

MASTER PLANNING REPORT

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Imperative

A state-wide budget reduction for public education in January of 2010 led to a deficit spending occurrence that year in the Richmond Community Schools of \$1,757,000. Reductions in expenditures that year and permanent reductions for subsequent years led to a balanced budget in 2011.

School year 2011-2012 saw 78 fewer students enroll than in the previous year. Consequently, the state tuition support formula projected a \$653,000 decrease for 2012, which led to a projected \$714,000 deficit. Through the collective bargaining process, the Richmond Education Association worked with the administration and school board to draft a new contract that cut the projected deficit to \$282,000, a \$432,000 improvement.

In addition, two major grants, totaling more than \$2.3 million were scheduled to end during 2012. Both grants, the Federal Stabilization monies and the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant provided contracted services and school personnel to support student academic needs.

To some degree, the two funding sources provided the support leading to one of the best academic years in recent Richmond Community Schools history. For School Year 2010-2011, all nine of the RCS elementary schools received an A Rating or Exemplary Status from the Indiana Department of Education. The entire District earned Adequate Yearly Progress from the Federal Department of Education in its administration of the No Child Left Behind Act, and RCS had the highest ISTEP gains in Wayne County.

Not only did Richmond Community Schools face a deficit in 2012 and 2013, it also faced, due to funding losses, the elimination of major support for what has become an upward academic trend across the District. The imperative for action was obvious, and the urgency was real.

Process

Proposals for master planning consultation were solicited in April, 2011, from two firms. The proposals were reviewed by the school board in May, and discussion to shape the effort took place over the course of several board meetings.

The formal master planning process used by the Richmond Community Schools began with the determination of end-of-process objectives. The objectives, as contained in Appendix A, were adopted by the Board of School Trustees at its September 14, 2011, meeting. Guided by the corporate vision that the Richmond Community Schools will be a high performing district that brings pride to the community, the Board articulated the overall goal of designing the most efficient and environmentally sound usage of all facilities in order to promote and/or support teaching and learning throughout the District. It established four objectives for the process, involving stability for students, facility flexibility, respect for student learning needs, and acknowledgement of the interests of parents and the public.

The Administration issued a set of ten basic assumptions, as contained in Appendix B, to which members of the public, staff, and Board were asked to respond. The assumptions, which addressed issues such as equity, finance, assignment of sixth graders, and the importance of technology, were later published in the form of questions and structured an online survey and two focus group discussions during October and November. The response to the assumptions, as contained in Appendix C, were discussed not only in school board meetings, but also in an edition of *P-I Live* on November 3, 2011.

Other public meetings involved not only those questions but also questions concerning the “must haves” of a contemporary school system. The response to those questions, as contained in Appendix D, guided school board discussion and the work of the administration in master planning.

Led by the expertise of Mr. Ron Maze, retired owner of Maze Designs of Richmond, the Administration conducted a demographic analysis, facilities assessment, capacity analysis, and space need projections. The demographic analysis examined the enrollment and enrollment trends throughout the District and in each grade of every school building. Facility assessment reviewed the condition, uses, costs, and future

needs of all the buildings. The capacity analysis measured the extent to which every building is being used against its intended capacity.

Taking into consideration the objectives established by the school board, the responses to the assumptions, and the results of the studies, a set of options, as contained in Appendix E, was presented on November 16, 2011, in a public session at McGuire Hall. Mr. Maze presented nine options or scenarios, most of which involved school closures, student and faculty relocation, grade level reconfiguration, facility repurposing, and possible construction. Dr. Bourff presented the merits of each option, explaining that components of each option could be combined with those of other options to form the recommendation he would be making to the school board in December. Those options were posted online and published in the *Palladium-Item* for further community review and comment.

The recommendation being brought before the Board of Trustees of the Richmond Community Schools is the subject of this document. This recommendation is intended for review and consideration by the Board. For the recommendation to produce the intended results for the beginning of School Year 2012-2013, official action no later than the first meeting in February is also recommended.

