



RAMS Parkside Discussion: Questions about Transportation

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

What would the transportation options be for Parkside students attending Valley View?

1. Parkside to Valley View Transportation
 - If approved, current Parkside students that live farthest from Parkside will actually have a shorter bus ride to Valley View than their current route. This is due to an existing bus route that already travels on 12 Mile Road then heads directly to Valley View. As a result, those Parkside students would see a reduced bus ride by 5 minutes.
 - Students that live South of 10 Mile/E. Division (Hunters Lane and Autumn Acres) are likely to have little to no change to their route time.
 - Students that live very near to Parkside will add approximately 5 minutes to their route for a total bus ride time of about 10 minutes.
 - Students who live south of Parkside (primarily on S. Monroe, Ogden, Maple, N. Lincoln) will likely have 5-8 minutes added to their route. The longest that those students would be on the bus is 25-30 minutes.

2. What would the Parkside to Valley View bus rides look like?
 - The routes will essentially be the same. The bus will drop off/pick up at Valley View instead of Parkside.
 - Some variables impact bus routes every year. These are things like new ridership due to new enrollees, changes in the bus roster due to family movement, students moving up to the MS, special programs, etc. These year-over-year changes require small routing changes to our bus program every year. This year will be no different. Families can expect similar changes and routes moving forward.

3. Would Valley view be able to handle additional buses?
 - During the 2023-2024 school year prior to the opening of Edgerton Trails Elementary, Valley View had 9 buses.
 - In the 2024-2025 school year, Valley View has 4 buses.
 - In the 2025-2026 school year, it is projected that Valley View combined with Parkside students will have 6 buses.

4. Rockford Public Schools' bus rides
 - Elementary students in our district ride the bus an average of 30 minutes.
 - The longest bus ride for an elementary student is 60 minutes. This is in the Cannonsburg attendance zone where the population of elementary students is widespread.
 - The shortest route for an elementary student is 2 minutes. In total, the average elementary route is 25 minutes. The shortest routes are near Roguewood and Valley View, where there is concentrated population density.



Parkside Discussion: How was the recommendation developed?

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

How was this recommendation developed?

The recommendation was developed by the Executive Cabinet:

- Dr. Steve Matthews
- Dr. Korie Wilson-Crawford
- Mike Ramm
- Allison Clements
- Lisa Jacobs

The recommendation began to be developed in November 2024 as plans began to be made for the 2025-2026 school year. The following concerns about Parkside elementary were noted:

- Parkside had one section in the following grades:
 - Kindergarten
 - 4th grade
 - 5th grade
- Moving students up into the 2025-2026 school year it appeared that Parkside would have one section in the following grades:
 - 1st grade
 - 2nd grade
 - 3rd grade
 - 5th grade
- One section grade levels limited the collaborative experience for teachers and students

Recognizing the potential for 2025-2026, the Executive Cabinet discussed options.

- Preschool/childcare in every building
 - Defeats the collaborative process for improvement
 - If we created a program in a Parkside Early Childhood Center, teachers and students would have collaborative opportunities
 - Developmentally they would not be with peers in the buildings.
 - Logistical concerns
 - How do preschool and DK fit within a building?
 - We cannot promise that each building can have preschool
 - Intentional design for preschool/childcare
- Slow phase out
 - Not bring in kindergarten class next year, no k or 1st the next year
 - Not viewed as optimal for the teachers or students
- Make River Valley Academy childcare
 - RVA students need a separate space

- Outdoor learning magnet
 - The site is not as conducive as other locations
- Immersion school
 - That would change the nature of the school
 - Not the way to do immersion
- Further redistricting
 - But other schools are right sized
 - Not the easy fix it appears
 1. Redistricting would create potential undersized buildings throughout the district
- Considered community needs
 - RAMS XII survey identified childcare as a need

Serious conversations began in November as we looked ahead to the 2025-2026 school year.

Why did we not convene the Parkside community for a discussion on this issue?

A recommendation to make such a significant change to a building would generate considerable discussion. I made the decision to present this to the Board at the February meeting and then take the next month to review and/or refine the recommendation for the March meeting.

This is consistent with board policy 5120 which states “the Board directs the assignment of students to schools within the district” and board policy 1230 which states the Superintendent’s duty is to “strive to increase the efficient use of District resources in the daily operations of the schools.”



Parkside Discussion:

Does this have anything to do with GSRP?

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Does the recommendation to consolidate Parkside and Valley View have anything to do with the state of Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)?

