

## Memorandum

TO: District 200 Board of Education  
FROM: Lynn Kamenitsa & Mike Poirier, Imagine Team Co-chairs  
RE: Supplement to Concept Diagrams for June 26 Imagine-BOE Working Session  
DATE: June 22, 2018

## Introduction

The community-led Imagine Team has been working since August 2017 to assess facilities needs at Oak Park and River Forest High School, and to develop a long-range facilities master plan that will meet those needs now and in the future. The attached Orange and Blue concept diagrams are the results of Imagine's work to date and will form the basis of the next stage of our process: consolidating those concepts, along with Board feedback, into a comprehensive, long-term facilities master plan for OPRF.

This document is a companion to the Orange and Blue concepts that will be discussed at the June 26 Imagine-BOE Working Session. It includes the following

- I. Challenges and opportunities Imagine identified during the research phase
- II. Explanations of major facilities components presented in the Orange and Blue concepts, including their connection to the identified challenges and opportunities
- III. Imagine's prioritization process
- IV. Imagine's use of feedback

## I. Challenges and Opportunities Imagine Identified

The research undertaken by Imagine identified many specific facilities needs and some opportunities. This information was shared with the public as part of the Imagine's [February Community Conversation](#). The dozens of specific needs and opportunities identified fall into six general thematic categories:

- A. Student learning spaces need to be reorganized, reconfigured and, in some cases, renovated and upgraded to meet current, changing, and future educational needs.
- B. Inefficiency is prevalent as the result of decades of piecemeal problem-solving and assignment of spaces.
- C. Connection and community could be better fostered through several facilities changes that would help create a more welcoming school.
- D. Equity, along several dimensions, could be better fostered through facilities changes.
- E. Configuration and capacity in several areas of the OPRF campus leave student, enrollment, and curricular needs unmet.
- F. Condition of facilities in certain areas of the aging building negatively impacts students and staff, despite decades of good maintenance.

## II. Major Components in Blue & Orange Concepts:

The brief introduction to each major concept component includes its connection to the thematic categories discussed above.

**A. The Student Commons** is a driving idea contained in both concepts. It would create spaces in the center of the building where students could collaborate, study, socialize, and access essential services. The Commons would also bolster campus safety and security by creating a defined area for these student activities and public access. That area could be closed off from the rest of the building and, thus, more manageably secured by staff.

*Creating spaces for students:* In listening sessions, students consistently expressed a desire to spend more hours in the building and to have more spaces where they could collaborate, study, and socialize during school and, particularly, before and after school. The current campus layout makes it difficult to provide spaces for this without disrupting classes (during school) and giving students access to the entire building (outside of school hours), making it challenging and costly to provide appropriate safety and security staffing. The Commons would create spaces for such activities in a central core of the building. Research tells us that student achievement improves with the number of hours students spend on campus. The Commons would create spaces in which students can safely spend those hours.

*A hub for student services:* All services frequently used by students would be arrayed along the Commons, so students could access those during lunch or outside of school hours without getting a special pass. For example, students would not need a pass to spend part of a lunch period in the Tutoring Center or Library, seek out their counselor or social worker, get IT help, or visit the nurse.

*Containing public access:* The facilities most frequently accessed by visitors would also be located along the Commons and near the main entrance of the building. This would ensure that people participating in an IEP meeting with Special Education staff, meeting with the Principal, attending an arts performance, or going to a Board of Education meeting would not have access to the entire building during their visit.

Note: In addition to the central Commons near the main entrance, both concepts also propose Commons spaces in the south end of the building that would similarly provide spaces for students outside of school hours and contain visitors to athletic events and black box theatre performances.

The creation of Student Commons spaces would help foster connection and community, reduce inefficiency, address some configuration and capacity challenges, and foster equity.

**B. Library and Tutoring Center** would be moved toward the center of the building -- off of the Commons -- for ease of access, before, during, and after school. Both would be redesigned to

accommodate group and collaborative work as well as silent individual work. In listening sessions, students routinely mentioned these two spaces as the ones that worked best for them at OPRF, but complained that they close too early, require a pass to access at lunch, and lack collaboration spaces. Moving both to the Commons area would make them accessible during lunch periods and enable them to remain open longer without the additional security personnel that would be required in their current locations.

