



Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee
Final Report to the Board of Education
for District 834

Presented November 13, 2014

Presented by:

Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee Members	Resource Team Members
Ellie Berg	Rob Bach, Stillwater Area High School Principal
Amy Burbach	*Dennis Bloom, Director of Operations
Margy Butala	Mark Drommerhausen, Lily Lake Elementary Principal
Dick Edstrom	Sonia Esch, Elementary Music Teacher
Rob Gag	Andy Fields, Oak-Land Junior High Principal
Bob Grey	Kristen Hoheisel, Director of Finance
Johnny Johnson	John Huenick, Vice President & Director of Education at Kraus-Anderson Construction
Sue Katula	Carissa Keister, Manager of Community Engagement
Peter Kelzenberg	Ryan Laager, Executive Director of Curriculum & Secondary Ed
Randy Kopesky	Beau Labore, Social Studies Teacher and Varsity Football Coach
Doug Menikheim	Malinda Lansfeldt, Executive Director of Learning Supports & Elementary Ed
Julie Mock	Paul Lee, Director of Student Support Services
Nancy Prince	Ricky Michel, Supervisor of Activities
Jeff Ranta	Tom Nelson, Superintendent
Sandi Schmiesing	Tony Willger, Supervisor of Facilities & Site Operations
Tim Siegfried	
Andy Sundgaard	
Elizabeth Weisberg	

**Facilitator*

Executive Summary

In the business of education, students are without question our greatest priority. In an effort to ensure our students have learning environments that meet their academic, physical, social and emotional needs, a Long-Range Facilities Committee was formed to consider the school district's current and future facility needs. The committee was made up of community members and staff and was supported by a resource team of administrators and support staff.

Our district has engaged in numerous facility studies in the past 12 years, all of which have come to similar conclusions – our facilities need updating to provide students with high-quality, equitable learning environments. What has changed is the sense of urgency. What were good ideas in the past are now becoming necessities as our district faces changing academic standards for students, equity concerns and capacity issues.

Based on the most recent study, the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee has established a list of priorities for the school board to consider as it works to address facility needs both now and into the future. The committee feels these changes are necessary to keep our district competitive by providing learning environments that are relevant to the changing needs of our students and our communities.

Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee's Priorities

- A. Expand preschool programming
 - Preschool in every elementary

- B. Create grade configuration based on academic needs
 - PreK-5 elementary schools
 - Grades 6-8 middle schools
 - Grades 9-12 high school

- C. Provide acceptable and equitable learning environments
 - Align elementary site-based programs with feeder middle schools
 - Implement a consistent dehumidification strategy district-wide (HVAC)
 - Upgrade playground fall zones at each elementary school
 - Update secondary school facilities:
 - Remodel/add on to science labs at Oak-Land Junior High and the high school
 - Add on to the high school cafeteria
 - Upgrade fitness and stadium facilities

- D. Address building capacity issues across our district

The priorities outlined above are based on what the committee members feel are the needs of our students. Cost was not a factor that we considered as we created our recommendations. We were, however, excited to learn that a unique funding opportunity exists next year that would allow for facility updates to be made without increasing taxes for our residents.

The following report will share the committee's recommendations to:

- Change grade configuration across the district for implementation in the 2018-2019 school year
- Address over-crowding and projected growth in south end of district with purchase or construction of an elementary school to feed into Oak-Land Junior High
- Better utilize space in central/northern schools
- Construct science labs at Oak-Land and the high school and add on to the high school to house ninth grade students
- Upgrade Pony Stadium and practice facilities and build a Community Center
- Hold a tax-neutral bond referendum in November 2015

Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee Report

We've all spent time in classrooms and can likely remember occasions when the environment around us made learning difficult. Researchers have found that learning environments can have a direct impact on student achievement. One white paper¹ on the topic suggests that the way in which schools are designed can affect such important factors as student safety, teacher-student relationships, and the academic performance of students. Acceptable environments can increase productivity, improve health and reduce off-task behaviors of students.

In an effort to ensure all of our students have learning environments that reflect current and future needs, a Long-Range Facilities Committee was formed. This group of community members and district staff met for several months to study and discuss various issues and opportunities that lie ahead for our school district. Based on this work, the committee is prepared to make recommendations to the school board on ways to enhance our facilities to better support our students and the needs of our community.

The Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee was tasked by district administration and the school board to address the following:

1. Develop a shared recommendation, with action steps and timelines regarding a preferred direction for the District's facility needs in response to:
 - a. The Bridge to Excellence
 - b. Changing demographics
 - c. Mechanical and operational needs
 - d. Building inequity issues across the district
2. Review and evaluate 10 years of long-term student enrollment projections and demographic data
3. Review current grade configuration (K-6, 7-9, 10-12) and building capacity for each school
4. Review student programming needs and the potential impact suggested changes would have on building use and capacity
5. Discuss ways to incorporate more district learning spaces that support 21st century learning (see Appendix A)
6. Examine financial impact and opportunities

Between January and July 2014 the committee - which was made up of 18 citizens, parents and staff - met nine times to discuss the district's facility needs. They were supported by 15 district employees who served as resources to assist them in their work. Wold Architects prepared materials, information and facilitated the meetings.

¹ Duke, Daniel. (1998) "Does It Matter Where Our Children Learn." [White Paper]. Commissioned by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. Accessed 10/10/14 from <http://www.casenex.com/>.

This was not the first time a comprehensive facility discussion has taken place in our community. In the last 12 years two other working groups have formed to discuss similar issues pertaining to our district's facilities. In 2003 the Facilities, Land Use and Attendance Boundary Task Force (FLAT) was established, and eight years later several Vision 2014 strategic planning reports were conducted (see appendices A-C for the full reports). Each of these groups' findings and recommendations were congruent with one another; specifically, each report identified necessary changes to the district's facilities to address the emerging academic and demographic needs of our students. Moreover, both of the previous reports are in close alignment with our current committee's recommendations. What has changed is the sense of urgency due to the fact previous recommendations have not come to fruition.

In short, the issues projected 12 years ago have become a reality and are creating new challenges and opportunities for our schools. These include:

- **Standards and learning expectations**
Minnesota state academic standards are written for students in grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Changes in these standards also require students to have more science experiences, which puts strain on our science labs.
- **21st century skills**
Our rapidly changing world requires students to have a new skill set, which focuses on things like creativity, collaboration, and communication. Our learning spaces need to be infused with technology and provide more flexibility for hands-on, collaborative learning. (See appendix D.)
- **Enrollment imbalance**
While overall enrollment is holding steady or slightly declining, rapid expansion in the south end of the district is causing overcrowding in several schools.
- **Inequities in learning environments**
From heating and cooling systems to playgrounds and science spaces, inequities exist between our buildings. These disparities result in vastly different experiences for students based on where they go to school.

After examining data and other key information, a clear set of priorities were determined by the group. These include:

- A. Expand preschool programming to every elementary school
- B. Create grade configurations based on academic standards and whole child programming.
- C. Provide appropriate and equitable learning environments
- D. Address building capacity issues across our district

Expand pre-K programming to every elementary school

Research is clear on the benefits of pre-kindergarten programs, and much focus has been put on kindergarten readiness at the state and national level. Studies conducted by Ready4K, an early education research group, have shown that children who participate in high quality preschool programs develop better language and social skills, have fewer behavioral problems once they enter school, and are 40 percent less likely to need special education services. Additional studies have found that adults who participated in high quality early education programs during early childhood are more likely to be literate and enroll in post-secondary education and are less likely to drop out of school, be dependent on welfare or be involved in criminal activity. (See appendix C for more research findings.)

Currently the district has found classroom spaces to hold preschool programming in four of its elementary schools: Lily Lake, Oak Park, Rutherford, Withrow - all of which are in the northern part of the school district. None of the schools in the south part of the district have space to offer these programs.

By reconfiguring our elementary schools (see below), we would open up spaces in all of our schools to provide preschool opportunities. This ensures equity across the district. It also provides our youngest learners with a solid academic foundation. Preschool students would have access to the school’s highly-skilled teachers, curriculum, facilities, and technology. As part of the elementary school community, preschool teachers would be able to collaborate with kindergarten teachers and other support staff to identify an individual student’s learning challenges and provide interventions sooner.

With the addition of preschool to all elementary schools we will be able to support the kindergarten transition more effectively and engage with families earlier in a child’s educational career. As indicated in the chart below, families who are involved in early childhood education are more likely to stay in our district, which helps us to maintain or even increase our enrollment.

