

To: SLCSD Board of Education**From: Superintendent Elizabeth Grant****Re: Closed School Property Use – District Need for a Career and Technical Center**

In accordance with the G-5: Administrative Procedures, we have recommended the former Riley Elementary School site be used to address an immediate district need. In truth, this recommendation is focused on addressing student needs and expanding their knowledge and skill sets in order to better prepare them for college or career. Our students need:

- A larger welding classroom so that students on the waiting lists for these classes are able to take our incredible state-recognized welding classes.
- An outdoor space for our student award-winning fire science program so they are able to work on a fire tower or use the tools of a fire truck as they expand their skills.
- Expanded course offerings so that students can take advantage of an advanced robotics lab, practice drone flight outdoors to increase their skills, add virtual production to their broadcasting abilities, or pursue a career-oriented pathways in construction, HVAC, plumbing, or electrical skills.

In Salt Lake City School District, we are committed to creating opportunities for students—ensuring each graduate leaves high school not only with a diploma, but with a clear, confident plan for college and career.

By increasing career and technical education (“CTE”) classes and pathways to graduation, we can enhance student engagement and improve attendance, leading to greater readiness for future success. A centralized career and technical center (“CTC”) provides many benefits. First, centralized offerings prevent unwarranted duplication of courses offered at the existing high schools. Redundancy requirements prevent the district from offering larger, more expensive programs at each high school. Additionally, a CTC provides a greater number of students with access to high-cost programs that, due to financial constraints, cannot be replicated at each high school. Finally, highly qualified and endorsed Information Technology teachers, for example, can be difficult to hire due to local workforce demand and earning potential outside of teaching. Centralizing certain types of courses allows each teacher to reach more students across the district.

We are recommending to the Board that the Riley Elementary School site be used to expand opportunities for students by designating the school building and grounds for a larger, updated Career and Technical Center (“CTC”). The Riley site provides much needed space to expand and enhance our CTE programs. Without additional facility space, meaningful program growth will not be possible and student needs will not be met.

In discussing this proposal, concerns have been raised about transportation, special education services, and costs. While each of these concerns is addressed below, we want to stress that we are committed to ensuring the accessibility of this site for all students and to the sound fiscal management of this district.

First, regarding transportation, we anticipate that the bus times between Riley and West and Highland high schools will be close to the transportation times to the current CTC at SLCC. We expect the transportation time for East High students to only increase by approximately five minutes. It is important to remember that SLCSD has been busing students to a CTC for more than 20 years. We will continue to provide transportation using buses and CTE vans; the transportation structure won't be new, only the routes will change.

The transportation team is confident in its ability to provide consistent, fully staffed service to support a change in CTC sites. Currently, they operate three daily routes to the existing CTC site, along with routes from East and West to Highland for the welding program, for a total of six routes daily. In fact, the proposed expansion aligns well with the existing transportation service structure. The additional mid-day transportation would help provide more consistent hours for our drivers, making these positions more appealing and supporting our recruitment and retention efforts.

Additionally, the district has researched options to provide students with extended time at the CTC to offset transportation considerations. Many districts respond to transportation concerns by "double-blocking" class periods at the CTC so that students have more time at the center for every trip they take. For example, Davis School District double-blocks CTE classes at their Catalyst Center to offset their much longer travel times.

Second, regarding serving our special education students, the district currently supports students in CTE classes through alignment with each student's goals as outlined in their Individual Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Transition Plan. CTE classes can play a critical role in assisting students with disabilities in the process of developing the necessary skills to achieve their post high school goals in employment and further education/training. Not only will these practices continue if the CTC is moved to Riley, we believe an expanded CTE site would allow the district to increase access for special education students, offering more tailored programs and hands-on experiences that support their transition goals. Currently, students with IEPs access CTE classes at both their neighborhood schools and the CTC at SLCC.

Finally, attending to costs through prudent fiscal management of public funds. As described in our April 15th memorandum, our plan is to expand our programmatic offering in phases at the CTC based on available funds. As financial stewards of public funds, we are committed to being fiscally responsible in this endeavor. We will not engage in any expansion that will negatively impact the financial well-being of the district and instead we will move at a speed that funding allows.

We anticipate funding for building needs will come from multiple sources, including:

- **Current CTE funding.** Federal and State CTE dollars are used to support CTE classes, and the building and construction costs related to creating career and technical centers and providing necessary equipment. The allocation of State funding increases with the number of students participating.
- **State Catalyst Campus Model Funds:** Under HB0447, the State has allocated \$65 million for districts to create and expand career and technical centers. Once the Utah State Board of

Education establishes the grant application process, we will apply for funds to improve the building.

- **Salt Lake Education Foundation Support.** The Foundation is willing and excited to launch a fundraising campaign to generate additional resources. We believe we will be able to secure meaningful contributions to build a high-quality center that will attract students from across the valley. If approved, we will begin our campaign by reaching out to philanthropies and industry partners. Industry partners commonly support building costs as well as purchase heavy equipment needed for various CTE programs.

Business Administrator Kearsley will provide additional information regarding costs and funding at the board meeting.

By designating the space and facilities at Riley Elementary for an expanded CTC, we can significantly broaden our CTE offering, increase the number of course seats, and support more students in completing CTE pathways. The move will allow us to not only meet the current demands of our students but to have the space to expand programmatic offerings to meet the future needs and interests of our students.

Finally, the board should understand what is at stake in this decision. We have a window of opportunity to expand CTE that will close if we don't choose to designate an unused district property for this purpose. The district's recommendation is based on the fact that we are unable to expand CTE in the current space at SLCC. If the board rejects this recommendation and opts to repurpose Riley for a community or commercial opportunity rather than to meet a current district need, the board is precluding the district from addressing that district need for many years to come.

Attachments:

Property Use – District Need memo from [April 15, 2025](#), Board Meeting (provides a breadth of information underlying the recommendation for an expanded Career and Technical Center)

Additional Readings:

- NYT Opinion piece [“Stop Trying to Make Everyone Go to College”](#) (mentioned by a community member during our last meeting's public comment period)
- Wall Street Journal article, [“The High-School Juniors with \\$70,000-a-Year Job Offers”](#)