Recommendation

- I. Reduce the number of elementary schools from nine (P)K-6 buildings to six (P)K-4 buildings for School Year 2012-2013. The following buildings, with projected enrollment, are recommended for use:
 - a. Charles 495
 - b. Crestdale 346
(includes PK-4 Life Skills Classes)
 - c. Elizabeth Starr Academy 300
 - d. Fairview 275
 - e. Vaile 301
 - f. Westview 243

- II. Establish two intermediate 5-8 buildings to include:
 - a. Dennis 580
 - b. Test 661
 - c. Relocate grades five and six in separate zones within the buildings, each grade level to loop with the teachers at the respective grade level. Grades seven and eight continue in the departmentalized format.

- III. Establish one special purpose intermediate 5-8 building at Hibberd 227
 - a. Relocate the Early College Academy from Dennis Middle School and expand to include a fifth grade cohort.
 - b. Relocate the Logos Lab Program from Test Middle School and expand to include a fifth grade section.
 - c. Relocate the 7-8 Life Skills Classes from Test Middle School and the 5-6 Life Skills Classes from Highland Heights.

- IV. Establish one special purpose K-12 building at Baxter
 - a. Relocate the Community Youth Services Program from the Richmond State Hospital.
 - b. Establish an alternative school program for grades K-12, focusing on therapeutic transition strategies for students exhibiting behavior issues.

- V. Closure of the following buildings:
 - a. C. R. Richardson Elementary
 - b. Paul C. Garrison Elementary
 - c. Highland Heights Elementary

- VI. Redistrict the attendance areas as follows:
 - a. C. R. Richardson Elementary students to Vaile Elementary and Elizabeth Starr Academy
 - b. Paul C. Garrison Elementary students to Charles Elementary
 - c. Highland Heights Elementary to Crestdale Elementary and Fairview Elementary
 - d. Additional redistricting will be proposed to balance enrollments, should the plan be approved as presented.

Rationale

PK-4 Grade Configuration

1. This configuration reduces the age span being served in one elementary school from eight years to six, creating a focus on students in the primary years of their education.
2. Given the importance of literacy and the development of reading skills by age ten, this configuration not only supports the work of early childhood specialists but also supports the critical connection to grade four, especially for students struggling to pass the required literacy assessments at the end of third grade.
3. Because more students are enrolled in each of the grade levels, there is an increased likelihood of multiple sections per grade. Sixty-two percent of the survey respondents voiced support for more sections. Though there will be some cases where only two sections are assigned, most of the grade levels in all the elementaries will have three or more sections. The following benefits occur when multiple sections are available:
 - a. More varied, as well as focused, tiered interventions for purposes of RtI,
 - b. Easier balancing of class sizes,
 - c. Fewer split classes,
 - d. More numerous opportunities for grade level collaboration among the teachers.

Flexibility in the design of the buildings was an objective of the school board in this master planning process. While this configuration is not a feature of building design, it is a program design that facilitates instructional flexibility, increasing options for students and teachers.

4. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents expressed support for the establishment of preschool classrooms in the elementary buildings. A recently released research report from the National School Boards Association, *Starting*

Out Right: Pre-K and Kindergarten, found that of 21,000 students tracked from kindergarten to eighth grade, a consistent finding was that the children who had preschool, along with kindergarten, performed significantly higher on a five-level measure of reading.

5. The transition to six PK-4 elementary buildings from nine (P)K-6 buildings increases the geographical boundaries of some of the schools, thereby reducing to various degrees the likelihood of mobility for students who change their residence.
 - a. Ninety-one percent of survey respondents indicated support for measures to reduce the effects of student mobility within the school district.
 - b. The first of the School Board's four objectives was the demonstration of the value of stability. Acknowledging the detrimental impact of student mobility, the Board emphasized not only the utilization of buildings and boundaries to achieve greater levels of stability for students, but also to engage the community in doing so.

