

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMO #114
Jamestown School District #1
2024/2025 School Year
January 20, 2025

RE: Restructure to 4 Elementary Buildings and 7 K-5 Sections Beginning in the 2025/2026 SY

FROM: Superintendent Robert Lech

BOARD FOCUS: Action

The purpose of Board Memo #114 is to succinctly outline the process and recommendations for the board to consider a restructure of elementary buildings and K-5 sections to most effectively accommodate student needs.

Overview

[As outlined more completely in Board Memo #112](#), the Jamestown School District has undertaken extensive work and engaged with the community to discuss both declining enrollment and the needs of aging facilities. This began with the Enrollment and Facilities Task Force which met in October 2022 and provided recommendations to the board in May 2023. The Jamestown School Board held a series of board retreats and committee meetings to further refine the recommendations and create facility options. The board commissioned a Community Committee on Facilities to allow further community engagement and perspective sharing. Additionally, consultants were selected to facilitate stakeholder discussion, gather perceptual data through a survey, and study enrollment and boundaries.

The two problems that the board has identified are:

- 1) Declining enrollment trends are impacting funding and resource allocation.
- 2) A significant funding shortfall exists to meet extensive facility needs of aging facilities, particularly at the elementary level.

Options for Board Consideration

To better consider the impact of these concurrent problems, the 4 options were created:

Option 1: Status Quo – Remain with 5 elementary buildings with 8 sections per grade level with existing staffing levels. Option 1 does not address either Problem 1 (Declining Enrollment) or Problem 2 (Facility Needs).

Option 2: Tourniquet Option – Shift from 5 elementary buildings to 4 (7 sections at each K-5 Grade Level). Option 2 addresses Problem 1 (Declining Enrollment) but does not address Problem 2 (Facility Needs).

Option 3: New Construction (2-Section School) – Retire a single-section building and double-section building and build a new two-section building (7 total sections of each K-5 grade level). Option 3 addresses both Problem 1 (Declining Enrollment) and Problem 2 (Facility Needs).

Option 4: New Construction (3-Section School) – Retire both single-section buildings along with a double-section building and build a new 3-section elementary school. Option 4 addresses both Problem 1 (Declining Enrollment) and Problem 2 (Facility Needs).

Selection of Elementary Facilities

Through the above-referenced processes, again outlined in more detail in Board Memo #112, the board targeted Washington Elementary School and Lincoln Elementary School as the schools which would be most advantageous to retire. The rationale for this includes the total investment needed, cost per square foot to address operational, safety, and maintenance needs, capacity (existing and maximum), and ability of existing space to meet current educational needs.

School	Maximum Capacity	Current Enrollment	Excess Capacity
Lincoln	250	179	71
Washington	150	89	61
Roosevelt	275	219	56
Gussner	275	225	50
Louis L'Amour	150	114	36

School	Construction (Additions)	Costs of Maintenance Needs
Lincoln	1955 (2000)	\$4.2 Million
Washington	1929 (1960, 1989)	\$5.2 Million
Roosevelt	1958 (1974)	\$3.4 Million
Gussner	1965 (1971)	\$1.7 Million
Louis L'Amour	1990	\$2.3 Million

The board further considered the impact of the reduction of one section from a budgetary standpoint with an estimated impact of \$1.3 million to maintain an 8th section at the K-5 levels. Further, it was considered that a reduction of sections would still maintain small class sizes with a shift from an average of 17.2 with 8 sections to 19.6 with 7 sections. Note: This will continue to decrease with anticipated declining enrollment to continue at the elementary level over the next 5 years.

Additionally, the board discussed that, according to the district's architects, ICON, that renovating either Lincoln or Washington Elementary would cost approximately the same amount on a cost per square foot basis as new construction.

Addressing Declining Enrollment (Problem 1)

The Community Committee on Facilities, which is studying the options, came to consensus on December 12, 2024 that Option #1 should not be considered as a viable option due to declining enrollment and the total facility needs. The board again discussed Option #1 in the board retreat on January 9, 2025 and requested that an agenda item be brought forward to the January 20, 2025 board meeting to discuss and take potential action to restructure to 4 elementary buildings and 7 K-5 sections for the 2025/2026 School Year.

