

Scenario Comparison

Scenario 1: Specialized Grade Spans (TK-3 and 4-6)

This proposal outlines a strategic shift: restructuring our elementary schools on the Westside into smaller, specialized grade spans, **Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through Grade 3 (Primary)** and **Grades 4 through 6 (Upper Elementary)**. This isn't just a reorganization; it's a commitment to an instructionally-focused model designed to maximize teacher expertise, align curriculum with key developmental stages, and cultivate a truly equitable learning environment.

Advancing Equity and Program Distribution

This restructuring is a powerful mechanism for advancing equity. It allows us to distribute specialized special education programs across all sites thoughtfully, rather than forcing them into schools based solely on available empty classrooms. This focused approach fosters greater collaboration among support staff and enhances the practicality of a full-inclusion model where appropriate. Crucially, this is an integral part of our effort to close learning gaps for our most marginalized students by providing highly specialized and consistent instructional support.

This plan spreads out special education classrooms among the schools, as well as developing pods of program classes. Teachers will have meaningful opportunities to collaborate. In addition, necessary ancillary spaces, such as sensory rooms, can be shared by program classes as needed. The percentage of IEP students at any one school, and the number of classrooms at any one school, will allow expansive and meaningful inclusion opportunities. This benefits both students with disabilities and general education students.

The positive effect on all students includes developing empathy, tolerance, and understanding of diversity; improving social skills like helping and cooperating; and often leading to better academic outcomes, reduced bias, and preparation for a diverse world.

Instructional and Equity Advantages

The core strength of this model is its ability to foster both **instructional alignment and specialized teacher expertise**. By giving each school site a narrow, three-to-four-year developmental focus, staff can concentrate their professional development and practice on the unique needs of that specific age group.

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- **Primary School Focus (TK-3):** Educators at these campuses (James Monroe and Helen Lehman) will become experts in the critical foundations of early literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development. This specialization directly supports the State's literacy goals, creating powerful, consistent hubs for foundational learning.
- **Upper Elementary Focus (Grades 4-6):** Hilliard Comstock will become the dedicated site for upper elementary students. The focus here shifts to content mastery, developing essential executive function skills, and providing the academic preparation needed for a smooth transition to secondary school. Professional development will be highly targeted, ensuring teachers are focused on the most critical content and pedagogy for this age range.

This structural consistency provides a smoother academic and social journey for students. Furthermore, aligning our sites into a TK-3 grade span directly supports the state-wide rollout of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK), creating a cohesive pathway for early childhood education.

This model encourages the development of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) at these campuses. It allows for early interventions, particularly in literacy, including robust Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports. This will allow more targeted support for general education students, meeting their needs before a referral for special education services.

Fiscal Responsibility

The plan also demonstrates sound fiscal stewardship. By transforming existing infrastructure (James Monroe and Helen Lehman per their master plans, and upgrading Hilliard Comstock), and including the closure of Abraham Lincoln Elementary, significant bond project savings are achieved. The closure of Lincoln Elementary means the associated planned \$17,000,000 Facilities Master Plan cost becomes available for use at other sites. The initial upgrade costs for Hilliard Comstock are estimated at \$3,000,000 (immediate needs: playground, fencing, classroom conversions) with a projected \$5,000,000 needed over five years. The district projects this specialized grade span model will ultimately reduce the total bond project estimates among these schools by approximately **\$8,000,000**.

This scenario is expected to be cost-neutral to the general fund, as the number of staff and bus routes is expected to remain consistent with current levels.

The strategic reorganization into specialized grade spans offers a robust solution that is instructionally rigorous, developmentally sound, aligned with state goals, and fiscally prudent.

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Scenario 2: Maintaining Distributed Special Education via Temporary Classrooms

This scenario involves proceeding with the board's decision to close the Steele Lane campus while maintaining a distributed model for Special Education services. This approach requires the immediate installation of **eleven temporary portable classrooms** to be spread across Hidden Valley, Luther Burbank, and Proctor Terrace Elementary schools.

Equity and Program Distribution

In this scenario, a high concentration of special education classes would remain at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School. This presents barriers to meaningful inclusion insofar as there are fewer general education classrooms into which students with disabilities may be meaningfully included. In addition, this concentration prevents the positive impact towards all students, including those in general education, of having special education program classes on campuses.

Logistics and Cost

The need to distribute programs across multiple sites necessitates the use of temporary facilities. This will simplify logistical planning for families by maintaining the established neighborhood school structure, which involves only a single transition from elementary to secondary school. The long duration of student enrollment from TK-6 grade also supports deep, long-standing relationships among staff, students, and families, strengthening the school's role as a community center.

The estimated fiscal impact to the bond over the next five years is roughly **\$22,000,000**. This figure accounts for the extensive installation of portable classrooms at sites like Proctor Terrace and the continued implementation of the facility master plan at Abraham Lincoln. The main difference in bond costs between the scenarios is the cost of the Facility Master Plan implementation at Lincoln Elementary, which is \$17,000,000.

This scenario is expected to have an impact on the general fund. While the number of staff remains consistent, it is estimated that an additional bus route would be necessary for Lincoln Elementary.

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Current Reality: Concentrating Special Education Programs

The status quo includes moving forward with the closure of the Steele Lane campus and focuses on relocating Special Education programs to sites with existing available space, specifically to avoid using bond funds for temporary classrooms (except where absolutely necessary). This means moving certain programs currently at sites to allow general education students living within attendance boundaries to attend their home school.

Facility and Equity Concerns

The immediate facility challenge will be at the Proctor Terrace Campus, which will still require the installation of two temporary portable classrooms.

Crucially, this scenario will result in **Lincoln Elementary exceeding a 50% special education enrollment**, housing 10 general education classrooms and 15 special education classrooms. Concentrating such a high percentage of specialized programs at a single site is widely considered a poor practice. It raises significant instructional, social-emotional, and equity concerns for our students by creating an uneven distribution of resources and specialized focus.

Community and Fiscal Impact

Like Scenario 2, this model maintains the familiar structure of neighborhood schools, simplifying logistics for families and fostering strong community bonds through long-duration TK-6 enrollment.

The estimated fiscal impact to the bond over the next five years is roughly **\$18,000,000**, accounting for the installation of the necessary portable classrooms at Proctor Terrace and the continuation of the facility master plan at Abraham Lincoln.

This scenario is expected to have an impact on the general fund. While the number of staff remains consistent, it is estimated that an additional bus route would be necessary for Monroe Elementary.