- There has been a focus in Michigan to ensure that preschool students have the opportunity to participate in preschool programs.
- Michigan has created the Great Start Readiness Program to provide preschool for children who turn 4 before December 1 of each year.
- The Great Start Readiness Program is coordinated through Kent ISD.
- In Rockford, we have two GSRP classrooms. They currently are housed at Cannonsburg Elementary School.
- While there is a per pupil allocation for students enrolled in the Great Start Readiness Program, the Rockford Public Schools does not receive this funding. Our school district only receives a rent payment from the Kent ISD for our classrooms.

The recommendation for Parkside Elementary is not based on the Great Start Readiness Program.

We believe that our early childhood programming – preschool and childcare – is a quality program that prepares our preschool students for a successful entry into kindergarten. Our parents are supportive of our programming and have a desire to see our Rockford program expanded.



Parkside Discussion: Questions about the Budget

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Budget questions answered:

Revenue is generated by the fee-based programs of preschool and childcare. The revenue is used to pay for the preschool and childcare staff wages and benefits.

- Wages and Benefits for existing teachers and paras currently at Parkside Elementary will remain consistent. The current staff at Parkside Elementary will be placed in other buildings in our district.
- There is no change in operating costs to run existing buildings.

The Capital expenditures can be paid for out of existing and/or future bond proceeds.

- The 2019 Bond is authorized to cover capital expenditures for Parkside and Preschool/Childcare buildings.
- Potential Future Bond Projects can include more specific capital enhancements to further reimagine the Parkside building from an Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Budget Projection for Early Childhood	
	FY 2025-2026
Revenue	
<i>Preschool Tuition</i>	\$ 286,900.00
<i>Childcare Tuition</i>	\$ 1,105,920.00
Total Revenue	\$ 1,392,820.00
Expenditures	
<i>Administrative Staff Wages</i>	\$75,957.35
<i>Early Childhood Staff Wages</i>	\$762,486.12
<i>Administrative Staff Benefits</i>	\$42,800.92
<i>Early Childhood Staff Benefits</i>	\$293,557.15
<i>Supplies</i>	\$86,106.91
<i>Utilities</i>	\$50,243.32
Total Expenditures	\$1,311,151.77
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenditures	\$ 81,668.23

The Early Childhood program is one of several childcare programs that our district provides to the community including Summer Care and Before and After Care. The combination of all these programs together creates a slight revenue stream for the district. (In other words, the childcare department as a whole creates revenue-not a deficit.)



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Parkside Discussion: Why an Early Childhood Center Matters?

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Benefits of an Early Childhood Center:

- According to the [National Education Association](#) (NEA), children in early childhood education programs are:
 - Less likely to repeat a grade
 - Less likely to be identified as having special needs
 - More prepared academically for later grades
 - More likely to graduate from high school
 - More likely to be higher earners in the workforce
- High-quality Early Childhood Education can **benefit children's cognitive, social, and behavioral development**. Studies show that children in high-quality ECE make greater improvements in these areas when compared to children from similar backgrounds who never enrolled in ECE. ([Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis, 2023](#))
- Participating in Early Childhood Education **helps children to develop skills that will benefit them in school and life**. Specifically, research shows that ECE can help children learn the foundational skills for reading, math, self-control, and positive relationships. ([Children's Learning and Development Benefits from High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Summary of the Evidence, 2023](#))
- Building a **sense of community** through events for families creates an **opportunity for them to connect and socialize**. This fosters a sense of community and belonging to our center and Rockford Public Schools. (*Survive to Thrive* – [NAEYC](#), LeeKeenan and Ponte, 2014)
- Early Childhood Education in a center provides students **access to various resources and supports**, including screenings for health and behavioral issues benefiting students, staff, and families.



Parkside Discussion: What are characteristics of elementary education in Rockford Public Schools?

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

RPS Elementary School Landscape: Every elementary school has a culture and identity. Fortunately in Rockford, both of these attributes are positive and increasingly influential. In other words, our elementary school programming offers our students and their families an experience that understands their student's individual learning needs and responds to enhance personal learning experiences, not by coincidence, but rather as a result of the supports and structures of the system. There is a responsibility to evaluate and ensure that every RPS student, regardless of where their home is located, is afforded *equitable learning experiences now and in the future*.

Core Instructional Belief: Teachers collaborate on building grade level teams to ensure high quality instruction, assess student understanding, and responding to student learning. Increased academic and social/emotional student learning outcomes result from a system that is structured to promote teacher collaboration. One of the key tenets of productivity includes having multiple sections at each grade level in each building so teachers have teammates to *"think and do"* with.