Imagine believes that a new Library and Tutoring Center would foster community and connection by helping students to feel more welcome in their school, help redress some equity issues (e.g., inequitable access at home to resources like quiet study areas and printers), improve student learning spaces, and remedy inefficient use of current spaces.

**C. Cafeteria and Food Service** facilities would get significant renovation to upgrade equipment, improve service and efficiency, and create a more welcoming space. In listening sessions and survey responses, students indicated that the cafeterias were a particular source of stress, anxiety, and discomfort, and that they wanted more options like the one provided by the balcony in the current Student Center. Imagine proposes making the cafeteria a more welcoming space using techniques we saw at other schools, including breaking large areas into smaller sections that could still be easily monitored, allowing some overflow to spill into the Commons, creating more spaces like the current balcony, and improving the efficiency of the servery area to reduce time spent in lines. The Commons could further reduce pressure on food service lines if students could arrive and depart during different times within their lunch period.

Redesigned and renovated cafeteria and food service facilities would improve efficiency, foster connection and community, address configuration and capacity issues, improve the condition of facilities, and even, according to students, affect some equity dimensions (for students who feel most uncomfortable in the current facilities).

**D. Classroom Reorganization** throughout the north end of the OPRF building would include rearranging existing spaces, renovating learning spaces, and re-allocating spaces as functions are moved to the Commons. This effort would focus on three key ideas: *neighborhooding*, *daylighting*, and *collaboration*.

*Neighborhooding*, locating like-functional classrooms and offices near one another, is an important contributor to improving faculty effectiveness and maximizing instructional time. It has the additional benefit of improving wayfinding throughout the school.

*Daylighting*, shown in multiple studies to have a significant positive effect on student learning and comprehension, is vastly improved in both the Orange and Blue concepts versus current conditions. Both concepts take advantage of adding new classroom spaces on exterior walls once the current functions are relocated to the Commons area.

*Creating collaborative spaces* throughout the academic area of the building is a key component of improving student-centered learning spaces. Both concepts include small group break-out spaces, create large spaces for collaboration among classes, and make classrooms more collaborative through updating infrastructure, instructional technology, and furniture.

Classroom reorganization would address issues related to student learning spaces, existing inefficiency, and configuration and capacity.

**E. Special Education Facilities** shortcomings would be addressed by expansion and renovation of the TEAM spaces, improving meeting spaces for professionals and families, and ensuring that diverse facilities needs of various Special Education programs are adequately met and located throughout the building. Meeting spaces that serve frequent visitors, like conference rooms for IEP meetings, would be located near an entrance and within an easily secured area of the building.

Improvements to Special Education facilities would address issues related to student learning spaces, equity, inefficiency, condition of facilities, configuration and capacity, and connection and community.

**F. Performing Arts Facilities** for the music and theatre programs would be updated and expanded to accommodate program growth and safety considerations. The current band, orchestra, and choir rooms are worn out, inaccessible, and undersized. New music facilities would be located together in a new area that increases classroom sizes, provides sufficient practice and collaboration spaces, creates adequate storage, and improves efficiency. Renovated and expanded theatre facilities would include a relocated black box theatre (with modern safety features), an expanded stagecraft area, and improvements to dressing rooms.

Improvements to performing arts facilities would address issues of student learning spaces, configuration and capacity, and inefficiency. Imagine also believes that these would foster connection and community since students who participated in arts programs reported that these programs served as safe spaces for them within OPRF.

**G. Physical Education and Athletics Facilities** would be newly constructed in their current location with minimal expansion of the school's footprint. This new south end would replace several problem facilities, accommodate existing needs, create flexibility for future needs, and make more efficient use of the land-locked site. The construction would happen over several years in carefully planned stages to minimize programming disturbances.

Imagine's research concurred with previous facilities assessments in determining that some of the worst facilities conditions in the school are the two swimming pools and the several boys' locker rooms. However, there are many other problem areas to be addressed in the Physical Education areas as well, including overcrowding, inefficiency, and safety.

