

Strategic Planning Session: January 26, 2016

Presentation Question & Answer

Q. What is the enrollment at each of the elementary buildings?

Dover 339; Bassett 414; Hilliard 330; Holly Lane 251 (Now available in the January 26th PowerPoint)

Q. What is your projected enrollment?

The district will be looking for another update soon, but Westlake Schools typically fluctuates between 3800 and 4100 students. Our current elementary projection is 1,330 students.

Q. Are we at capacity?

We determine building capacity using a square footage allocation the state deems appropriate for 21st century learning, but we do not use all spaces equally. We use some spaces for one-on-one or small group instruction, such as for special needs programming, restricting space overall.

Traditionally, teachers lecture in front of rows of student desks, but that requires less space than the collaborative group work required today. Older buildings like ours have defined spaces; they are more difficult to adjust since you cannot easily add, or remove walls. Renovation and restoration projects help buildings add more space, but they don't fix the problem since the rest of the building stays the same.

Q. How did we get here, and where are we spending the dollars we have?

Research has shown how quality learning environments affect students, and so standards have changed since we first built our buildings. Though standards have changed, our buildings are the same.

Westlake Schools is one of only a few districts that does not have a separate, dedicated fund for permanent improvements. All renovations come out of the same account as the money we use for classroom expenses, materials, and technology. At the same time, revenues are stagnant while expenses have increased. It is a constant balance between keeping student programs consistent and maintaining facilities. We focus on the biggest health and safety concerns first, and fix smaller issues when we can.

When districts work with the OSFC, the state requires districts to pass PI funds along with their projects to make sure they can make repairs when necessary. We did not work with OSFC on our recent building projects because they did not offer to pay a high enough share of the costs, so we also did not have to pass a PI levy at the time, although we have one planned for Phase II of our current Master Plan.

Q. Why does the district purchase refurbished computers?

Many districts use their PI funds to purchase technology and keep classrooms up-to-date. Buying refurbished computers is one way to make do with a thinly stretched budget.

Q. How does the district decide who learns in modular classrooms?

That is a building by building decision made by the principals and staff, based on staff and educational needs, age of the students, etc.