



East Pennsboro Area School District
Feasibility Study
February 23, 2017 Community Meeting
Frequently Asked Questions

Have we taken bids on the construction of our schools aside from Crabtree and Rohrbaugh (CRA)?

Crabtree Rohrbaugh and Associates have provided our district with a professional service. Professional services do not require or mandate bids. Once an option is selected by the board, the design phase will begin. Bids for construction of the buildings or renovations to the buildings will not be sought until the design phase is completed.

Were any traffic feasibility studies done?

A traffic study has not been done by the school district, but once the vote has been made about whether to close WCH, it will then be decided if a traffic study is necessary. A study would include working with state (Penn Dot) and local (township) authorities.

Have there been any projected studies done on how this will impact home values?

The district has been advised by a local real estate agent that from an appraisal standpoint it is difficult to measure any loss of value. We have been advised it is typical that individuals looking for homes normally look at the home, the neighborhood conditions and the school district as a whole. However, school building location does affect choice. If West Creeks Hills Elementary were to remain vacant for an extended period of time it could negatively affect home values.

How is Cumberland County one of the fastest growing counties in PA but we aren't projected to have a larger population or rising numbers in our schools?

Cumberland County as a whole has seen a 5% growth, primarily in rural areas. East Pennsboro Township has very limited land for residential growth. This could be the reason for the declining enrollment taking place over the past several years at the school district. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's enrollment projections, deemed reliable and reasonable, dictate a slight decline in the student population over the next 10 years.

Has any research been done to see how it will impact our schools if school vouchers take effect?

School vouchers are in the beginning stage of discussion at the federal level. The district will monitor any changes from the federal and state government.

What research has been done to show how this benefits our students and teachers?

As a result of the recommended grade level reconfiguration, there will be a more consistent approach to curriculum, instruction and assessment among the grade levels. Targeted grade level and band-level (primary and intermediate) professional development will improve instructional delivery. Moving the 5th grade to the elementary school provides a more appropriate social, emotional, and academic placement for this age group.

What are the next steps?

The next steps are very deliberate and will take time. The first step after the board has made their final decision is the design phase. This phase is projected to take 12 months. The process will take an additional 2 months after the design phase to award the bid. The final phase in the process after previous two is starting the actual construction which is projected to take 12 months to be completed.

Why are the facts different in the previous presentation than what it is in this one?

The facility and program deficiencies are the same except for the addition of #7, limited future expansion. The deficiencies were discussed in depth at the regular board meeting on November 3, 2016 and the information contained in the PowerPoint were topic discussion points. In order to report the information at the February 23, 2017 community meeting, the deficiencies were expanded on the power point.

Can we have a committee of residents, teachers, staff and students to help be part of the decision making process?

The feasibility study began in the facilities committee. The Facilities committee is made up of school board members, administration and township representatives. During that process, the architects met with the building principals and conducted a survey of building needs. The board of school directors will be asked to consider the creation of a steering committee to participate in future discussions and decisions as they relate to the current feasibility study.

What is the bond rating?

The district received ratings from Standards and Poors on September 25, 2012, and again on October 29, 2015. Both ratings were A+.

Why are the pool repairs not included in the money being borrowed?

The pool repairs have been pulled out of the feasibility study so they can be addressed separately. The board is considering a separate bank loan of \$2 million dollars to complete the

pool repairs. As of this document, the school district is waiting on the void report from the engineer. This information should be available to the board by the meeting on March 9, 2017.

Why are we building bigger buildings if we are only at 80% capacity?

The proposed intermediate school is based on the District's educational program. Building capacity does not factor other spaces needed such as libraries, gymnasiums, cafeteria, specialized spaces for specific programs like band and chorus. Our current elementary facilities are currently at 90% utilized, based on enrollment, not 80%. Also, school projects are reimbursed/planned for 20 year cycles and should plan for additional space to accommodate future enrollment growth, educational programs etc.

What is the maximum borrowing capacity of the district?

One guiding principle that was established at the beginning of this process was to maintain little to no impact on the taxpayers, or to remain budget neutral. With that principle, the \$50 million dollars was established as our borrowing limit by the board of school directors. Upon further review of the district financials, we could borrow up to \$76 million dollars. However, if this full amount were borrowed, the budget would see an approximate \$1.1 million dollar increase in expenditures annually. To offset this increase, the district would need to make educational program cuts creating a negative impact on the education of our students. If the district does not borrow to its capacity, it would allow the district, if need be, to borrow more money for an emergency. However, should that need arise, a tax increase would likely be needed to support the additional borrowing.

The proposed preliminary budget is on display for the 2017 – 2018 school year with a 4.31% tax increase. Is this tax increase for the new bond?

