



FACILITIES COMMITTEE
PROGRESS REPORT
DECEMBER 9, 2024



PARTNERSHIPS
FOR AUTHENTIC LEARNING & LEADERSHIP



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Executive Summary and Process

In March of 2024 a committee of 27 community members and district staff was formed to help Delaware City Schools investigate the current facilities conditions of the district and consider the implications of those facilities on the student, family, and community experience. The committee was charged with “exploring” the landscape to help “paint a picture” for the Board of Education and the community regarding current conditions. Likewise, the committee served as liaisons between other community members and the district to ask questions and provide input.

Community Survey ([Document Link](#))

As the Delaware City School District continues to plan for the educational needs of our students, facility planning is an integral part of the academic process. The district deployed a survey to gather initial feedback from staff, parents and community members to understand current perceptions and generate conversation regarding short and long term facility needs.

Building Tours ([Document Link](#))

The Facilities Committee spent considerable time touring each school building and their grounds to gain personal insights into the physical conditions and usage of current spaces. Building administrators were present to share what challenges are faced in their buildings as well as the spaces that offer positive experiences for our students. The report highlights the information the committee thought was most important to their discussions of facility planning.

Student Enrollment Study ([Document Link](#))

The District commissioned an updated enrollment study to review current and projected enrollment in the Delaware City School District. The study takes into consideration current and future development in the community and the likely impact on the schools as it relates to student enrollment. The study indicates the district should expect an increase of approximately 700 students over the next 10 years. This study will need to be updated regularly to account for additional community growth.

Permanent Improvement and Maintenance Cost Assessment ([Document Link](#))

Delaware City Schools partnered with a company specializing in facilities assessment to analyze and project permanent improvement (PI) expenditures over a 20 year period. Experienced facility consultants visited the district over a period of several weeks to examine current building facades and roofs, mechanical systems, athletic facilities, parking surfaces, district buses and transportation, classroom furniture, flooring and more. The assessment indicates that the current permanent improvement fund cannot keep pace with district needs and rising costs.

City of Delaware Informational Meeting

The facilities committee appreciated the opportunity to meet with a team from Delaware City including the City Manager and staff from planning and development. Key insights were gained regarding residential and commercial developments, changing demographics of the community, land availability that may be suitable for the school district’s future planning, city boundaries and annexation, and the limited requirements that can be imposed on developers.

Actions taken by the District

1. Several key projects were prioritized for completion based on feedback from building tours:
 - a. Upgraded to LED lighting in the Hayes 2000 academic wing
 - b. Renovated restrooms at Hayes and Carlisle
 - c. Replaced furniture in select areas of all elementary schools
 - d. Replaced select exterior doors for upgraded accessibility and security at Hayes
2. Engaged in targeted conversations with the City of Delaware to explore projects of joint interest and define the needs of the district. Regular meetings will be scheduled with key city staff members to ensure ongoing dialogue is maintained.
3. A [webpage](#) was created to keep community stakeholders informed about the facilities committee process and share the various studies that were completed.

Findings from the Facilities Committee

District Themes:

1. **Outdated Facilities and Infrastructure:** Many of the district's school buildings have sections that are outdated, with visible wear and tear, such as cracked tiles, aged HVAC systems, and inconsistent design elements between older and newer building sections.
2. **Need for Modernization:** Among the Facilities Committee there is a widespread call for updates and modernization across the district's facilities, including enhancements in lighting, aesthetics, and classroom furniture. Modern furniture is not equitably distributed through the district. Participants emphasized the importance of flexible and updated learning spaces to meet the evolving needs of students and align with future workforce demands.
3. **Focus on Accessibility:** Building accessibility should be a focus. There are spaces throughout the district that are not ideal to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
4. **Permanent Improvement Funding:** The current Permanent Improvement funding cannot sustain permanent improvement expenditures moving forward. The district is already in a deferred maintenance/purchase situation with upgrading facility infrastructure, purchasing buses, and replacing curriculum resources.
5. **Need for Regular Enrollment Projections -** The facilities committee noted the need to update the enrollment study regularly to monitor the impacts of community growth on the schools. It will be important to track how many students are being enrolled from new developments.
6. **Future Planning:** The district should engage in additional community conversations to include multiple options including new buildings, redistricting elementary schools and repurposing current facilities to meet both academic goals and growth of the community.
7. **Community and Staff Engagement:** The facilities survey highlighted a strong desire for increased collaboration with staff and community members in planning future renovations. Input from staff regarding furniture, technology needs, and the overall design of learning spaces is considered vital for creating environments conducive to teaching and learning.

