

Elementary Facilities Committee
January 18, 2012

Present: Board Members Sue Kimball, Dave Mylott, Brian Reed, and Jeff Harris; Facilities Director George Kimball; Special Services Director Cathy Zylinski; Business Administrator Martha Williamson; Principal Mark Vallone (arrived 6:25)

The meeting was called to order at 6:10. Dave Mylott stated his understanding that this committee was set up to assess the current elementary space problems, using more than one set of eyes consider the issues. The goal is to come up with a short term plan to address the most pressing concerns and to see if a long term plan can also be developed. Two known short-term issues are space for the band program and space for the elementary technology assistant. The committee agreed with this assessment of the situation.

The committee members looked at the original ground floor plan for the building (1986) and at George Kimball's drawings of the current library and of the area where the library was first housed. George explained that the original building had been built at a time when there was no fire marshal so the plans had been rubber stamped for fire compliance. When an addition (four classrooms, two each at the end of two wings) was added in 1997, the district discovered many areas of the original structure were out of compliance for fire code, and they had to make significant modifications to bring the structure up to code. This included coating wood paneling with fire preventative chemicals, adding fire doors to the interior, relocating a hallway, and moving the library from its original location to where it currently resides.

The committee then took a tour of the building, with emphasis on spaces used for special education, Title I and other specials. Mark Vallone joined the meeting at the start of the tour. The current Occupational/Physical Therapy room which is near the exterior door to the fourth/fifth grade wing, is a former classroom. It is used to service small groups of students per IEP requirements students throughout the day. Physical movement and large pieces of equipment in these programs require quite a bit of space.

The storage room in that same hall has a door with glass in it, and Mark had originally suggested using that room for band because it is at the end of a hall. George said the room would not meet code for housing students because there is only one exit and there is a currently unresolved problem with moisture coming up through the floor during the spring months.

There is one computer lab next to the library that is used by the part-time computer teacher as well as for standardized testing and class projects. The library is used throughout the day for library specials and students use the computers in the library for Accelerated Reader and for grades 4 & 5 research. Currently the library has 37 specials a week. The conference room off the library is used for meetings and for testing. George noted the need to replace the paper put up over the glass in the door with a shade that can be raised and lowered. The question arose as to how much the library would be used if the library special went away. The committee also wondered where the proposed science special would be housed. Principal Vallone said that would depend on what kind of science specialist was hired. The School Board thought the science special would be on a cart, or in the field, rather than having a dedicated classroom.

The four/five wing has a teachers' room that is a good size for the population that uses it. Unfortunately, the other teachers' room, near the music room, is small, overcrowded and has two copiers in it. The microwaves and coffee makers there cannot always be accessed by teachers during their break times due to overuse.

The elementary office and nurse area was toured. The current location of the nurse's office leads to problems with confidentiality and crowding. Various ideas were put forth, including switching the offices of the Dean of Students and the nurse, changing the bathroom accessibility to stay with the nurse's space, and adding a wall in the hallway to enlarge the waiting area. Another idea was to move the nurse somewhere else and move guidance next to the dean of students and principal.

The music/choral room on the stage of the multipurpose room would be a good area for band, but it is currently in use by the music teacher much of the day so not often available when band needs it.

There are a series of smaller rooms in the pit area that used to house the library. These now are used for several things including guidance, math tutorials for Title I, and behavioral time out for students. There is also a conference room and an office area for special education here. One of the math tutorial rooms has a sink which would be nice for a teachers' area.

The raised level of the former library is used to house the grade level readers for the school and occasionally serves as a third teacher room. The school psychologist has a small office off this space which she shares with a guidance counselor. This space is not ADA accessible. It also is a throughway to the other side of the building, making confidentiality an issue.

There is a second tiny room at ground level also used for guidance at the junction of two wings. This space is very public and has air quality issues.

The committee looked at a classroom serving as a Title I room, which has been subdivided for small group instruction with desks for one certified teacher and three reading facilitators. This room also stores Fontas and Pinnel reading material for targeted reading recovery programs to bring non-coded struggling students up to grade level.

Additional special education areas include one classroom which houses reference materials for staff, a desk for the Districts' behavioral consultant, a desk for the school special education coordinator, a desk used by several paraprofessionals for tutorial work with students, and a private bathroom area for hygiene tasks. The tutorial desk is also used as a testing area by audiologists and visually impaired consultants. Two more long, narrow rooms, commonly referred to as LL1 and LL2 (Learning Labs), have been subdivided for speech services, behavioral services, testing and tutorials. These rooms also contain the desks for three speech personnel. One of them is used for the kindergarten breakfasts. They are used 100% of the time.

A second computer lab on the other side of the building is used 60-70% of the time for testing and class research projects. It is also used for math tutorials and for school staff meetings.

The wing with music, Title I and the second computer lab has one first grade classroom on it. The art room's current location is at the end of the wing that contains the rest of the first grade. Switching these two rooms would put all the first grades together and would move art closer to where the other "specials" are.

Following the tour, Dave asked the principal and the committee for their thoughts on what our short term and long term goals should be. Short term issues are the nurse, band and the computer assistant. In the long term, we also need to look at the preschool, which has been moved to the SAU building to make room for kindergarten, and at the traffic patterns around the outside of the school. Mark expressed concerns about the town recreation program. They have been using the elementary facility but are gradually being squeezed out due to space problems. (Recreation is using Watson Academy, but that building is not ideal for their needs.) Jeff Harris suggested future discussions should include use of the SAU facility since there is space on the second floor. Martha Williamson pointed out that the space there would need extensive renovations, requiring a warrant article as well as several years of time. The state is not offering building aid at this time and tax payers do not have the resources to support costly projects.

The committee members all agreed that future meetings were needed to further study options and set priorities.

Next meeting was tentatively set for January 26 at 6:00 in the elementary art room.