

## High School Building Task Force Draft Needs Summary

This needs summary is intended to address the following driving questions:

- What is it in the current curriculum that we don't have the space for?
- What is it in the hoped-for curriculum that we don't have the space for?
- At current population, what are the administrative or student support tasks that are constrained due to lack of space?

### Current Curriculum

Through the master scheduling process, teacher assignments, and room assignments we have worked to ensure that curricular programs are not eliminated due to space constraints. Nevertheless, there are many current programs that are negatively impacted by space constraints and space quality, but we choose to run them despite the negative space impacts. Prominent examples of these programs include:

- **Science classes** – Our Science classrooms are almost all relatively small, with lab work space that is both awkwardly and dangerously configured. The small available class space limits the type of work that teachers can plan for students, barely providing enough space for students to be arranged in rows (the tight space limits the ability of Science teachers to create collaborative activities). There are significant problems with venting and the configuration of safety equipment.
- **Art classes** – We have three small art spaces, and size/quality of space negatively impacts our art classes. Our studio art room is a converted interior classroom with no natural light or storage space. Our ceramics room has minimal storage space and is not directly connected to our kiln and storage room. Our printmaking/silkscreening room has a tight space and minimal storage space. Because all three rooms are small and can only hold minimal equipment, each room needs to be specialized, which constrains room availability and usage (for example, we can only run a finite number of ceramics classes because of the space available). The space and quality of all three rooms are not conducive to artistic creativity and collaboration.
- **Theater arts classes** – We have a growing theater arts program, but all classes have to be scheduled in the auditorium, which receives heavy usage by other groups. For example, during concert seasons and Fall Play/Spring Musical seasons, the use of the stage negatively impacts theater arts classes that also need stage space.
- **Computer science and journalism classes** – We have added to our computer science and journalism offerings, but the limited appropriate computer lab space means that computer science and journalism classes in many cases have had to be scheduled in general-use labs, meaning that other teachers in the building are constrained in their ability to access computer labs for classwork.

- **Wellness classes** – We offer a variety of wellness classes to our juniors and seniors (e.g., RAD, Total Body Workout, Crossfit, Strength and Conditioning), but limited specialized physical education space (e.g., no fitness room or separate weight room) means that on rainy days or in the winter, we might have four Wellness classes scheduled in the same gym, and some classes have to move into halls in order to have room. In addition, our Health classes switch between three different academic classrooms because we do not have enough available rooms to have one consistent Health space.
- **Special education and regular education support programs** – Our Learning Center classes occur in two different rooms, and can become particularly crowded, limiting the ability of special education teachers to provide individualized support in a quiet and structured setting. Our Transitions program is now sited in our former faculty room because of space constraints (and is far from an ideal space). Our In-School-Suspension room is in the same suite as our Therapeutic Special Education program, meaning that some of our most emotionally fragile students are working next door to students serving consequences for disruptive behavior. Our Academic Support Center is in the back of our Media Center, and the small size of the ASC limits the number of students who can access it. Our School Psychologist is in a small office space in the Media Center that adjoins a computer lab, and there is a gap in the walls between the two spaces – we had to fill in the space with foam so that the Psychologist could conduct testing and have private conversations with parents in her office (she frequently has to use the Principal’s office for testing or meetings). The School Psychologist has had to hang curtains in her windows (which look out on the Media Center) to maintain privacy. Our Speech/Language Pathologist has her office – which also is used for one-on-one meeting space with students – in a converted server space.
- **English Language Learners program** – The ELL space is in a converted office in the Media Center, but has to be used as small-group instruction space. We have had to hang curtains in this space as well to maintain privacy.

### Hoped-For Curriculum

There are multiple ways in which our current space will constrain our hoped-for curriculum. Prominent examples of these include:

- **Specialized science courses** – We have multiple specialized science courses, and would like to add more. For example, courses such as Entymology, Forensic Science, or Project-Based Physics provide alternative lab-based science courses for students who may not be as interested in taking more traditional science courses (e.g., Chemistry, Physics); in addition, courses such as Biotechnology or Epidemiology allow students interested in science to explore specific topics. Because of limited lab space, it is becoming increasingly challenging to offer these specialized courses while still having the physical room available to run the traditional suite of science offerings (Environmental Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics). As we look at the next

several years, I will most likely have to limit the number of sections available because of space constraints.

