



Wenatchee School District

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Board Report Date: November 12, 2019

Title: Community Conversation on Facilities - Summary Report

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Strategy 2: Tapping the Power of the Whole Community

Background:

Beginning with the 2019-20 school year, the school board and administration committed to holding a Community Conversations series to help the Board listen to and understand the underlying values, concerns, and priorities of district residents, school families, students, and staff. The Board and administration will use feedback and data collected during these conversations to inform future planning efforts and policy.

Executive Summary

Two community conversations were held during the month of October on the topic of school facilities. Attendees were asked two questions:

- How do you feel about students learning in our schools?
- What is your vision of a future-ready school?

Comments from 40 individuals were collected in small group discussions with board members. The feedback indicates that stakeholders want school facilities to match our community values and more accurately represent the quality instruction happening inside. Attendees cited aging infrastructure, overcrowding, classroom size, lack of instructional teaching spaces, physical learning environment, school safety and the addition of portable classrooms as areas of greatest concern across the district. While it was recognized that facility challenges exist, it was also noted that attendees felt school staff was providing high levels of learning and that District has maintained facilities well. In terms of a future-ready school, attendees indicated they envisioned flexible and adaptable learning spaces and architecture that supports changing instructional practices, technology, personalized, project-based and experiential learning. A future school would incorporate nature and light in its design and provide a comfortable classroom learning environment free of distractions.

Below is a summary of themes and feedback that emerged from the two community conversations.

Physical environment

The physical environment refers to the level of upkeep, ambient noise, lighting, indoor air quality and/or thermal comfort of the school's physical building.

- Substantial noise levels in Wenatchee High School due to retrofitted walls not extending to the ceilings.

- Heating/cooling and ventilation systems are also not able to properly balance room temperatures at Wenatchee High School
- Lack of access or difficulty accessing drinking fountains and bathroom facilities.
- Aging electrical infrastructure systems to accommodate technology, security needs
- Plumbing issues at Wenatchee High School and lack of electrical outlets

Portables

A portable classroom is a type of modular building installed at a school to temporarily and quickly provide additional classroom space where there is a shortage of capacity. Portable classrooms were repeatedly mentioned by attendees as a top concern. Overall there was a general consensus among attendees that portable classrooms are not ideal learning environments.

- Noise and physical discomfort of portable classrooms
- Stakeholders felt they created a school culture disconnect and feeling of isolation among students and staff housed in the portables.
- Being in a separate building from the school also created hardships for students as they travel back and forth between the building and the portable for lunch and specialist classes.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding occurs when the number of students enrolled in the school is larger than the number of students the school is designed to accommodate.

Related to the portables, attendees expressed frustration with the need for portable classrooms to alleviate overcrowding at all levels. It was understood that the needs for 21st-century learning spaces are have changed since many buildings were constructed. Participants also identified a lack of alignment between programs and instructional spaces.

- Crowding in common spaces (cafeteria, hallways, bathrooms) at Wenatchee High School was repeatedly raised by attendees.
- Small classroom size
- Lack of instructional spaces for Career & Technical Education (shops, STEAM and sports med), specialists (art and HiCap) and private PT and OT therapy rooms.

Safe Routes to School and Parking

- Safer crosswalks and parking lot improvements at Pioneer
- Increased parking at Wenatchee High School.

Future-ready Schools

Attendees provided the following qualities when asked to share their vision of a future-ready school.

- Buildings and spaces that incorporate outdoor learning, nature, and light.
- More natural light and windows
- Modern, simple and expandable architecture
- Tech ready classrooms, cloud-based computing
- Soundproofing
- Larger, flexible, collaborative and multi-use teaching and learning spaces
- Dedicated rooms for specialists (Art teaching on a school stage, no High Cap rooms)
- Hands-on, project-based and experiential learning spaces (shops, makers spaces)

Recommendation: There is no recommendation at this time, as this is an informational report only.