

# Recommendation to the Board of Education

Proposing a change to Parkside Elementary:  
Supporting Rockford's Collaborative Culture and  
Enhancing Childcare Opportunities

March 10, 2025

# February 10 Proposal to Board of Education

- Combine Parkside and Valley View attendance areas
  - All students would attend Valley View Elementary
  - Valley View becomes a school with approximately 470 students
    - Multiple sections at each grade level
      - Supports teacher collaboration
      - Supports student collaboration
- Repurpose Parkside into an Early Childhood Center
  - Create multiple preschool and childcare options at Parkside
    - Early Childhood Special Education would move from Meadow Ridge to Parkside
      - ASD program would move from Parkside to Meadow Ridge
        - This program would continue to offer outdoor excursions at both Meadow Ridge and into downtown Rockford
    - Childcare and preschool options would be created at Parkside

# Since February 10 . . .

- Multiple meetings with Parkside parents
- Met with Thad Beard, city of Rockford manager
- Met with Tom and Tracie Rich, local realtors
- Met with Rockford Chamber of Commerce
- Met with Robbie Augustine, Mike McIntosh, Grace Smith
- Visited Parkside multiple times
- Listened to Parkside staff concerns in informal visit to lunchroom
- Received emails and phone calls opposed to and in support of proposal

# Tonight's Purpose

- Hear from community members representing those wishing to keep Parkside as an elementary building
- Hear the Superintendent's recommendation to repurpose Parkside and combine Parkside and Valley View

# Rockford Public Schools' Core Values and Norms

- Parents care deeply about their children and where they go to school
- School staff – administrators and teachers – care deeply about the students who attend our schools and actively seek to create positive, engaging classrooms and schools for these students to attend
- It is possible to have differences of opinion and continue to presume positive intention

# Representatives from Parkside

# Strong Elementary Schools

- We believe that we have a responsibility to every Rockford Public School student, regardless of where their home is located, to provide them with a positive, engaging, equitable learning experience
- To meet this responsibility we have focused on creating elementary schools where teachers can collaborate to create high quality learning experiences for all students, assess the impact of these learning experiences, and respond as needed to students either individually or in groups
- A core belief is that elementary grade level teachers are responsible for the learning of all students not just those assigned to their classroom

# Strong Elementary Schools

- Strong elementary schools encourage student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction
- This “think and do” approach encourages student-to-student interaction which expands opportunities for discourse, problem-solving, and hearing multiple perspectives.
- Having two or more sections in a grade level at the elementary level has the potential to increase student-to-student learning opportunities and staff-to-staff collaboration



# District Performance – M-STEP

M-STEP Comparison					
	2018-19		2023-24		
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	
3rd	62.3%	69.9%	65.8%	76.8%	
4th	62.9%	69.2%	70.0%	73.0%	
5th	65.9%	62.4%	73.7%	70.1%	
6th	55.6%	60.9%	63.1%	67.1%	
7th	54.7%	63.6%	62.5%	64.7%	
8th	83.3%	66.8%	87.9%	59.9%	

# Student Achievement – Comparative Data

- All subjects combined – Rockford 10<sup>th</sup> in the state
  - English Language Arts – Rockford 10<sup>th</sup> in the state
  - Math – Rockford 11<sup>th</sup> in the state
  - Science – Rockford 5<sup>th</sup> in the state
  - Social Studies – Rockford 22<sup>nd</sup> in the state
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- There are 904 school districts in the state of Michigan
    - 537 traditional public schools
    - 367 charter schools
  - [The top 50 Michigan school districts for each school subject, via test scores - mlive.com](#)

# Increasing Academic Performance

- RAMS XII: Academic Excellence pillar
  - 1.A.1 – Guaranteed and viable curriculum
  - 1.A.2 – Tiered instruction
  - 1.A.3 – Student engagement
  - 1.A.4 – Data Response/Assessment
  - 1.A.5 – Eliminating opportunity gaps

# Key Factors

- The intentional decision to give teachers and administrators time to work together to support students
  - Early release days
  - Common planning time
  - Focus on guaranteed and viable curriculum
  - Creation of a tiered system of support
- This requires teachers having colleagues with whom to work and plan
- For students having a meaningful system of tiered support is critical
  - Tiered support is facilitated with teams of teachers

# Additional Key Factors

- Early Childhood Education
  - Providing high quality opportunities for our youngest learners prepares them to be successful in grades K-12
- Our Rockford Public Schools Community Services early childhood program supports our students success in school
  - Accredited through the state of Michigan
  - Curriculum supports our kindergarten learning experiences
  - Staff trained in the PLC (professional learning community) process

# Catalyst for the Proposal

- Enrollment at Parkside has created single section grade levels at K, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- Looking ahead, it appears that Parkside will have single section grade levels next year at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>
  - Kindergarten enrollment is unknown at this time
- The enrollment at Parkside creates an environment for students that lacks equity when compared to other Rockford schools
- The enrollment at Parkside creates an environment for teachers that does not foster meaningful collaboration with grade level colleagues
- There is a community need for additional preschool and childcare programming

# Current Parkside Enrollment

Parkside		
Total enrollment	179	
In-district SOC	29	Including 7 children of staff
Out-of-district SOC	32	
ASD students	10	Fulltime in ASD
ASD students	10	Push-in to general education
* 21 students from Parkside opted for other district schools		