The district has used the option to put the preliminary budget on display and seek a referendum exception from the state for the 2017-2018 school year. This option allows the district to increase real estate taxes anywhere from 0% to the 4.31% max, as advertised. This does not mean the tax rate has been set. The tax rate will be set by the Board when they vote on the final budget in June 2017. The tax increase for this budget year (2017-2018) is mainly due to the increase in the PSERS contribution rate, medical insurance rate increases and special education cost increases. The district holds budget/finance committee meetings prior to the second meeting of every month beginning at 6pm. The meetings are held at the administration center. The public is encouraged to attend these meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for March 23, 2017.

Will building a new building be disruptive to our students' educational services?

If the board was to select Option 7, as presented with the closing/vacating of West Creek Hills Elementary, construction of a new building for grades 3 to 5 would take place first. Upon completion of the building the relocation of the students with the new grade reconfiguration

would take place. Fifth grade students would no longer be at the MS allowing for more room for construction at that building. If renovations were to take place at each building while school is in session it could result in educational disruptions. Some remedies to this disruption could include temporary classroom relocations in the current building, an outside temporary classroom approved by PDE or relocation to one of our existing buildings on campus. The district would work to make certain any disruptions were minor and short in duration.

Will class sizes increase with the proposed structure?

There are many mixed findings on the issue of class size and academic achievement. The most famous study, Tennessee’s Student Teacher Achievement Ratio report, showed that class sizes of 13-17 made a difference in academic achievement. A California and Ontario study noted that class sizes of 20 or fewer made a difference on academic achievement. Finally, a different Tennessee study, and a Bolivian study, found that class size must be reduced by 7-8 students to make a difference. **Here is the approximated impact on class sizes once enrollments are balanced among the two buildings. Please note this is a projection of class size based on information available at this time.**

	WCH Average Class Size (grade enrollment/# of teachers)	EPE Average Class Size (grade enrollment/# of teachers)	Total Grade Enrollment	K-2, 3-5 Grade Alignment Average Class Sizes with 10 Teachers	K-2, 3-5 Grade Alignment Average Class Sizes with 9 Teachers
Kindergarten	18.2 (91)	21.8 (109)	200	20	22.2
First Grade	18 (90)	21 (105)	195	19.5	21.66
Second Grade	21.2 (106)	22.8 (114)	220	22	24.44
Third Grade	22.6 (113)	21.8 (109)	222	22.2	24.66
Fourth Grade	25.75 (103) *Only 4 Teachers	22.6 (113)	216	21.6 *Already has 9 Teachers	24 *Already has 9 Teachers

Notation: The Pennsylvania Department of Education projections, which are deemed reasonable and reliable, show a decreased enrollment of 99 students K-12 in the next 5 years.

Notation: Fifth grade has 199 students with 8 core teachers. Average class size of 25.

Why won't there be anything done at East Pennsboro Elementary?

The district is currently working to upgrade the lower level HVAC system, which has been identified as an immediate need. If the district were to pursue Option 7, as presented, the operational savings from the closing of West Creek Hills Elementary could allow for the district to make improvements to East Pennsboro Elementary.

Closing West Creek Hills will eliminate the neighborhood or community school.

The district recognized and understands the valuable role West Creek Hills Elementary has in our school community. When examining the current enrollment at West Creek Hills, twenty five percent of West Creek Hills' student population live within the PDE defined walking distance of the school (This is defined at one mile from the building). The remaining 75% of the students are transported from areas as far away as Pine Hill Road, Country Club Road, Adams Ricci Park and the Schaeffer Field development.

Why don't we use the money to pay our staff members a better salary or provide additional classroom supplies?

The district could choose to not borrow the money and reallocate the debt budget to salaries. If this were to be done, there would not be improvements made to any schools. Should construction needs occur in the future, real estate taxes would have to be increased to cover the new budget line item.

Will there be an additional cost to clear the trees and repurpose the land on the main campus for the athletic fields or 3-5 building?

If the district were to move forward with Option 7, the costs of land preparation, except for the access road, is included in the current budget. Option 7 could include placing a new building in the area behind the administration center and would not disrupt any of the current athletic fields in the general area.

How will blended learning impact the physical spaces at the high school and elementary schools?

Currently, we are creating a shared vision, with teacher guidance, of what personalized learning will look like in our high school. Because of the specialized and departmentalized approaches of a high school, the initial visioning discussions have centered on self-contained classroom models of instruction. At the elementary school, guided reading blocks are already being used which is similar form of blended learning. This is being accomplished through the use of i-Ready diagnostic assessments and reading instruction. This form of blended learning is referred to as station rotation.