2024/25 School Year Parkside Grade Level Sections:

- Kindergarten: 1
- 1st Grade: 2
- 2nd Grade: 2
- 3rd Grade: 2
- 4th Grade: 1
- 5th Grade: 1

2025/26 Parkside Elementary Grade Level Sections:

- Kindergarten: 1
- 1st Grade: 1
- 2nd Grade: 1
- 3rd Grade: 1
- 4th Grade: 2
- 5th Grade: 1

Proposed Valley View Elementary Grade Level Sections With Adding Current Parkside Students for the 2025/26 School Year:

- Kindergarten: 3
- 1st Grade: 3/4
- 2nd Grade: 3
- 3rd Grade: 3/4
- 4th Grade: 4
- 5th Grade: 3

How does collaboration among teachers in the same building increase student experiences?

- Rockford Public Schools strives to ensure that all students in our district have equitable learning experiences no matter their home building or teacher.
- A core belief of our elementary buildings is that grade levels are responsible for the learning of all students and not just those that are assigned to a specific classroom teacher.
- Teachers in our elementary buildings have weekly shared planning time with their grade level colleagues and the point of our early release calendar is to provide time during the school day for same building grade level colleagues to discuss and respond to their students' learning.
- This diverse and productive thinking *is limited* when a teacher does *not have a grade level thinking partner* at their building.
- An intended outcome of this collaboration is tiered instruction (RAMS XII 1.A.2). For example, elementary schools with multiple class sections at a grade level routinely share students among teachers to intervene and extend learning. This arrangement is not possible with one teacher per grade level and thus could potentially limit learning opportunities for students.
- In the instance of Parkside Elementary, teacher collaboration *is limited* because of current and projected single section grade levels. In other words, teachers are not afforded the benefit of collaborating about real time student learning status to improve it in the best agreed upon practice in the moment and in the future.

What are the limitations of single grade level learning environments for the social and emotional needs of students?

- An elementary school experience includes six years of education in the same building with mostly the same classmates. As a result of these interactions there are opportunities and limitations.
- Every year students grow because of the variety of the interactions they have inside and outside of school. The more diverse the experiences and social interactions, the more depth they build as a young person and future adult.

- Similarly, there are also times when students need space from other peers. Consider times when there are conflicts among classmates. Always being in the same space can limit student well-being and even learning.
- The same can be said for the learning environment. Inevitably student dynamics influence overall class learning potential. If students learn with the same class of students for 6 elementary school years, it is likely that they may not be able to
- Multiple sections afford increased opportunity for students to learn at their highest level as well as develop their minds and hearts because of increased variety of interactions and options for intentional arrangements while kids develop socially.



Parkside Discussion: Questions about Enrollment Capacity

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Elementary Building Enrollment and Capacity:

If we move Parkside elementary to an Early Childhood Center, would we have capacity for growth in the district.

Building	Current enrollment	Unused classrooms
Belmont	274	3
Cannonsburg	265	0
Crestwood	476	5
Edgerton Trails	458	7
Lakes	413	3
Meadow Ridge	494	0
Roguewood	582	0
Valley View	340	7

- Parkside is not included in this calculation as it would be repurposed as an Early Childhood Center.

We have a total of 25 unused classrooms in the district at the elementary level.

If we added 23 per classroom we would have additional elementary capacity of 575 students.

With the additional capacity currently available in our elementary buildings we would not anticipate adding any portable classrooms to our district.



Parkside Discussion: Questions about New Development

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Approved New Development (per city of Rockford):

1. Summit Point: 27 single family homes. Under development currently – work has commenced on the water/sewer/utilities. Home construction will begin spring/summer 2025. First occupancy of homes – 2026. Valley View Elementary attendance area.
 - a. Anticipated impact on enrollment: Between 13 and 27 students.
 - i. Why that estimate? Autumn Acres across 10 Mile (Division) is a similar development and price point. We currently have 11 students from that development.
2. Summit Pines: 6 single family homes. Under development currently – work has begun commenced on water/sewer/utilities. Home construction will begin spring/summer 2025. First occupancy of homes – 2026. Valley View Elementary attendance area.
 - a. Anticipated impact on enrollment: Between 3 and 10 students.
 - i. Why that estimate? It is only 6 homes.
3. Creekview Bluffs: 47 single-family townhomes. Preliminary plan is approved. Home construction is slated to begin spring 2026. First occupancy of homes – 2027. Parkside Elementary attendance area.
 - a. Anticipated impact on enrollment: Up to 25 students.
 - i. Why that estimate? A similar development at Myers Lake Rd. and Belding Rd. (by Ric's Market), which has over 100 townhomes/single family homes, produces 23 students to the district – 6 elementary and 17 secondary.
4. Heritage Park: 21 single family lots remaining in the buildout of the subdivision. Build out will continue for the next 1-2 years through 2026. Occupancy will vary. Valley View Elementary attendance area.
 - a. Anticipated impact on enrollment: Up to 21 students
 - i. Why that estimate? Currently from the Heritage Park neighborhood we have 221 students from approximately 250 homes in the neighborhood.