Rationale for Transition in 2025/2026 and Next Steps

Closing an elementary building has been discussed for a number of years, which has created a level of uncertainty about the board and administration's previous communications. The staff, students, school community, and the district need finality to allow appropriate planning for the 2025/2026 School Year.

If the board recognizes that Option #1 is not feasible, the option should be removed from consideration. Without Option #1, each of the remaining 3 options require a smaller facility footprint. In that case, despite the emotions and challenges associated with retiring a building, the decision allows the district to begin to enact a transition plan to address the needs of staff, students, and parents. It would also support and inform the other actions in place, such as the boundary study and the work of the Community Committee on Facilities. Lastly, by addressing Problem #1 (Declining Enrollment), the district and board would be better able to engage the community regarding Problem #2 (Facility Needs).

Students:

The district recognizes the impact to the students impacted by the school retirement. To help ease the transition and support these students, counselors from the new schools will be deployed to the impacted student body to discuss the transition, tours will be scheduled once the boundary study is completed, and all opportunities to integrate students into the new boundary schools will be considered.

Parents:

The district understands that there will certainly be many questions from parents of the retired building as it relates to this transition. To ensure that questions from all parents are heard and thoughtfully considered, the district will deploy a survey to gather all questions. These questions will be used to provide a FAQ document and will be the basis for an additional community meeting if that is desired/needed by families at the retired school.

Staff:

We have current vacancies for the 2025/2026 SY that need to be filled. The district and board have consistently stated that non-renewals/reduction in force will not be considered as an avenue to right-size staffing for 7-sections. To better place impacted staff in new positions with a minimum of disruption, a survey will be sent to staff of the closing building that includes desired priorities (positions, facilities, and short-term employment options). Further, awareness of available positions and opportunities will be made to staff in buildings that will not be retired in 2025/2026.

Additionally, the process used to gather questions, create an FAQ, and the need for any additional communication will mirror what is outlined above for parents.

Central Office will make staffing decisions based on: 1) preferences outlined in the survey, 2) general experience (grade level and district), and 3) fit in the new position. When placements are made, an individual meeting with that teacher will be held to allow for greater discussion. If existing staff are greater than the number of vacancies, the district administration will request the board to consider temporary positions that would maintain positions. Note: these temporary options will also be part of the initial survey.

With current vacancies for support staff, teaching positions, and administration, it is likely that the majority of positions could be determined by the end of February with remaining position decisions made by April of 2025.

Other Considerations:

The district must continue to utilize Capital Projects Plan, building and grounds staff, consultants, and contractors to prioritize facility needs and target 100% of available funding to ensure buildings continue to be safe and meet student needs. This includes the comprehensive process outlined in Board Memo #112 outlined below:

To augment the Capital Projects Plan, an annual review process begins with building leaders beginning in January/February. Each CPP need and tentative timeline is provided and building administrators are able to prioritize those projects, as well as any new needs. Annually, in February/March, the central office administration, including Business Manager, Facilities and Ground Director, and Superintendent, review each of the CPP priorities and building requests and prioritize recommendations based on available funding. These recommendations are reviewed by the Jamestown School Board's Facility Committee in March/April, who review the priorities and annual plan and make a formal recommendation to the Jamestown School Board for approval in March/April.

Additionally, this process will prioritize any facility needs necessary in the short-term and long-term in maintaining the remaining four buildings to the standards needed and expected in the Jamestown School District.

The district must utilize the boundary study to study the impact to English Learner and Title I programming when setting boundary lines with a focus on providing the best educational environment for the district's elementary EL population and the potential for all K-5 elementary buildings to be eligible for Title I services.

Recommended Action:

Determination on Operational Change to 4 Elementary Buildings and 7 K-5 Sections and Requested Action for the 2024/2025 School Year