6. The PK-4 configuration utilizes the existing buildings at a much higher percentage of capacity than does the current configuration. The chart, *Current Capacity*, as contained in Appendix F, reveals an average building capacity usage at 77%. The recommendation to establish six PK-4 buildings would result in an 83% average building capacity usage. With capacity usage below 90%, ample space appears to be available in the buildings for the anticipated student numbers and sufficient capacity for additional students, which addresses the goal of the master planning process to design efficiency into the usage of facilities.

7. New construction to facilitate this grade level configuration may be necessary at Charles Elementary and at Crestdale Elementary as contained in Appendix G. In both cases, the possibility exists that up to four classrooms in each building may be necessary to construct to accommodate additional students. In the first year of plan implementation, the use of portable classrooms will accommodate numbers, after which it can be determined whether new rooms are necessary. If

they are, the construction costs, would be affordable within the current Capital Projects budget.

Relocation of Life Skills Classes to Crestdale Elementary

1. The scheduled renovation of Crestdale Elementary offers the opportunity to create Life Skills classrooms located near kindergarten and general education preschool classrooms. During the renovation process, classrooms designed to the specifications of the RCS Department of Exceptional Education can be created with minimal budget impact.
2. Close proximity to Reid Hospital is a key advantage of Crestdale Elementary, as the needs of primary Life Skills students, some of whom are medically fragile, are being addressed.

Intermediate 5-8 Buildings

1. A review of last year's ISTEP scores in grades seven and eight across the state revealed that seventh and eighth graders in schools of a 5-8 configuration outscored their counterparts in 7-8 configured schools in math and in language arts by single-digit percentages. Because there are only 36 such schools, the comparison yields weak data. Nonetheless, the data are far from discouraging.
2. Respondents to the survey regarding placement of sixth graders were evenly divided among the options. However, several comments explained that had there been an option in which sixth graders would be placed in a middle school where core teams would be responsible for their education, that option would have been selected. Indeed, when discussions were conducted at the middle schools, both faculties were supportive of sixth grade placement within the middle schools, as long as the support for sixth grade transition is in place. Placement of both fifth and sixth grades in the middle schools, in which the two grades are separated programmatically and physically when possible from the seventh and eighth grades, provides an opportunity to continue instructional

practices very similar to those of the self-contained elementary classroom. The emerging academic needs of the transescent can be addressed within an intermediate school with science labs and fine arts facilities, but the relationships established between teacher and student in the elementary setting is also possible in an intermediate school where fifth and sixth grades are conducted separately from the seventh and eighth grades.

Looping with the classroom teacher or with the grade level teachers is also possible in this manner of configuration. Looping encourages the building of relationships and extends that elementary experience into the transition of what had been the middle school years. Against the organizational design that had made transitioning into middle school one year and out the next, this new 5-8 design emphasizes the value of stability...again, the first objective that the RCS School Board established in master planning.

3. The 5-8 configuration utilizes the existing buildings at a much higher percentage of capacity than does the current configuration. The chart, *Current Capacity*, as contained in Appendix F, places Test Middle School at 59.47% capacity and Dennis at 50.27%. The recommendation to assign fifth and sixth graders to both schools would result in an 88% capacity usage at Test and a 77% capacity usage at Dennis. It must be noted that the self-contained mode of instruction involves a classroom use that reduces capacity, as it is currently measured. With capacity usage below 90%, ample space appears to be available in both buildings for the anticipated student numbers. In the first year of plan implementation, however, it would be advisable to secure two portable classrooms at Test. During the year a determination can be made regarding the need for additional permanent classrooms. This addresses the goal of the master planning process to design efficiency into the usage of facilities.

One Special Purpose Intermediate 5-8 Building at Hibberd

The relocation of the Logos Program , the Early College Preparatory Academy, and the Life Skills classes for grades five through eight provides a unique opportunity to meet the scholastic needs of the students in these programs.

1. Expansion of the Logos Lab Program and the Early College Academy is possible with the additional grade level at fifth grade. Both programs typically have more student applicants than openings, and because there is capacity in the building for servicing more students, the grade levels could also be expanded.
2. The Logos Lab Program and the Early College Academy serve similar academic purposes, which is to address the needs of identified high ability students or those who have been identified as potentially high ability students. While the structures of the two programs are different, the opportunities for the faculty to share resources and/or combine particular lessons, projects, or units could lead to deeper, richer, more significant educational experiences for the students.