Specific School/Department Themes:

1. Hayes High School:

- a. Hayes High School exhibits inconsistencies in classroom sizes and infrastructure quality, leading to concerns about the overall learning environment and flexibility for different teaching methods and student collaboration within classrooms.
- b. There is a need for additional collaboration spaces, enhanced athletic facilities, and upgrades to existing sections to ensure a uniform and modern educational environment.

2. Dempsey Middle School:

- a. While the building is in good condition, there is a need for expanded common spaces or changes in scheduling to alleviate congestion, particularly during peak times.
- b. Dempsey is a large middle school in terms of student enrollment. The building has adequate classroom space to accommodate current and future students, however it was noted by the committee that community perception is that the building is overcrowded.
- c. The building tour results spoke to a need for enhancements in athletic facilities, performance spaces, the creation of more alternative learning spaces, and flexible furnishings.

3. Elementary Schools:

- a. Elementary schools show disparities in infrastructure quality and amenities. Issues such as outdated classroom furniture, limited natural light, and a lack of flexible learning spaces are examples.
- b. Providing handicap accessible entries at all facilities is a priority. The remaining facility in need of an upgrade is Smith Elementary.
- c. Schultz is becoming a large elementary school in terms of student enrollment. While there is adequate space to accommodate current enrollment, community perception is that the building is overcrowded.

4. Athletic/Practice Facilities:

- a. The district's athletic facilities are lacking compared to peer districts. There is limited space, outdated amenities, and inadequate locker room facilities.
- b. From the building tours, it was noted that the district lacks a multipurpose field house and adequate practice fields to support both school and community athletic programs and marching band.

Next Steps

Further Investigation Recommended by the Facilities Committee

1. Define district-desired standards at each building (classroom amenities, collaboration spaces, outdoor spaces, common spaces, learning labs, etc.).
2. Review elementary attendance boundaries. The District's elementary buildings vary greatly in student enrollment due to changing neighborhood demographics.
 - a. Can the District balance elementary enrollment through a realignment of attendance boundaries in a way that still maintains neighborhood schools?
 - b. At what point should additional elementary schools be considered?
3. Establish a land acquisition team to fully investigate land available within the City of Delaware that may be pertinent to future planning of the district.
4. Investigate best practices for middle schools:
 - a. Can we increase extracurricular/co-curricular opportunities for middle school students in one building?
 - b. At what point should a second middle school be considered and what are the considerations with a two middle school district?
5. Audit of athletic facilities with comparable districts and/or those in our league.
6. Assess needs for other buildings that support school operations (Willis, Transportation, Lincoln Field Complex, Old Admin Building).
7. Further engage with district staff to gain insights in the following areas:
 - a. Technology and Classroom Features: There were observations about the presence of technology such as interactive boards, but also questions about whether it meets the needs of staff. Some participants noticed the coexistence of modern technology with traditional elements like chalkboards.
 - b. Trends in Education: Participants recognized the evolving nature of education trends and the long-term impact of construction decisions, emphasizing the need for thoughtful planning and consideration of future needs when designing school facilities.
 - c. Furniture Needs: Participants expressed the need for new furniture and emphasized the importance of gathering input from staff regarding their furniture needs. This suggests a theme of addressing furniture inadequacies and ensuring that staff have the necessary resources to support the student experience.

District Action Items

1. Finalize educational capacity report and share executive summary with Facilities Committee and BOE.
2. Continue to identify community partners that will help support some of the needs that have been identified in lieu of additional spending on facilities or as a stopgap until permanent improvements are made.
3. Continue to seek student voice in the process. It is important to understand the student experience and how the district can better meet their educational needs.
4. Develop communication plans to help educate the community about district needs.