Retention Rate After Attending District Preschools

	Eligible students	Attending 834 in K, 1, 2	Retention Rate
3-yr study completed 2011 <i>(07-08, 08-09, 09-10)</i>	226	192	85%
3-yr study completed 2013 <i>(09-10, 10-11, 11-12)</i>	298	256	86%
2013-14 Kindergarten students who attended 834 preschools	Eligible students	Attending 834 in K	Retention Rate
	120	104	87%

Create grade configurations based on academic standards and whole child programming

Stillwater Area Public Schools is currently one of only a few metro school districts to have a grades 7-9 junior high school. The majority of districts locally and nationally have made a change to a middle school model, with grades 9-12 high schools. According to the United States Department of Education², the number of middle schools in the past decade rose by 12 percent to 13,000, while the number of junior high schools declined by 14 percent to 2,900. The middle school configuration more closely aligns with Minnesota State Standards, which have been written to link and support key learning objectives to the most appropriate grades. In doing so, these standards follow a K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade progression.

Grade Configuration in the Metro Area 2013-2014

School or School District	Elementary	Middle Level	High School
*Burnsville-Eagan-Savage	K-6	7-9	10-12
Cretin-Derham Hall	NA	NA	9-12
Eden Prairie	K-6	7-8	9-12
*Edina	K-5	6-9	10-12
*Forest Lake	K-6	7-9	10-12
Hastings	K-5	6-8	9-12
Mahtomedi	K-2 and 3-5	6-8	9-12
Minnetonka	K-5	6-8	9-12
Mounds View	K Centers and 1-5	6-8	9-12
NSP-Maplewood-Oakdale	K-5	6-8	9-12
Roseville	K-6	7-8	9-12
South Washington County	K-5	6-8	9-12
*Stillwater	K-6	7-9	10-12
Wayzata	K-5	6-8	9-12
White Bear Lake	K-5	6-8	9-10 and 11-12

**Currently studying grade configuration*

As part of the Vision 2014 planning process a study of grade configuration was conducted by school district administrators (see appendix C). Our committee reviewed this report, which explored the research around grade configuration and provides a recommendation that a preK-5, 6-8 and 9-12 configuration would better support the academic, social and emotional needs of our students.

² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2012* (NCES 2014-015). Access 10/15/14 at <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84>.

At a series of Vision 2014 community forums held in November of 2010, participants were asked for feedback related to changing to a middle school and 9-12 model. Of the 237 responses collected during those meetings, the majority of people supported making a change.

Vision 2014 Survey Question	Yes	No
Would you like to see Stillwater Area Public Schools move from junior highs (7-9) to middle schools (6-8)?	60%	40%
Would you like to see ninth graders move from the junior highs to the high school?	62%	38%

Elementary School (Pre-K – Grade 5)

As outlined in the 2011 Grade Configuration Report, there are tremendous benefits to adopting a pre-K-5 elementary school model – the largest of which comes to our youngest learners. Providing more opportunities for preschool children to attend their neighborhood schools provides a solid foundation to begin kindergarten with increased academic skills and social-emotional confidence to support school readiness and success. Our older students would also benefit as they would have access to earlier leadership opportunities currently reserved for sixth grade students. Fourth and fifth graders would be able to serve on school patrols, produce schools newscasts, and take part in a variety of learning experiences to further their leadership skills.

Another benefit of pre-K-5 elementary schools is that they better align with state standards. This structure ensures our teachers are equipped to meet the specific learning needs of their students. Teachers would have greater opportunities to enhance professional development and work with colleagues in professional learning communities around the standards.

Learning environments would also be enhanced for students in a pre-K-5 elementary school with the additional classrooms vacated by sixth grade students. We would be able to utilize this space to provide needed academic intervention space for special education and English Language Learners, designated resource rooms to store curriculum materials, band and orchestra rooms, and flexible learning spaces for art and science.

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Sixth graders would benefit greatly from being part of a middle school environment, which is better aligned with their academic, social and emotional needs. During sixth grade, students are transitioning into their teenage years and are experiencing physical and emotional changes. They are becoming more independent in their decision-making and are afforded more freedoms with increased consequences for making poor choices. Middle schools are intentionally staffed and designed to support the wide range of developmental needs that occur with students at this age level.

Middle schools, by their nature, provide students with opportunities to try new things, grow and explore. As part of a middle school, sixth graders would have more access to elective opportunities, such as world languages. Many of our sixth grade students have mastered grade level standards, and in a middle school setting, they would have far greater academic opportunities to accelerate when ready because courses are not restricted to an age or grade level.