- **Curriculum support courses** – We introduced a new curriculum support course, Math Foundations, this year, and we are looking to add similar courses in the future. In some cases, courses might target students who struggle academically, with the goal of keeping them on course toward graduation (Literacy Foundations is an example of a new course that we would like to add). In other cases, courses are intended for a broader audience, with an emphasis on improving skills in targeted areas (for example, a Writing Lab that could help large numbers of students with their writing skills). These types of courses necessarily require small enrollment to allow for individualized attention, but our current high room utilization rate (93+%) will make it challenging to impossible to find space to accommodate additional courses of this nature.
- **Expanded business program** – Our enrollment requests for Business classes have increased exponentially over the last three years, and we are looking to add new personnel in our Business Department. We have also seen significant increases in our DECA program, with large numbers of students competing at the regional, state, and national levels. Because of space limitations, it will be incredibly challenging to add more Business courses and find appropriate classroom space for those courses to meet.
- **Multiple courses requiring computer access** – We have added an increased number of technology-rich courses in the last several years, and we would like to both expand enrollment in those new courses and continue to add more courses (e.g., Digital Photography, Journalism, Video Game Design, Advanced Placement Computer Programming). Many of the courses we have added require specialized software (e.g., Adobe Photoshop Suite) that necessitates work in computer labs. Because our computer lab space is limited, we are close to the point where we will have to limit the number of sections we run of specific courses (despite student demand), or curtail the expansion of computer-based courses.
- **Theater arts courses** – Our theater arts courses currently all run in the auditorium because we do not have any other space. RAD classes also run in the auditorium, and other arts programs (band, chorus, after-school plays) compete for access to the auditorium both during the day and after school. This means we will either need to limit the number of theater arts courses that we run in the future (we currently run theater arts courses three periods a day, but would like to expand to four or five periods a day), or find some alternate space (as yet to be identified) for theater arts courses to use.
- **Specialized wellness courses** – We have seen tremendous success with some of our specialized wellness courses for juniors and seniors, such as RAD or Crossfit. We would like to continue to provide these types of specialized courses – for example, we are considering running a new course next year titled Mentors in Violence Prevention – but space constraints may prevent us from doing so.
- **Journalism courses and program** – In addition to the need for computer lab access, Journalism courses require staging and cameras. We have seen large increases in our Journalism program in the last several years, and we would like to continue to expand the program to include more courses, create partnerships with local broadcasting organizations, and reach a wider audience with more sophisticated programming. The small classroom currently being used for our video

journalism broadcasts may need to be converted to regular classroom space next year, which would bump our broadcasting “studio” to another part of the building, which has yet to be identified. The lack of appropriate space in the building will likely keep us from reaching our goals with the Journalism program.

- **Alternative education programs** – We have a small but important population of students who struggle in a traditional high school setting. As we work to put together alternative education offerings to meet this population’s needs, one of the primary constraints is space: we are not able to identify an available space in the building, which limits both curricular opportunities and the timing for any alternative programming.
- **Early education programs** – One area of interest for future programming is early childhood education. Many of our students are interested in child development and in working directly with children, but we simply lack the physical space to be able to build an early childhood program in the building.

### Administrative and Student Support Tasks

There are multiple ways in which our current space negatively impacts our administrative and student support tasks, both currently and in the anticipated future:

- **Guidance support** – The current guidance office configuration negatively impacts the privacy that students and parents can experience when meeting with counselors. In addition, as our student population grows and the need for additional counselors becomes evident, we have no identified space to house any new personnel.
- **Office space** – We are currently at a point where administrators’ offices (Assistant Principals and Principal) are used as meeting space or student support space by the general population. This leads to concerns with privacy and program integrity, especially for students who need a secluded space to work.
- **Meeting space** – We have only one functioning conference room in the building, and it can only comfortably accommodate up to about 10 people. Because the conference room is next to the Principal’s office, it also leads to issues with privacy: because of limited space, we frequently need to use the conference room for work with students (counseling, MCAS testing, special education testing), which means that we can have students sitting next door to a private meeting between an administrator and parents.
- **Teacher collaboration space** – There is no ad hoc collaboration space available for teachers. Most departments have a room with desk space and a table for teachers within the department (Wellness has its offices in the locker rooms, Art teachers do not have office space, Performing Arts has scattered offices), but there are no small meeting spaces in the building to allow for general collaboration outside of department office spaces.

### **Recommended next steps**

To collect more detailed information to answer the driving questions, it is recommended that the Principal meet with department heads individually, collect detailed information from them about how space impacts their current curriculum and how it impacts future curricular opportunities, and bring that data back to the rest of the group.