Additional property to be developed

1. Property on Donald Street owned by the Rockford Baptist Church: Potential 6-12 homesites
2. Tamarack Townhome property: Build out of Townhomes. Up to 15 homesites

3. Michigan State Police Post on old Northland Dr. Potential 8 townhomes.

According to information provided me Thad Beard, city of Rockford manager, these developments are likely but not approved yet. So these developments do not appear imminent – within the next two years. The soonest possible impact 2027 or beyond.

Potential impact of development by 2030

1. Several properties will be developed within the city of Rockford, and in the current Parkside and Valley View attendance areas by 2030.
2. The impact of these developments for the district will probably be under 100 students.
3. Capacity within the system could absorb these students even if we repurpose Parkside into an Early Childhood Center.



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Core Instructional Belief: Teachers collaborate on building grade level teams to ensure high quality instruction, assess student understanding, and respond to student learning. Increased academic and social/emotional student learning outcomes result from a system that is structured to promote teacher collaboration. One of the key tenets of productive collaboration includes having multiple sections at each grade level in each building where teachers have teammates to *"think and do"* with.

2024/25 School Year Parkside Grade Level Sections:

- Kindergarten: 1
- 1st Grade: 2
- 2nd Grade: 2
- 3rd Grade: 2
- 4th Grade: 1
- 5th Grade: 1

2025/26 Projected Parkside Elementary Grade Level Sections:

- Kindergarten: 1
- 1st Grade: 1
- 2nd Grade: 1
- 3rd Grade: 1
- 4th Grade: 2
- 5th Grade: 1

Projected Valley View Elementary Grade Level Sections With Adding Current Parkside Students for the 2025/26 School Year:

- Kindergarten: 3
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How does collaboration among teachers in the same building increase student experiences?

- A core belief of our buildings is that grade levels are responsible for the learning of all students and not just those that are assigned to a specific teacher.
- Teachers in our elementary buildings have weekly shared planning time with their grade level colleagues. Our early release calendar is intentionally designed to provide time during the school day for building grade level colleagues to discuss and respond to student learning.
- An outcome of teacher collaboration is tiered instruction (RAMS XII 1.A.2). Elementary schools with multiple class sections at a grade level routinely share students among teachers to intervene and extend learning. This is not possible with one teacher per grade level and limits learning opportunities for students.
- In the instance of Parkside Elementary, teacher collaboration *is limited* because of current and projected single section grade levels. Teachers are not currently afforded the benefit of collaborating about real time student learning status to improve it in the best agreed upon practice in the moment and in the future.

What are the limitations of single grade level learning environments for the social and emotional needs of students?

- When a single section of students interacts only with each other over an extended period of time, students do not have the benefit of diverse experiences and social interactions that prepare them for the future.
- Similarly, there are times when students need space from peers. Consider times when there are conflicts among classmates, families or others. Always being in the same space can limit student well-being and even learning.
- Student dynamics influence overall class learning potential. If students learn with the same class of students for 6 elementary school years, it is likely that they may not be able to fully engage in discourse, debate and varied perspectives which support future learning.
- Multiple sections afford increased opportunity for students to learn at their highest level as well as develop their minds and hearts because of increased interactions and options for intentional arrangements while kids develop socially and academically.



Parkside Discussion: Questions about Redistricting

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Should we redistrict to add students to Parkside Elementary?

When the district created new elementary boundaries last year, it was anticipated that Parkside would have more students than it does.

One solution that has been presented is to redistrict to add students to Parkside.

The rationale for not redistricting:

1. Each elementary building is currently appropriately sized.
 - a. Moving students to Parkside to create two sections per grade level is not easily done.
 - b. The two closest buildings - Edgerton Trails and Valley View – currently have extra capacity.
 1. Why would we reduce their size when they already have open classrooms?
 - c. Roguewood is a two-section per grade level building in both general education and Spanish Immersion.
2. We created the Northland Dr. boundary to divide the district east and west to ensure that elementary school students would attend middle school together.
3. Each elementary building has at least two sections per grade level, leading to teacher collaboration opportunities during common planning and early release times.
 - a. Moving students could possibly create the situation we are trying to avoid – one-section grade levels.
4. It is true that this is a problem that we created at Parkside with the new boundaries.
 1. But the boundaries work at every other school.
 2. The solution is not to undersize other buildings and make multiple buildings inefficient.
5. Moving a boundary would not guarantee having students in the right grade levels.
6. We have excess capacity at the elementary level.
 1. Creating an Early childhood Center meaningfully uses this excess capacity to benefit the district.