In addition, middle schools provide sixth graders access to uniquely licensed and trained teachers specialized in a content area such as science or math. In our current system, sixth grade teachers are expected to be fluent in all core content areas while a 6-8 middle school allows teachers to specialize in an area. A new structure would ensure our students have access to appropriate state-defined learning opportunities from content experts. Our sixth grade teachers would also be able to collaborate with seventh and eighth grade teachers to ensure standards are aligned between grade levels. By moving to a 6-8 middle school model we will create far greater staffing efficiencies, while ensuring a more consistent and equitable learning environment.

Middle schools also provide sixth grade students with unique learning spaces not found in elementary schools. These include science and STEAM labs, performance spaces, fitness centers, media centers and computer labs. Art classrooms are equipped with pottery wheels, kilns, and other equipment not found in all elementary schools. Middle school schedules also give students numerous breaks throughout the day to move between classes, interact with peers, and stretch their legs.

It is widely known that students perform better when they are connected to school through participation in various activities. Middle schools offer numerous opportunities for students to explore their passions, expand their horizons and develop friendships through co-curricular activities offered before and after school. These include plays, music ensembles, Lego League, math league, science club, robotics, sports, art club and more.

High School (Grade 9-12)

Ninth grade is synonymous with high school. The freshman year is when students start earning credit on their transcript that eventually leads toward graduation. The majority of Minnesota high schools are configured grades 9-12, which aligns with Minnesota graduation requirements. In addition, high school programming and scheduling provide a full complement of academic opportunities to ninth grade students.

Currently, more than 15 percent of our junior high students attend one or more classes at the high school. Even more are eligible but choose not to leave their junior high school. A growing population of our students has exceeded the course offerings available in our junior high schools. We also have a large number of ninth grade students who participate in athletics and activities at the high school. All of these students are transported on shuttles between their

junior high and the high school in order to access these services. The offerings at the high school – both academic and extra-curricular - are vast and allow students the opportunity to choose from an array of core classes that align with their ability level while providing elective courses and activities that spark their interest and passion.

Our current junior high structure has, in many ways, been a disservice to our ninth grade students. In the last 10 years numerous courses have not been able to form in our junior highs because of low registration numbers. There may be 16 students interested in a course at Oakland, and another 16 students at Stillwater Junior High, but neither school has enough interest to form the course. By having all of our ninth grade students in one building, these sections may fill every year. This is just one of many staffing efficiencies that occur when resources are maximized.

Past studies have all recommended making a change to a 9-12 high school. While few argue the academic benefits to this change, previous conversations have raised concern about the size of the high school. Stillwater is already considered a large high school with graduating class sizes of approximately 700 students. The size of each class would not change with the addition of ninth graders at the high school. The building enrollment would increase to approximately 2,800 students, which would make it similar in size to top-rated schools Wayzata, Eden Prairie and Minnetonka (all of which have more than 3,000 students). Across the nation some of the largest schools are among the highest performing. Schools that work hard to personalize learning, build relationships, and connect with students have proven to be successful, regardless of their size.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, the top ten largest high schools are also among the highest performing schools in the state. Much can be learned from these districts to better understand the relationship between school size and student performance. As a next step, we recommend a committee of educators from our district be formed to visit with other high-performing, large high schools to gain insights to help students develop relationships and find ways to connect with our school community. Administration can also work with architects to design ways to make a large high school feel more intimate.

Provide acceptable and equitable learning environments

The Stillwater Area Public School District is comprised of one early childhood building, 10 elementary schools, two junior high schools, one alternative learning center and one high school. Depending on the year each facility was constructed, there are significant discrepancies that exist throughout our district. To get our learning environments where they need to be, the facility group recommends:

- Align elementary site-based programs with feeder middle schools
- Implement a consistent dehumidification strategy district-wide (HVAC)
- Upgrade playground fall zones at each elementary school
- Update secondary school facilities:
 - Remodel and add on to the science labs at Oak-Land Junior High and Stillwater Area High School
 - Add on to the high school cafeteria
 - Upgrade fitness and stadium facilities

Align elementary site-based programs with feeder middle schools

Some of our students have unique physical and emotional needs that significantly impact their learning. These students require very specific types of environments that differ from a traditional classroom. In an effort to better meet the needs of these students while maximizing our resources, the district has provided site-based (or cluster) programs within several of our elementary schools. The cluster programs have specially designed spaces and are staffed by specialized teachers and support staff. These sites serve the following programs: Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD), and Medically Complex.

