

Elementary Facility Questions and Answers

Q: A school bond would be paid for by an increase in property taxes. What are the types of property being assessed along with the percentage of each to the total valuation?

A: According to the most recent valuation report (2014 Certified School Adjusted Value Report) the school district has just over one (1) billion in assessed valuation (\$1,028,013,689). The chart below shows the breakdown of the different types of property and the percentage of each to the total valuation.

2014 Certified School Adjusted Value Report (October 9, 2014)		
Property Classification	Valuation Amount	% of total valuation
Personal Property	39,659,565	3.86%
<u>Centrally Assessed</u>		
Personal Property	23,274,675	2.26%
Real	8,964,345	0.87%
Residential Real Property	503,791,932	49.01%
Comm. and Indust. Real Property	150,792,898	14.67%
Ag Improvmnts. and Farm sites	12,461,500	1.21%
Agricultural Land	289,068,774	28.12%
Total Valuation	1,028,013,689	100%

Q: What is the Homestead Exemption and how does it work?

A: The Homestead Exemption is for residents 65 years of age and older (Veterans and disabled individuals of any age received special consideration) who own and reside in a home within the Beatrice Public School District. If the individual has an annual income range between \$27,300 - \$40,100 he/she may be eligible for an exemption up to a maximum applicable property value of \$89,300. Property of greater value can receive partial exemption. Please contact the Nebraska Department of Property Assessment and Taxation or the Gage County Assessor for specific guideline and details regarding edibility.

Q: If the bond issue passes, what will happen to the existing buildings?

A: The existing buildings would either be: 1) sold for an appropriate reuse, compatible with the neighborhoods or 2) demolished, and the property sold for redevelopment compatible with the neighborhoods.

Q: How will safety and security be addressed in the new building options?

A: The new school options will be constructed to provide a storm shelter in each of the four classroom neighborhoods. The proximity of the storm shelter areas to the students and staff are important for quick and easy access. The building will also be designed to have a secure main entrance (visitors allowed to enter the building only with school office staff permission).

Q: Does the facility have capacity for growth?

A: Yes, all options have accommodations for some modest growth. The school board has recommended that the project include two additional classrooms so as to provide at least seven classrooms per grade level and a total of 51 Pre K – 5 classrooms for all proposed options.

Q: What was the intended lifespan of the existing buildings?

A: The lifespan of the existing buildings is relative to program requirements and the degree of maintenance and repair performed over the life of the building. The existing elementary schools received good care and maintenance, but building systems like heating, ventilation, and air conditioning need updating every 25 – 30 years. Also, the educational programs being offered today require more space and different types of space than that of 60 years ago. A 60-year lifespan is a reasonable expectation; then major improvements are necessary for any building.

Q: How is the District going to keep that small school feel in a big building?

A: Making a large building feel smaller was a focal point, both of the Board of Education and the committee who worked with the architect. It is important that a new building retain the community atmosphere of our current buildings. While touring other facilities, the committee discussed this with the architectural firm, DLR, and a plan emerged. The concept design represents a way, through grade level neighborhoods and larger common spaces, to make this happen. The facility is designed for students to spend most of the day in their neighborhood, similar in size to an existing elementary building, with others of similar age. The larger common spaces are to be used during scheduled times, still in smaller age range groups, under supervision. Outside, separate playgrounds based upon age ranges are planned. Additionally, the building allows for access by neighborhoods (before and after school), keeping children in smaller groups.

Q: How will a new single site elementary affect busing and what will it cost?

A: We believe that more students will be bused with a single elementary. Because both Norris and York function as a single site, they were asked about the percentage of elementary students bused in their districts. In conversations, we learned that they transport approximately 75% of their elementary students. Then, we talked to First Student (our student transportation provider). With this information, it was estimated we would need an additional three buses. Depending on size, each additional bus would cost around \$4,000 per month (3 buses x \$4,000 per month x 10 months = \$120,000 per year). We are reimbursed by the state using a formula where we get the lesser amount of our actual costs or the number of miles. Most of the costs should be reimbursable, and the District would pay the remainder. We are still working on how much this will be. Currently, elementary students who live more than 9 blocks from school do not pay to ride the bus. The Board is looking at the option of free busing for all elementary students, but no decision has been made at this time.

Q: Has the increased traffic flow associated with a new elementary school been considered?

A: A traffic study, completed by Olsson Associates, looked at traffic patterns and traffic flow. Road improvement will be needed on 33rd Street to the building entrance and possibly on Lincoln Street by the building entrance. Additionally, there is a service road to be constructed running from the East parking area connecting to Highway 136 at the light on Orange Boulevard. The proposed bond includes the funding for all these changes.

Q: Has the increased parking associated with a new elementary school been considered?

A: Staff parking and bus drop-off / pick-up will enter off Lincoln Street. Parent parking and drop-off / pick-up will be off 33rd Street, utilizing a double loop system. The committee observed this system during one of the facility tours. The double loop system helped with traffic flow and congestion during those busy times before and after school.

Q: What are the advantages of a single site elementary school?

A: The advantages of a single site elementary are many. Here are a few to consider.

- A single site elementary allows for consistent class sizes. Currently, classroom size varies by building. It is not uncommon to have a classroom at one building with 17 students while the same classroom in another building has more than 20. A single site elementary would allow these numbers be in balance, giving all students the advantage of smaller class sizes.
- A single site elementary would allow grade level teachers to collaborate and plan together to ensure consistency of instruction for all children.
- A single site elementary would give students similar experiences at each grade level.
- A single site elementary would allow all students to experience an inclusive environment similar to Middle and High School. Currently, specialized programs are localized in a few buildings.
- A single site elementary would eliminate the need to transport students to a different school because of programming needs or overcrowding at a certain grade level.
- A single site elementary would allow for efficiencies in building use and staffing:
 - Eliminate loss of time for staff that currently travel between buildings.
 - Administration assigned to a building full-time rather than split between two buildings.
 - Defined gym space would allow better scheduling of facilities for optimum use.
 - Because students would not be moved to other buildings for program needs, staffing adjustments and changes would be easier to accomplish.
- A single site elementary would be more efficient:
 - Mechanical systems have improved/are more efficient than when the existing buildings were constructed.
 - A new facility would be designed for 21st Century learning and technology.
 - Eliminate student transportation to other buildings because a program need wasn't available in their home attendance center.

Q: Even if I agree there is a need to do something why run the bond issue now?

A: The Board of Education decided to run a bond issue at this time for a number of reasons. The Board felt that is a legitimate need and it was important to act now rather than wait for a general election in November of 2016. It is reasonable to assume that the cost of construction and materials will only go up over time. Interest rates are at historic lows. The Board felt passing a bond at this time would allow the District to get the most out of their money.

Q: What impact do new schools have on economic development?

A: In a review of research by Jonathan D. Weiss, he concludes the following:

“While the research is emerging and difficult to measure, many studies have shown that public schools and school spending also impact state and local economies and can play a role in attracting business. By educating the future workforce, public schools help make states and localities more economically competitive. Also, as a basic industry, schools are major employers that have a short-term stimulus impact on state and local economies. Evidence suggests that the quality of public schools can also influence business site selection and labor location decisions.”