by the end of 2024, and advise whether the number of elementary schools in the District should be reduced and if so, then how, where, and when. Following Task Force input, the Board has endorsed the following criteria for the Task Force to use in fulfilling this charge.

The Board has determined that criterion #1 below has the highest priority and therefore should be reasonably satisfied with any facility option. The remaining criteria have equal weight. The goal is for facility options to satisfy as many other criteria as possible, but it will be unlikely that any option will excel against all other criteria.

1. **Fiscal Responsibility:** This criterion should consider building improvements, staffing requirements, and capital and operational costs relative to District financial constraints. The Board seeks to minimize deferred facility maintenance costs and solutions that would result in major capital expenses. Opportunities to repurpose or sell different buildings and sites no longer proposed as schools should be considered. Metrics for evaluating each facility option against this criterion may include:
 - a. "High", "medium", or "low" likely capital costs
 - b. "High", "medium", or "low" operating cost reduction
 - c. State and federal funding impact (e.g., Achievement Gap Reduction Program)
 - d. "More" or "fewer" bus routes
 - e. "High", "medium", or "low" opportunity for repurposing or sale of buildings or sites

2. **Efficient Building Utilization:** Current and projected enrollment should be reasonably balanced among our elementary schools, not substantially (i.e., more than 30%) below functional building capacities, and not above functional building capacities. These objectives should be accomplished without any assumed changes in the District's current class size policy, and without speculating on enrollment change too far into the future. Metrics for evaluating each facility option against this criterion may include:
 - a. Projected enrollment to building capacity, 2027
 - b. Projected enrollment to building capacity, 2035
 - c. Highlighting/counting schools with enrollment <70% of functional capacity



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3. **Maintain Educational Opportunities:** Extent to which the option provides a full and equal range of educational services and offerings across all standard elementary schools. This criterion should consider student enrollment and building capacities that support full staffing, and buildings designed and equipped as safe and modern learning environments. Metrics for evaluating each facility option against this criterion may include:
 - a. Standard classroom sizes and suitability for modern learning
 - b. Suitability of common and encore spaces in building
 - c. Site area for outdoor learning and recreation

4. **Minimize Impact on Students:** The number of students affected by any changes should be minimized to the extent practical, except that movements of too small of groups should also be minimized. Where students change schools, moves should be in appropriate groups (e.g., number of students, neighborhoods residing). Logical transitions to middle school should also be considered. Metrics for evaluating each facility option against this criterion may include:
 - a. Number of neighborhoods changing attendance areas
 - b. Number of students changing attendance areas
 - c. Smallest number of students moving from any one school
 - d. If a large block of students changes, do they all go together?
 - e. If applicable, percentage of students from one elementary school that may attend different middle schools

5. **Schools Close to Students:** Elementary school buildings should be close to where concentrations of students live, and where students can safely walk to school. Ease of access to schools for families with limited resources should be considered, including relationships to other local services including nearby wrap-around care providers. Metrics for evaluating each facility option against this criterion may include:
 - a. Percentages of students living within ½ mile (comfortable walk), 1 mile, and 2 miles (legal bussing threshold) from assigned elementary school
 - b. Contiguous attendance areas—or at least geographically logical areas—which keep communities of interest together
 - c. Number of preschool and wrap-around care providers within 1 mile of remaining open elementary schools in option