When our district changed attendance boundaries in 2011, the cluster sites remained unchanged. What did change was the way elementary schools feed into the junior high schools. For example, the elementary EBD cluster site is located within Stonebridge Elementary School, which feeds into Stillwater Junior High, but the EBD students go on to attend the cluster site located at Oak-Land Junior High. As a result, many students in our cluster sites now attend a junior high different than that of their elementary classmates. With a change in grade configuration, new spaces would be available to modify our feeder system to ensure students transition with their classmates.

Implement a consistent dehumidification strategy district-wide (HVAC)

As we work to create equitable learning environments across the district, the facilities committee recommends addressing disparities with ventilation and air conditioning systems. Currently, all but six schools have HVAC systems which provide cooling to make indoor environments more conducive to learning. We recommend updating the HVAC systems at Afton-Lakeland, Lake Elmo, Lily Lake, and Oak Park elementary schools and Oak-Land and Stillwater junior high schools to ensure equity across the district.

Upgrade playground fall zones at each elementary school

Parent organizations at our elementary schools have worked hard over the years to partner with the district to provide playground equipment for our students. The committee recommends the district continues to partner with elementary parent organizations to further enhance the safety of playgrounds by installing fall-safe synthetic surfaces in place of woodchips. The synthetic surfaces, which are typically made of rubber and other shock-absorbing materials, help protect children as they play. Fall-safe synthetic zones also create easier access for students of all abilities and do not have to be replaced on an annual basis. Currently the Early Childhood Family Center is the only playground with this surface in the district.

Update secondary school facilities

Stillwater Area High School was built nearly 25 years ago and has not undergone any significant renovation in that time. However, the needs of our students have changed. Even without the addition of ninth graders, the high school needs to be brought up to today's standards, specifically in the areas of science labs (which are also a concern at Oak-Land Junior High), cafeteria space, and fitness facilities.

- **Remodel science labs at the high school and Oak-Land Junior High**

As stated in the 2011 facilities report (see appendix B), our current science lab spaces at the high school and Oak-Land Junior High are undersized. This results in overcrowded labs, which limits students' access to equipment and also raises safety concerns. Science standards have also been changed at the state level, which requires more students at the high school to take higher level, lab-based science courses. Our high school does not have enough or adequately equipped spaces to absorb the increase of students who must take science courses. The committee recommends remodeling science spaces at these two schools to better meet the needs of students and provide more hands-on learning spaces.

- **Add on to the high school's cafeteria**

The high school's cafeteria is currently undersized, resulting in crowded conditions during the four lunch periods. The current facility does not provide enough common and support spaces to house ninth grade students. The committee recommends increasing the square footage of the cafeteria by renovating space and/or adding onto the building.

- **Upgrade fitness and stadium facilities at the high school**

Our school district and the greater Stillwater area community has adopted a health and fitness mindset. Considerable resources have been invested to promote physical wellness through the HealthyMOVES PEP Grant and Lakeview Foundation's PowerUp Initiative. One challenge the district faces is a lack of gym spaces, practice fields and fitness centers. Stillwater Area Public Schools does not have support from community park and recreation departments to build and maintain fields.

To encourage healthy lifestyles for our students and community, the committee recommends the district expands its fitness facilities, including:

- **Community Center**
Work with community partners to build a Community Center on district property to include an indoor track, gymnasium space, and a fitness center. The center could be used by students during the school day and made accessible to district residents during non-school hours.
- **Stadium upgrade and additional practice fields**
Build concession stands and restrooms at Pony Stadium and convert the competition field at Pony Stadium and select practice fields to synthetic turf. Synthetic surfaces are more resilient to harsh weather conditions, and would allow our athletes to get out on the fields earlier in the spring seasons. These upgrades would provide the district with additional practice field space and the opportunity to host sectional and state tournaments, and would expand the use of the fields beyond varsity sports. The turf fields could be used by more high school teams, as well as by the St. Croix Valley Athletic Association and other community groups, adult athletic teams and the public.
- **Fitness center and gymnastics room**
Build a gymnastics space and equip a fitness center with cardiovascular equipment to support the physical education classes and athletic programs at the high school.