The opportunity to share resources addresses one of the Board objectives of master planning, to operate with greater efficiency. However, it also addresses another objective, and that is to create greater flexibility within our buildings. Bringing those programs together also makes possible a number of opportunities in student leadership, service learning, and community connections that would not be possible within the current cross-town program arrangement.

3. The relocation of the Life Skills Classes combines the students now located at Highland Heights in the fifth and sixth grades with those of Test Middle School in the seventh and eighth grades. Aside from the advantages of those students interacting with the high ability students, there is also the opportunity to take advantage of the pool in the Hibberd Building. Not only is there the obvious benefit to learning how to swim, there is also the therapeutic benefit of swimming, particularly for those students affected with muscular issues.
4. The co-location of the Logos and Early College Academy programs creates an alternative to the traditional middle school experience for those students who qualify, irrespective of their residence within the school district. Eighty percent of the respondents to the survey expressed support for the creation of unique programs offered to students beyond their respective neighborhood schools.

Research is clear; curriculum and instruction should be qualitatively differentiated for high ability students and include time for these students to work together. This option provides full-time services to maximize achievement for these learners.

5. In its fourth objective for the master planning process, the RCS School Board acknowledged the right of choice that parents exercise today. This combination of programs at the Hibberd Building offers parents of high ability middle level students a unique educational experience that cannot be found elsewhere in the region.

One Special Purpose K-12 Building at Baxter

1. The Richmond State Hospital has been the site of the Community Youth Service Program for several years. The partnership between the State Hospital and the Richmond Community Schools has benefitted many young people over the years. Central to that partnership was the educational services provided by the Richmond Community Schools to the adolescent residents of the State Hospital. However, that program no longer exists, and the administration of the State Hospital has informed RCS that the facility housing the Community Youth Services is scheduled for demolition at a time to be determined.

Relocating the Community Youth Service Program to the Baxter Building is an opportunity to eliminate the concern for the impending demolition of the building now housing the program. Affirming the continuation of the program, it should be noted that 92% of the respondents to the survey expressed support for the program, whether it be on the campus of the Richmond State Hospital or elsewhere.

2. The Baxter Building offers a gymnasium, cafeteria, library, and outdoor courtyard currently not available to students at the Richmond State Hospital site. Such facility features offer possible strategies to staff, extending their professional repertoire for addressing the needs of their students.

3. Among the many comments in response to the question of “must haves” for the contemporary school, the need for effective responses to poor student behavior was common. The Baxter Building offers an alternative setting for students who exhibit behavior that distracts teachers from their instructional responsibilities. Current practice places students in the Community Youth Service Program who qualify for special needs. The expansion of services to non-special needs students would address many behavior problems in the buildings that often lead to suspension and/or expulsion. Transitional learning plans designed not only to provide alternative educational services but also therapeutic counseling services will offer a valuable response to the survey comments and also to the School Board objective of meeting the diverse student learning needs.

Closure of Buildings

1. C.R. Richardson Elementary, Paul C. Garrison Elementary, and Highland Heights Elementary Schools have experienced significant enrollment losses. As illustrated in Appendix H, each of the schools has lost over the last six years at least 20% of its enrollment. This is in contrast to the school district, which as a whole, lost approximately 8% enrollment in the same time period.
2. The goal of the master planning process was to address with urgency a revenue loss in student tuition support from the State of Indiana and the conclusion of two major grants, currently funding over \$2,000,000 in contracted services and personnel costs. The closure of the three elementary buildings: C.R. Richardson, Paul C. Garrison, and Highland Heights, represents an annual operational savings of \$1,243,910.85, as contained in Appendix I.
3. The three buildings have numerous facility needs, including heating and air conditioning, air handling, energy efficient windows, insulation, technology infrastructure improvements, dividing walls and/or units, elevator, lighting, recessed doors, improved casework, etc. They are considered at high need in the RCS Capital Projects Plan. Conservative renovation costs for the three buildings are estimated to be \$14,065,630.