Parkside Elementary 2024/25		
	K	18
	1st	24
	2nd	28
	3rd	37
	4th	25
	5th	27
		159
	ASD	20

Parkside Elementary 2024/25		
	K	?
	1st	18
	2nd	24
	3rd	28
	4th	37
	5th	25
		132
	ASD	20

# Did We Explore . . .

- Redistricting to bring more students to Parkside?
- The closest elementary buildings to Parkside are Rogewood and Valley View
  - Each of them has two sections in each grade level K – 5
    - Valley View's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade has 3 sections
  - Moving students from those buildings could create single section grade levels at those schools



# Did We Explore . . .

- “Fixing” the redistricting by bringing back students originally included in Parkside boundaries?
- The boundaries that were approved created elementary schools that are appropriately sized
- The boundaries that were approved followed key boundaries – streets, geographic boundaries, distance from school

# Did We Explore . . .

- The “problem” created by redistricting?
- Every building in Rockford, except for Parkside, is appropriately sized and able to handle potential enrollment changes from planned housing expansions
- Redistricting right-sized schools does not make sense

# Did We Explore . . .

- Moving River Valley Academy and use that space for expanding preschool?
- River Valley Academy was created to give high school students who needed an alternative learning space their own location
- River Valley Academy is a productive school and program for students who need an alternative setting

# Did We Explore . . .

- The impact moving Parkside students who will then have three schools in three years?
- This will cause some students to have three schools in three years
- Our supportive staff will ensure student success and belonging
- The Parkside students will move together to Valley View
- There will be beneficial impacts from teacher and student collaboration

# Did We Explore . . .

- The impact new housing development will bring to Parkside?
- New development has been reviewed with the city of Rockford and local real estate agents
- New development within existing Parkside Boundaries
  - Creekview Bluffs – 47 single family townhomes – 1<sup>st</sup> occupancy 2027
  - Tamarack Run Townhomes – 12 additional units – preliminary planned unit development application submitted – 1<sup>st</sup> occupancy 2026.
    - Currently no students from Tamarack Run
  - Likely student impact - minimal

# Did We Explore . . .

- The impact new housing development will bring to the city of Rockford?
- New development has been reviewed with the city of Rockford and local real estate agents
- New development
  - Summit Point – 27 single family homes – 1<sup>st</sup> occupancy 2026
  - Summit Pines – 6 single family homes – 1<sup>st</sup> occupancy 2026
  - Heritage Park – 21 single family lots remaining
  - Likely impact – 75 students by 2027
  - Other developments are being planned but impact is several years away

# Did We Explore . . .

- The impact on achievement of larger schools?
- Valley View has consistently been one of the highest achieving schools in Rockford
- The top three achieving elementary schools in Rockford have been Valley View, Crestwood, and Belmont

# Did We Explore . . .

- Isn't this just a money grab by the district?
- Our projections show the impact of this will be additional revenue to our district of approximately \$81,000
  - Revenue for new preschool/childcare classrooms would be \$1.39M
  - Expenses including wages, benefits, supplies, and building costs would be \$1.31M



# Did We Explore . . .

- The cost of renovation needed for Parkside?
- We can transform the Parkside classrooms as they are into classrooms appropriate for preschool and childcare programs within existing budgets
- Parkside has a gym that can be used by preschool and childcare students
- Parkside has a media center that can become an appropriate preschool/childcare media center

# Did We Explore . . .

- Co-locating preschool/childcare classrooms in each building?
- This would work against teacher collaboration
  - Our preschool/childcare staff supports our professional learning communities culture
- Preschoolers require lots of manipulatives.
  - Classroom items are changed about every two weeks to keep students interested and scaffold their learning. Because they are in one building, classrooms can share these manipulatives.
- Each school would need to be licensed for preschool ages.
- Co-location creates additional expenses that would make it cost prohibitive
  - Staffing
  - Facility needs
  - Licensing requirements

# Did We Explore . . .

- Valley View capacity?
- Valley View has 26 classrooms
- Valley View currently uses 19
  - 2 Developmental Kindergarten
  - 3 kindergarten
  - 2 each in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>
  - 3 in 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Next year if this proposal is accepted the possible classrooms usage could be 24 classrooms (enrollment driven):
  - Kindergarten – 3
  - 1<sup>st</sup> - 3/4
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> – 3/4
  - 5<sup>th</sup> – 3

# Background. . .

- This is a challenging conversation
- It is especially challenging given that we just redistricted last year
- Our intent is to continue to create vibrant learning communities within our district

# What to Remember

- The goal is to ensure that the students and staff at Parkside have the opportunity to be in collaborative and supportive learning and teaching environments
- Parkside is not closing
- Parkside is being repurposed to help meet a community need
  - Early childhood enrollment has the potential to help our district keep families in our district
  - It meets a need for our young families
- Valley View has room
  - And room for growth

# Recommendation for Consideration

- Combine Parkside and Valley View attendance areas
  - Create a school of approximately 450-470 students
  - Provide equitable experience for all Rockford elementary students
- Repurpose Parkside into an early childhood center
  - This will meet a community need
  - This will connect young families to our district