Address building capacity issues across our district

The Stillwater Area Public School District is in a unique situation. While enrollment across the district is predicted to hold steady or even slightly decline in the coming years, growth in the southern portion of the district is expected to increase (see appendix E). The largest growth is predicted for Lake Elmo and a small portion of Woodbury that falls within the district’s boundaries. This follows trends we’ve seen over the past decade, further adding to the overcrowding occurring in our southern schools. Lake Elmo Elementary is already over capacity, and Afton-Lakeland and Andersen elementary schools are also near capacity.

Elementary School Enrollment Projections

School	2013-2014	2018-2019	# Change
Afton-Lakeland	515	582	67
Andersen	342	330	-12
Lake Elmo	717	814	97
Lily Lake	511	454	-57
Marine	134	112	-22
Oak Park	469	393	-76
Rutherford	640	549	-91
Stonebridge	488	486	-2
Valley Crossing	315	298	-17
Withrow	160	186	26
Sum	4,291	4,204	-87

Source: 2014 Demographic Study, Hazel Reinhart

Addressing the capacity issues in the south is important for several reasons. First, we need to relieve the overcrowding that already exists in these schools, and second, we need to create room in our schools for future growth. Another important consideration for the district involves the future of Valley Crossing Community School, a school that Stillwater shares with two other districts. Currently about 300 of Stillwater’s students attend this school. Valley Crossing was created under a legislative agreement, and the building will be paid off in 2016. The three school districts are currently involved in discussions about the future of Valley Crossing.

The facility committee recommends three options be considered to address building capacity issues in the southern portion of the district. Any of these options would need to be vetted and agreed upon by partner districts:

- Purchase Valley Crossing from South Washington and North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale
- Sell Valley Crossing and build a new elementary school in the southern end of the district
- Keep the Valley Crossing agreement as is and remodel Lake Elmo Elementary

Purchase Valley Crossing from South Washington and North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale

Purchasing Valley Crossing would likely be cheaper than building a new school and would allow us to address our space concerns in the southern part of the district. Valley Crossing is located just outside of the district's current boundaries, but is centered in a rapidly growing area. This would be an opportunity to acquire a high performing school and, with room for 900 students, it would provide room for the district to grow.

Sell Valley Crossing and build a new elementary school in the southern end of the district

All three districts have a financial interest in the Valley Crossing building. One option would be to sell that interest to one of the other school districts and use the proceeds to fund a portion of the construction of a new 550-student elementary school. A new building would help relieve overcrowding in the other southern schools and balance attendance to feeder middle schools. By locating a new school in an area of growth, a new school would also draw new students into the district. A new building may also provide an opportunity to create a choice school for district families based on a particular theme.

Keep the Valley Crossing agreement as is and remodel Lake Elmo Elementary

Currently, all three of the districts involved in Valley Crossing are evaluating their facility needs. As discussions continue it may be determined that it would be in everyone's best interest to keep the school as is. If that were to happen, we would continue to send about 300 students to the school each year. We would, however, continue to face challenges with enrollment at the other schools. There would be a need to remodel Lake Elmo Elementary to address the capacity issues. Lake Elmo was originally built in the 1920s and has been remodeled 10 times. This option does not provide space for growth or free up space for open-enrollment to students outside of our district.

It is important to note that our committee members expressed concern in investing additional resources to further remodel our facilities to meet our capacity needs. We recommend the purchase of Valley Crossing or construction of a new elementary in the southern portion of the district over further renovation of existing buildings.

Better utilize space in central and northern schools

While enrollment is expected to grow in the south, student numbers are projected to decline in the central and northern part of the district. The facility committee recommends balancing enrollment and building capacity district-wide and considering repurposing space.

Some options to consider include:

- Repurpose Central Services building and move support staff to existing buildings.
- Repurpose leased spaces.
- Sell the Central Services building.

Financial Opportunity and Protecting Our Investment

Our district facilities serve an integral role in the education of our students. Providing optimal learning spaces to meet the needs of our students is the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee’s main objective. We also recognize that the district’s buildings are an important community asset and need to be maintained at a high level to protect our long-term investment.

