

Chalkboard

By

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Have you ever been part of a group having a conversation and somebody gives some lengthy discourse? Then, someone says to someone else, “What do you think?” The reply is, “What s/he said.” The meaning is that the second person agrees with all the remarks of the other and can offer no additional information.

This article is similar to that as I offer some thoughts from the building principals regarding why each feels a “building program” is in order. Their remarks are taken from a project that was part of the evaluation process this year. The following excerpts answered this writing prompt-“*Using and referring to the above data that you have provided, compose a brief essay in a Word file justifying any changes to facilities that you envision.*”

From Mr. King, “As you can see by the campus maps, we have several teachers working in the Middle School building that are High School teachers. This creates a few problems both for the students as well as the teachers. An ideal situation would place all high school teachers on the same the campus and that is what I will try to justify in this essay.

First, let’s talk about teaching space. As we grow each year and add new staff members, the amount of available teaching space diminishes. I have three regular education teachers, two special education teachers in the MS building, one teacher in a dressing room on the stage and two drivers education teachers teaching in a weight room in the gym. I am adding another math teacher and will have a health teacher on a cart going from room to room next year.

Second, let’s talk about discipline. The fact that students have to walk from one campus to another with little or no supervision creates a problem of its own. Another issue is time between classes. I know that 5 minutes is plenty of time for me, but I don’t have to go to a locker, go to the restroom and then be in my seat before the bell rings. With all of that hustling around, students tend to get a bit frustrated and when someone does something to upset one of those students the level of tension is sometimes unbearable and tempers fly. Having teachers that far away makes for immediate response time to discipline problems almost non-existent. Not to say that we don’t get over there in a flash when needed, but it shouldn’t have to be that way.

Third is teacher unity. Unlike those teachers that work in the same building, my staff (in the MS) doesn't feel like they are as much a part of the whole as those teachers in the immediate HS building. I stress to them frequently that they are."

Mr. Cozens writes, "Gentry Middle School is growing at a steady rate as is the other schools. I see that this trend will continue for some time. To meet the needs of the students we have changed schedules so teacher can have more students each day. Now they (are reaching or) have reached the 150 students limit set up by the state department. So teacher cannot have any more students during the day. We have no more rooms to add teachers to the staff. Now we have 5 high school teachers teaching full time in the middle school. I have one teacher teaching two classes in the cafeteria. The rooms are full and I see more students coming and no place to put them."

From the Intermediate School Dr. Rose expressed, "I believe the number one reason for considering a new campus is the openness of the current campus. The current campus makes it almost impossible to secure. Most of the classrooms open to the outside. Most of the children, including kindergarteners, must walk a considerable distance outside to go to any activities outside of the regular classroom.

Most of the buildings are about to cycle through roof replacements. The water and sewer system on the east campus is old and breaking down. Almost every time it rains the east campus restrooms are unusable. Very soon it will be time to start replacing all the heating and air units on the elementary campus. All of these are very expensive items.

The current facilities are at capacity. We have people currently meeting in storage closets and small cramped rooms. All of our title people are housed two to a classroom. We will probably have to close two computer labs this year to add more classrooms. We are adding a new 2nd grade to the campus this year and will need a new fourth grade classroom next year. Music and art classes are meeting in the same space."

Representing the Primary School Ms. Wilmoth penned, "As our community has grown, so has our student population. This growth in student population requires more teachers, more classrooms, more desks, textbooks, chairs, tables, basketballs, forks, playgrounds, etc. At the elementary campus (campuses), all of the rooms and closets are currently being utilized. All of our Title teachers are housed two to a classroom. Physical Education, Library, Music and Fine Arts classes share classroom space – 2 classes meet in the same space at the same time. There is absolutely no more room for new classrooms to be added.

As our school population has grown, so has our student needs for services. These services include speech/special education resources, physical education, music education, art education, gifted education, physical and occupational therapy, ESL/Migrant services, counseling services, and other services provided by agencies outside of the school.

Not only does a school grow in population, a school grows old. The water and sewer system currently serving the elementary schools is inadequate, insufficient, and defective! The electrical service to the buildings is inadequate to carry the load requirements for the technological needs of our curriculum or administration. The roofs leak. The foundations are crumbling. The classrooms have insufficient insulation. Current heating/cooling systems do not provide adequate environmental control over the air quality.

Peripheral issues include Parking for staff, Intercoms/Communication, Parking for parents, Healthcare/Nurse, Patterns of traffic, Cafeteria, Places to perform, Storage, Conference rooms, and Safety/Security.”

So why is our school district contemplating a building program?
What they said.