New state laws mandate a referendum for school construction projects requiring \$2,000,000 or more in financing. Given the existing demands on the Capital Projects Fund, the Richmond Community Schools would face the necessity of pursuing bonds for the financing of improvements on the three schools. Although 66% of the survey respondents stated that a stable tax rate is preferable to a lower tax rate, there was no indication that a higher rate would be supported to finance improvements on schools.

The closure of the three schools makes feasible district construction and/or renovation projects without securing outside funding.

Financial Goal

The master planning process began with a projected 2012 General Fund deficit of \$714,000 and a projected deficit in 2013 of \$614,000. In addition, the scheduled end of two grants in 2012 resulted in the projected loss of more than \$2,300,000 in support services.

As revealed in Appendix I, an annual operational savings of \$1,243,910.85 is realized with the closure of the three elementary schools. That savings is reduced by the operating costs of repurposing Hibberd as the location of three special programs for grades 5-8. As contained in Appendix J, the annual operating costs of Hibberd will be \$588,997, reducing the annual net operational savings to \$654,913.85.

The collective bargaining process, which concluded in November, resulted in a reduction of the projected 2012 deficit to \$282,000. As illustrated below, the sustainability plans for the Safe Schools Healthy Student Grant and the Federal Stabilization Grant have resulted in lower ongoing annual costs, reducing what had been a \$2.3 million financial goal to \$1,439,511.

This plan creates an operational savings of \$654,913. Due to efficiencies produced by the assignment of teachers, there is an anticipated reduction of teaching staff by approximately ten, yielding a savings of \$481,493.50. Those savings, combined with anticipated retirements in the amount of \$415,920, total \$1,552,326.50. The master plan, as recommended, exceeds the financial goal by \$112,815.50.

Financial Goal Impact of Recommendation

<i>Projected Deficit</i>	\$282,000.00	
<i>SSHS Sustainability</i>	\$302,511.00	<i>(originally \$1,388,215)</i>
<i>Stabilization Sustainability</i>	\$845,000.00	<i>(originally \$1,116,000)</i>
	\$1,439,511.00	
<i>Operational Savings</i>	\$654,913.00	
<i>Staffing Reduction</i>	\$481,493.50	
<i>Anticipated Retirements</i>	\$415,920.00	
	\$1,552,326.50	
<i>Net Savings</i>	\$112,815.50	

Conclusion

Challenging times require bold, yet thoughtful, measures. This recommendation comes at a time when national, state, and local economies are challenged to do more with less. This recommendation does just that.

The tax rate from the Richmond Community Schools, at \$.57 per every \$100.00 worth of taxable real and personal property, is the lowest in Wayne County, as illustrated in Appendix K. This plan puts forth many educational enhancements...and does not rely on any additional local taxes to do so.

As proposed, this plan eliminates an otherwise imminent budget deficit and preserves the academic support systems made possible during the last few years by two federal grants that both end next year. The provision of safe schools and healthy students is a component of this plan, long after the grant of the same title has expired.

This plan provides for more visible enrichment and remediation services at each building, while continuing to limit the class sizes. Preschool services in each building and the continuation of the creative arts are features of this program, all of which are made possible by means of a more efficient assignment of students and teachers within the District.

Stability and flexibility are simultaneously achieved, as this plan provides for a four-year experience in the new intermediate school design, rather than the current two year design, in which students transition from elementary one year and to the high school the next. Stability for the future is a key to this proposal as it is designed to structure educational services for the foreseeable future, and yet, this design also provides enough flexibility to allow for programmatic and enrollment changes.

Finally, this proposal honors this decision-making process that parents face when choosing their childrens' schools. The Richmond Community Schools has a rich history of high quality educational service and looks forward to continuing to provide those services in a competitive environment. Each elementary school will offer educational services designed to the individual student needs, and for students of high ability in the intermediate years, no school in the region will offer a similar program of focused support.

