



STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT MEDIA RELEASE

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SCASD Board of Directors To Discuss Updated Elementary School Project Options

On Monday, Sept. 12, the State College Area School District Board of Directors will consider [updated information about potential elementary school renovation projects](#) being evaluated as part of the ongoing District-wide Facilities Master Plan - Elementary Update.

Also on the agenda, the Board will receive [a district administration request to pursue studying whether to offer International Baccalaureate Organization programs to district students.](#)

Action items include [several State High Project change orders.](#)

District-wide Facilities Master Plan - Elementary Update

Based on projected enrollments from a commissioned demographic analysis of the district's attendance areas, the district administration will present two key recommendations to help the Board narrow elementary school project choices.

Using municipal planning data for its enrollment project report, the DecisionInsite firm looked at planned residential development and potential increases of students within district elementary enrollment areas for the next decade. Demographers also took historical enrollments for the district and local fertility rates into account.

The firm prepared both conservative and moderate projections, with the conservative ones estimating lower numbers of new students from future residential growth than the moderate ones. Chosen because the district administration believes they better match the district's expected enrollments, the conservative projections predict approximately 300 more elementary students over 10 years — about a 1 percent annual increase.

Accordingly, the administration is recommending **a district-wide K-5 student enrollment capacity of 3,500**. This would accommodate a possible enrollment of 3,259 by

2022 — as forecasted by the conservative projections — and represent 92 percent capacity for the elementary schools overall.

The second key recommendation has to do with school size.

All but one of the district's current elementary schools have enrollment capacities between 400 and 529 students. The most recent schools constructed, Ferguson Township and Mount Nittany, each has a 414-student capacity. In light of past elementary school capacity decisions and current Board and community discussions, **the district administration is recommending that future buildings be constructed with capacities between 400 and 550 students.**

"This range maintains comparable size among our school buildings, and satisfies the project student enrollment over the next decade," the district administration's recommendation to the Board stated. "This range provides flexibility for future additions to one or more of our facilities if we do experience enrollment growth beyond DecisionInsite's conservative projections."

Consequently, the district administration suggests the Board, if it accepts the recommended district and school capacities, could eliminate four of the [eight initial project scenarios for Radio Park, Houserville, Corl Street and Lemont elementary schools](#) because they would produce a lower district capacity and larger schools than desired.

[As outlined in the district administration's recommendation](#), the potentially eliminated choices would be options 2, 4, 6 and 8 — all of which called for Corl Street Elementary to be closed and repurposed.

This would leave options 1, 3, 5 and 7 still under consideration. The options present various combinations of new construction and renovations/additions for Houserville, Radio Park and Corl Street. All of the options assume closing Lemont Elementary and combining it with Houserville, its sister school, an idea in district planning since 1999.

[Refined project scenarios considered by the Board in an Aug. 31 work session](#) included only one ("Scenario 3") that meets both the proposed district capacity and school size range. It also aligns with options 1, 3, 5 and 7.

Scenario 3 would:

- Result in three classrooms per grade level at Houserville (combined with Lemont), Radio Park and Corl Street, adding one classroom per grade level at Corl Street.
- Leave all three schools within the proposed building capacity.
- Generate capacity sufficient for projected K-5 enrollment.

Cost estimates for options 3, 5 and 7 have not been finished yet because the design team is still evaluating construction and addition/renovation options for each school. Option 1, calling for addition/renovation at all three schools, and the refined Scenario 3 have comparable cost estimates at about \$45 million — beyond the original allocation of \$40 million for the elementary school projects but within the district's financial means. By applying in time for state grants this spring, the district was awarded \$3.8 million toward the projects. In addition, the state is eligible for more reimbursement from the state's PlanCon program.

The current DWFMP timeline anticipates the Board receiving final project options on Oct. 10 and selecting projects on Nov. 14.

Community forums about the project options are scheduled for 7 p.m. Sept. 19 and Oct. 17 at Mount Nittany Middle School.

International Baccalaureate programs

The district administration will ask for approval to continue exploring International Baccalaureate study “programmes” — a so-called “Consideration Phase” that would amount to a feasibility study.

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the [International Baccalaureate Organization](#) states that its “high-quality and challenging educational programmes” seek “to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.” IBO offerings are Diploma Programme, Career Programme, Middle Years Programme and Primary Years Programme.

After reviewing the IBO programme requirements since January, the district administration believes that they strive to develop values and attributes compatible with the district’s strategic plan and instructional focus goals.

During the Consideration Phase, the district would assess its readiness to implement and sustain programmes and support training for necessary staff members. It also would prepare recommendations for the next step, the Candidacy Phase. The application deadline is April 1, 2017.

The district plans to present a formal IB programme proposal, including estimated professional development costs, to the Board at a later date.