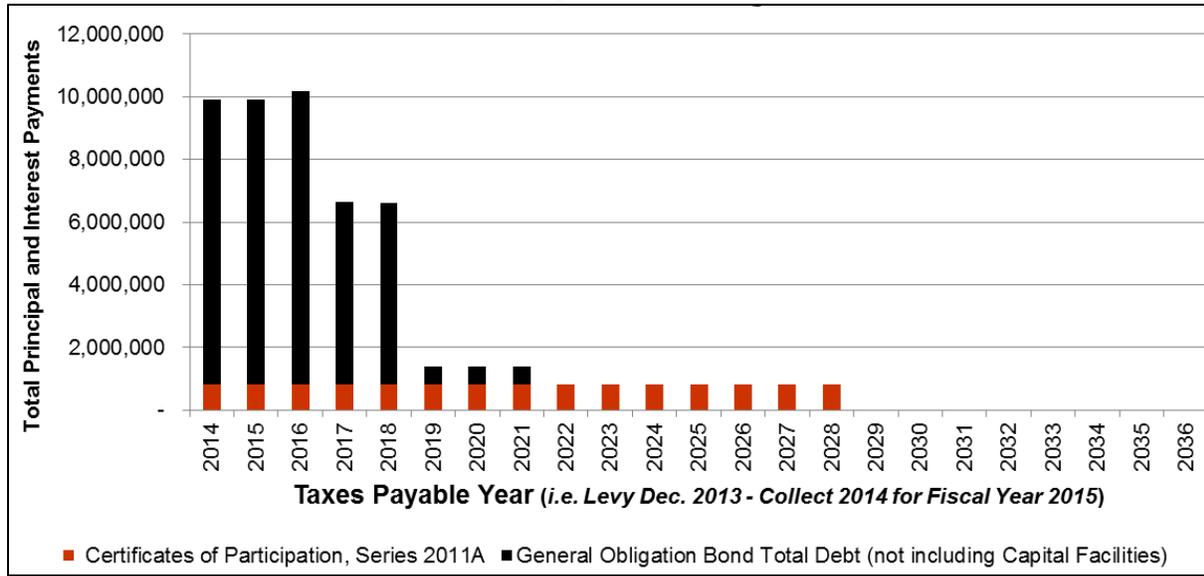
To support the work of this committee, district administrators have met with representatives from Kraus-Anderson Construction Company’s project management team to begin costing elements of this plan. Based on this work, early estimates show that the facility enhancements addressed in our recommendation would cost between \$90 million to \$97.5 million.

Overall Budget Preliminary Estimates

Category	Scope of Project	Est. Cost
Elementary Schools	Preschool rooms, HVAC, Lake Elmo remodel, site-based programming, playground fall zones	\$9,810,000
	<i>Option A: Purchase Valley Crossing from partner districts</i>	\$18,000,000
	<i>Option B: Build new 550 student elementary</i>	\$25,500,000
Middle Schools	Oak-Land science lab remodel, HVAC	\$6,300,000
High School	Science lab remodel, 9th grade classrooms, cafeteria, expanded hallways/circulation area, Community Center, additional parking	\$48,025,000
Pony Stadium Upgrades	Pony Stadium entrance, restrooms, concession stands, Pony Stadium field	\$3,790,000
Multi-Use Practice Fields	Tennis court relocation, additional parking, multi-use practice fields	\$4,075,000
	Total Project Costs	\$90,000,000 to \$97,500,000