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION

Executive Summary

December 14, 2011

FACILITY PROFILE

Six Elementary PK-4 Buildings

Enrollment

Charles	495
Crestdale with PK-4 Life Skills Classes	346
Elizabeth Starr Academy	300
Fairview	275
Vaile	301
Westview	243

Does not reflect PK numbers

Does not reflect redistricting

Two Intermediate 5-8 Buildings

Dennis	580
Test	661

16

One Special Purpose Intermediate 5-8 Building at Hibberd 227

- Early College Academy
- Life Skills Classes
- Logos Lab Program

One Special Purpose K-12 Building at Baxter

- Community Youth Service Program
- Alternative Education Program for K-12

Closure of:

C.R. Richardson Elementary	Students to Vaile and ESA
Paul C. Garrison Elementary	Students to Charles
Highland Heights Elementary	Students to Crestdale and Fairview

IMPACT ON FACULTY STAFFING

Reduction of 10 Teachers \$481,493.50
 Calculated at (M5 + 15) + 15% Benefits

Operational Savings

Building	<u>Garrison</u>	<u>Highland</u>	<u>Richardson</u>	Operational <u>Total</u>
\$ Creative Arts	\$100,889.79	\$87,737.98	\$84,467.61	\$273,095.38
Library Media				
Specialists	\$90,593.40	\$33,369.98	\$32,884.46	\$156,847.84
\$ Administrative	\$104,485.64	\$95,910.00	\$95,467.06	\$295,862.70
\$ ESE 2.5 FTE	\$77,524.83	\$ 77,765.32	\$76,796.39	\$232,086.54
\$ Secretarial	\$26,185.32	\$36,025.33	\$32,438.76	\$94,649.41
\$ Clerical - On Claim	\$11,068.14	\$11,746.34	\$11,746.34	\$34,560.82
Library Para	\$ -	\$12,967.08	\$12,967.08	\$25,934.16
Assistant Principal				
Counselor				
 Total General Fund	 \$410,747.12	 \$355,522.03	 \$346,767.70	 \$1,113,036.85
 Utilities	 \$53,697.00	 \$32,046.00	 \$45,131.00	 \$130,874.00
 Total Savings Per Building	 \$464,444.12	 \$387,568.03	 \$391,898.70	 \$1,243,910.85

Operational Costs

Building	Hibberd		
\$ Creative Arts	\$189,168.00	\$189,168.00	
Library Media			
Specialists	\$32,884.00	\$32,884.00	
\$ Administrative	\$99,442.00	\$99,442.00	
\$ ESE 2.5 FTE	\$77,765.00	\$77,765.00	
\$ Secretarial	\$36,025.00	\$36,025.00	
\$ Clerical - On Claim	\$11,746.00	\$11,746.00	
Library Para	\$12,967.00	\$12,967.00	
Assistant Principal	\$ -	\$ -	
Counselor	\$ -	\$ -	
 Total General Fund	 \$459,997.00	 \$459,997.00	
 Utilities	 \$129,000.00	 \$129,000.00	
 Total Costs	 \$588,997.00	 \$588,997.00	<u>18</u>

Net Operational Savings

Net Savings		\$654,913.85	
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Construction Cost Impact

Charles Elementary	4-6 Future Classrooms	\$960,000.00
Crestdale Elementary	4 Classrooms	\$480,000.00
Dennis Intermediate	Cafeteria	\$700,000.00
Test Intermediate	2-4 Future Classrooms	\$736,000.00
Hibberd Facility	Minor Renovation	\$800,000.00
Baxter Special Purpose	Minor Remodeling	\$100,000.00

Tax Impact

0

Financial Goal Impact

Projected Deficit	\$282,000.00
SSHS Sustainability	\$302,511.00 (originally \$1,388,215)
Stabilization Sustainability	\$845,000.00 (originally \$1,116,000)
	\$1,439,511.00
Operational Savings	\$654,913.00
Staffing Reduction	\$481,493.50
Anticipated	
Retirements	\$415,920.00
	\$1,552,326.50
Net Savings	\$112,815.50