Parkside Discussion: Questions about Teacher Collaboration

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

The importance of teacher collaboration:

When schools have only one teacher per grade level, students miss out on the advantages of a collaborative teaching team working together daily. This includes teamwork, shared expertise, and differentiated instruction. Having at least two grade level sections in each building where teachers are collaborating together ensures that every child receives a high-quality, well-rounded environment that supports their learning.

1. Stronger Teaching Through Collaboration and Consistency in Learning

- When teachers work together in a building, they easily share ideas, lesson plans, and strategies that help improve instruction for all students.
- Research shows that when teachers collaborate, student achievement improves significantly (*Visible Learning*, Hattie, 2009).
- With multiple teachers at the same grade level, all students at a grade level in the building receive a similar, high-quality education.
- Schools that follow the *Professional Learning Community (PLC) model* (DuFour, 2004) see higher student success rates because teachers meet regularly to discuss student progress and adjust instruction based on data.
- Research (*Ingersoll & Strong, 2011*) shows that when teachers work in teams, they are less stressed, more motivated, and stay in the profession longer.

2. Better Support for Different Learning Needs

- Every child learns differently, and when multiple teachers work together, they can group students flexibly to give them more personalized instruction.
- Struggling students get extra help, and advanced learners receive challenges that keep them engaged.
- Studies on differentiated instruction (*Tomlinson, 2001*) show that when teaching is tailored to a student's level, learning improves dramatically.
- When teachers work as a grade level team, they can identify areas where students are struggling and quickly provide support to keep them on track.
- Common assessments across classrooms help ensure that every child is making progress and getting the support they need.
- In multi-section grades, students may have opportunities to interact with different teachers, which helps them adapt to different teaching styles and personalities.
- Flexible grouping across classrooms allows students to work with peers at similar academic levels, keeping them challenged and engaged.



Parkside Discussion: Valley View Enrollment and Capacity

This document is intended to answer questions that have arisen as we have begun a conversation about repurposing Parkside Elementary to an Early Childhood Center.

Valley View Elementary and Capacity:

1. If we move the students from Parkside to Valley View, what would the enrollment be at Valley View?

Current Valley View enrollment (February 2025): 340

- This includes 34 developmental kindergarten students
- This includes 45 5th grade students

Projected total 2025-2026 Valley View enrollment: 321

- Projected 1st – 5th 2025-2026 enrollment at Valley View: 261
- Additional kindergarten enrollment: 60

Current Parkside enrollment (February 2025): 179

- Includes 20 ASD students
- Includes 32 out-of-district school of choice students
- Includes 12 in-district school of choice students

Projected total 2025-2026 Parkside enrollment moving to Valley View: 138

- Subtract from 179 the ASD students moving to Meadow Ridge
- Subtract the 27 5th graders moving to middle school

Projected enrollment of combined Valley View and Parkside: 459

2. Would a combined Valley View and Parkside exceed capacity?
 - a. No. Based on the current (February '25) enrollment for each building and rolling those up to next year, here is the current projected enrollment and preliminary enrollment for Valley View for the 2025-2026 school year:

	Parkside '25-26	Valley View '25-26	Combined '25-26
Kindergarten	?	?	?
1 st	21 (1 – 21)	52 (2 – 26)	73 (18, 18, 18, 19)
2 nd	25 (1 – 25)	45 (2 – 23)	70 (23, 23, 24)
3 rd	28 (1 – 28)	55 (2 – 27)	83 (20, 21, 21, 21)
4 th	38 (2 – 19,19)	67 (3 – 22)	105 (26, 26, 26, 27)
5 th	26 (1 – 26)	42 (2 – 21)	68 (22, 23, 23)
Total	139 (no K yet)	261 (No DK, K yet)	*399 (No K, DK yet)

*60 kindergarten to add

With these projections, that would use 18 classrooms. Assuming 3 kindergarten classrooms would put the total to 21.

Valley View has 27 classrooms. 3 classrooms are currently used for specials - music, STEAM, and art. With these projects the specials classrooms would still serve as specials classrooms.

With the K-5 classrooms at 21 and the specials classrooms at 3, that would leave 3 classrooms for growth.

It is important to note that these are projections based on current enrollment data. It is also important to note that Parkside currently has 32 out-of-district school of choice students. The numbers above reflect that all of those students would move to Valley View.