

Facilities Study Committee
Recommendations to the Black River Falls School Board

- I. There are widespread school facility needs in the Black River Falls School District. However, results from the Community Perceptions survey showed the strongest support for addressing needs at elementary grade centers (4K to 5th grade) first. Facility needs at the elementary level are pressing and immediate, and the consequence of a handful of factors.
- Increasing enrollment among 4K to 5th grades.
 - Lack of existing space to house current and future enrollments in 4K to 5th grades, and the inability to reconfigure existing facilities to solve space problems.
 - The outdated and, in some cases, dilapidated condition of existing elementary facilities, particularly Third Street Elementary.

- II. Based on these and other issues studied by the Facilities Committee, it is our recommendation that the School Board:

A. Build a new school facility serving Grade 1 through Grade 5.

1. Build on site adjacent to Forrest Street Elementary, provided that the McNulty Property (from the Black River Area Foundation), the Fox and Kernan properties (along Forrest St.) and Hoffman property (to the west of Forrest St. Elementary) can be acquired by the district.
2. Build with necessary capacity for projected enrollment of 800 to 900 students.
3. For safety purposes, site design should separate transportation areas for buses and parent traffic.
4. Consideration should be given to incorporate renewable energy (“green school”) concepts as far as it would be economically advantageous to the district.
5. District Office facilities should be incorporated into the new elementary building.

B. Designate Forrest Street Elementary to serve as district’s Early Childhood, 4K and Kindergarten programs.

1. Remodel the building to close off the courtyard, creating additional instructional space and eliminating the need for students to travel outside between classrooms.
2. Move office to new area to provide for greater student security.
3. Convert current office space to small-group instruction space.
4. Replace existing windows to improve energy efficiency and classroom lighting.
5. Remove and sell all portable classroom structures and move these students into the main building.
6. Existing 4K community partnerships would continue to operate at their current community locations.

C. Close and sell Third Street Elementary (built in 1926) and the District Office (1897).

1. Third Street is not accessible for people with disabilities, which exposes the district to lawsuits; nor is it fiscally responsible to make it accessible, given numerous other problems with the facility, including outdated plumbing, electrical wiring, technology, and energy inefficient single pane windows.
2. Continued use of this facility will require millions of dollars of improvements that will make it only minimally more functional.
3. Closure of District Office is necessitated by its age and need for improvements, and the fact that it shares a common heating plant with Third Street.

D. Close Gebhardt Elementary (built in 1950) and either sell the facility or donate it to the Town of Brockway for a community center.

1. Building is too small for current instruction, and too large for nontraditional instructional programs (like alternative High School programs).
2. Site is too small for necessary expansion needs of the future.

III. Benefits of school improvements for the district and broader Jackson County community.

A. Financial benefits

1. Continued eligibility for \$600,000 in SAGE funding (waiver only through 2011).
2. Better cost efficiency:
 - bussing – less time, fewer miles, and lower cost
 - heating and maintenance for a single facility instead of multiple, aging facilities
 - avoidance of costly improvements to Third Street Elementary, and/or purchase of multiple additional portable classrooms to meet growing enrollment
3. Better staff efficiency:
 - reduced travel between buildings
 - consolidated food service delivery
4. Resale of portable education facilities, Third Street, District Office and possibly Gebhardt.

B. Educational benefits

1. Increased student contact time.
2. Increased staff collaboration and planning time.
3. Full accessibility for persons with disabilities and assistive technology for hearing impaired.
4. Provides needed space for small group instruction.
5. Maintains smaller class sizes for non-SAGE grade levels.
6. More grade levels in one location promotes increased efficiency in delivery of instruction by specialists.

7. Allows introduction of new technology without expensive structural remodeling at existing schools.
8. Physical Education courses can be scheduled throughout the day, as commons area would be separate.
9. Reduces one elementary transition.

C. Safety and security benefits

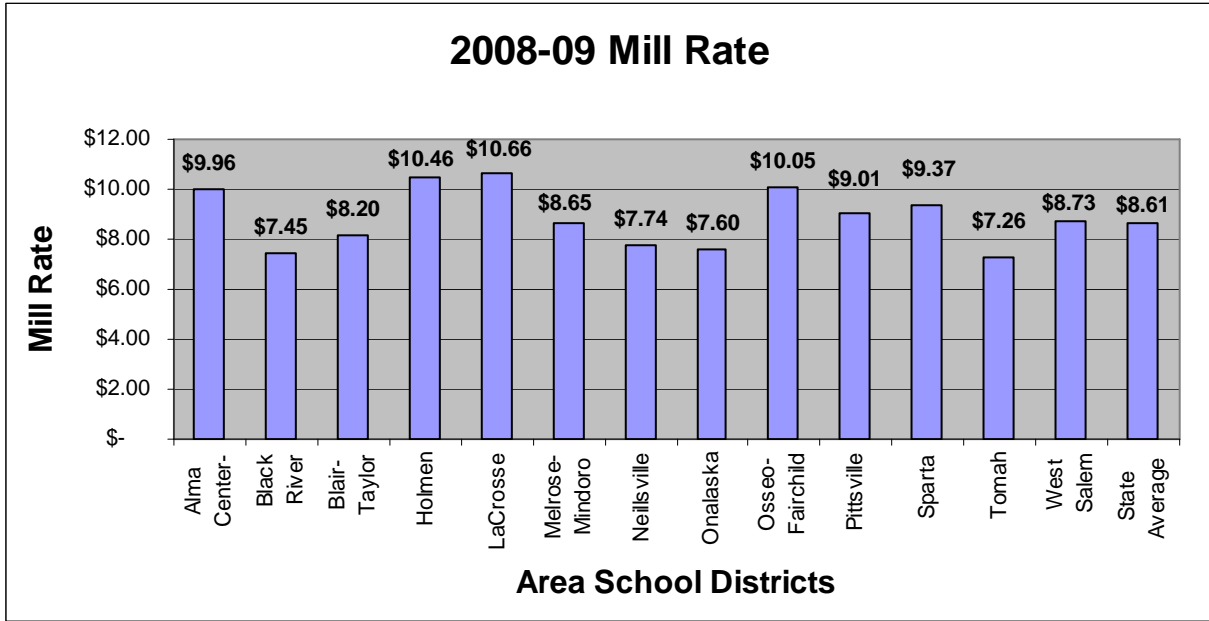
1. Separate bus and car drop-off areas.
2. Office spaces at the entry of buildings for proper access supervision.
3. No need for students to leave building for instruction in portable classrooms.
4. Increase in playground size and green space.
5. Speed and efficiency in communications.

D. Jackson County community benefits

1. Positions community to attract new businesses and families.
2. Provides Jackson County community with new space for community and sporting activities.

IV. Costs of school improvements.

- A. The mill rate increase is expected to be approximately \$.90 per \$1,000 of equalized property value (though final figure depends on repayment schedule chosen by board).
- B. Comparison with Neighboring Districts and State Average



- V. Don't ignore long-term facility needs at the High School.
 - A. Significant improvements are needed at the High School.
 - B. Results from the Community Perception Survey did not show community support for extensive upgrades to the high school at this time, which is why improvements to the high school are not recommended for inclusion in this facilities referendum.
 - C. The School Board should continue evaluating high school needs and planning for comprehensive long-term improvements at the high school.