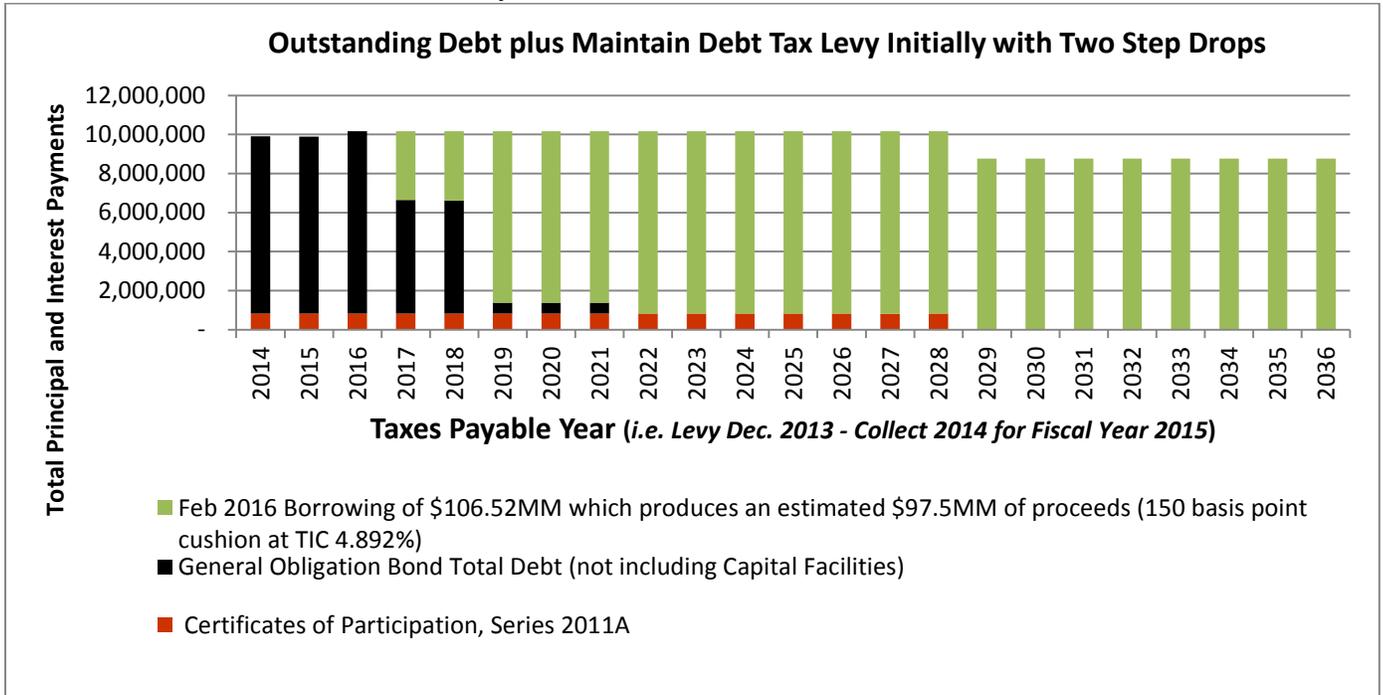
As indicated in numerous reports including this one over the past decade, our district’s facilities are in need of attention. What is different now is the opportunity we have to deliver a tax neutral plan. Borrowing rates are favorable and bonds from several projects – most dating back to the early 1990s - will be paid off in the next two years, which will result in millions of dollars dropping from the tax rolls. Bonds for the construction of Rutherford Elementary School, Stillwater Area High School and Valley Crossing Community School will be paid in full, as will smaller bonds for previous projects at Andersen, Lake Elmo and the junior highs. By 2016 our district will be in a unique position to reinvest in its facilities without raising taxes.

Stillwater Area Public Schools Outstanding Debt



As shown in the chart below, the district could invest \$97.5 million to address the facilities issues outlined in this report without raising taxes. By distributing this debt over a period of 20 years, the district’s outstanding debt would remain unchanged and begin to decrease after the first 12 years.

Stillwater Area Public Schools Proposed Debt Structure



The facilities committee recommends the school board take advantage of this unique opportunity to ask voters to invest in the district's facilities as part of a November 2015 bond referendum election.

Conclusion

The role of the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee has been to provide the school board with a recommendation to address our facilities' needs both now and into the future. Throughout this process we have focused on our students and considered their academic, physical, social and emotional needs. This plan is designed to provide our students with optimal learning environments and to make the necessary changes to ensure our facilities meet their needs.

We recognize that significant modifications to our current school system are being proposed which would impact students, staff, families and our residents. This report reinforces more than 12 years of analysis and study, which have all reached the same conclusion. Certainly change will not come easily, and many conversations will be needed in the months ahead to fully develop the recommendations we've provided. Yet there is no doubt in our minds that changing grade configurations and updating our facilities are necessary, and with favorable financing options in place, we believe now is the opportune time for us to act.

We thank the board for this opportunity and for its consideration of our recommendation.

Appendices

Appendix A: [Facilities, Land Use and Attendance Area Task Force Final Report to the Board of Education for School District 834 Executive Summary](#)

Appendix B: [Vision 2014 Facilities Report](#)

Appendix C: [Vision 2014 Grade Configuration Report](#)

Appendix D: [21st Century Learning Framework](#)

Appendix E: [Stillwater School District #834 Enrollment Projections, 2014](#)