The current buildings that comprise the school's south end involve dozens of structurally interdependent spaces that makes a piecemeal approach to remedying problems inefficient and more expensive. Building new would enable the most efficient and flexible use of available space to meet current and future needs, reduce the costs of maintaining a 90 year old structure, and create much more flexible spaces to respond to future demands.

Rebuilding Physical Education and Athletics facilities would improve student learning spaces, decrease inefficiency, improve the condition of facilities, remedy configuration and capacity issues, foster connection and community, and address several equity concerns.

**H. Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) Facilities** would be consolidated and relocated to the first floor in both concepts. The current facilities are not properly equipped to meet the needs of today's students nor those of the future. Consolidation to a first floor location, near the main kitchen and cafeteria, would provide a gateway for new instructional opportunities aligned with the school's career and technical education initiatives.

Renovation and relocation of the FACS facilities would improve student learning facilities, address configuration and capacity issues, reduce inefficiency, and improve the condition of the facilities.

**I. D200 and Building Administration Offices** would be positioned near the main entrance to the school to control public access and maintain secure zones within the building (see Student Commons section above).

**J. Student Services** would be brought to the center of the building in both concepts to increase student access to these resources before, during, and after school (see Student Commons section above).

### III. Imagine's Prioritization Process

The Imagine Team's process for prioritizing facilities challenges and solutions has followed a similar pattern at each stage of our work: thorough research by sub-teams, identification of issues to be addressed, discussion of those issues with the broader team, building consensus within the team about issue importance, and gathering feedback about our consensus from facilities users and community members.

Ours is an iterative, discursive process with consensus as the goal. Group members respectfully challenge the conclusions and arguments of others at every stage. Ongoing interaction with facilities users and community members pushes us to further refine our concepts. At times, the Imagine group has also used formal exercises to prioritize needs and the approaches to meeting those needs. This group work helps ensure that no sub-group or individual dominates or steers the prioritization process.

Our prioritization process has not been driven by formal metrics, but by consensus around multiple dimensions, including, but not limited to:

- Safety, health, and security of users
- Systems/facilities on the verge of failure
- Equity and accessibility
- Percentage of students impacted
- Facilitating student learning and achievement
- Creating welcoming and inclusive facilities

Individual Imagine members may give different weight to different dimensions, but one advantage of a large group using a discursive, consensus-focused approach is that such disparities are balanced out as the process moves forward.

Additional considerations include:

- Efficiency (for students, faculty and staff)
- Return on investment
- Capacity for multiple uses and flexibility
- Life expectancy
- Balancing academic, social, emotional, and physical impact of facilities
- Avoiding Band-Aids, inefficient short-term fixes, and the fallacy of sunk costs

Throughout our process to date, Imagine group members have had to train ourselves not to prioritize based on project costs for several reasons: 1) we do not know costs at this stage; 2) individuals' speculation about what items are more or less expensive is often wrong; 3) we do not want to settle for short-term, cheaper solutions that ignore longer-term, more comprehensive ones.

#### **IV. Imagine's Use of Feedback**

During the course of our work, the Imagine Team conducted five Community Engagement Sessions, once each during November, February, and April, and twice in May. We structured each of these sessions to maximize the opportunity for questions and comments from the public during the meetings. Many of the questions were answered on the spot, and we made every reasonable effort to capture comments and suggestions from these meetings. In addition we solicited and received questions and feedback for each of these meetings via feedback forms submitted on paper, via chromebooks at the event, or online after the event.

The Imagine Team documented and gave careful consideration to all of this feedback. We responded to many questions and comments on the Imagine page of the OPRFHS website. The feedback informed our discussions and decisions as we continued with our work. It helped us identify oversights and errors in our work, broaden our thinking about particular components, test our assumptions and conclusions, learn where we needed to sharpen and better support our explanations, and gather information about whether our work was on the right track in the eyes of community members. We did not do quantitative analysis of the feedback, since the small and self-selected sample would not yield results that were accurately representative of the community at large. We occasionally received unsolicited feedback and ideas, which we also evaluated as part of our overall work process.

In addition, we received important and helpful feedback from OPRF students, faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Education at every stage of our research, assessment, and conceptualization. The insights from these constituencies continue to be valuable in both defining critical issues and identifying conceptual remedies to address them.