



Worthington Schools
200 E. Wilson Bridge Road
Worthington, Ohio 43085
www.worthington.k12.oh.us

July 8, 2019

Dear Boundless Committee Members,

Worthington Schools have a strong tradition of excellence and residents in our community have high expectations for our schools. Every day we strive to provide a well-rounded education for our students with a rigorous curriculum, caring teachers and opportunities for our students to connect with their school through activities and clubs.

Worthington Schools provides an educational experience that prepares students for careers, college and life. We also know that excellence in education must go beyond a data point and a letter grade on a state report card.

In Worthington, we like to call it the Both/And approach, where our school district has made the deliberate decision to focus and apply resources on offering students more educational and enrichment offerings than any other district in Central Ohio, rather than focusing exclusively on test scores.

As we open in 2019, Worthington will serve 10,800 students in programs from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Students are served in 19 different schools and with multiple programs.

Worthington delivers excellent value to the taxpayers. We have a stable and lean budget and we carefully spend every dollar where the impact is the greatest for student success.

In 2015-2016 we began to plan for the future of Worthington facilities. The research revealed some of our buildings are in great shape and are in need of some minor maintenance, while others could use extensive renovation or even replacement. That makes sense when you consider that some of our newest school buildings are 25 years old, while several of our schools are 60 years old (Colonial Hills) and were not built with today's learning in mind. We have done an excellent job with upkeep on the buildings, however, it's not the appearance of the buildings that concerns us. It is the out-of-date infrastructure behind the walls (i.e. plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling) that is becoming more and more costly. The plan began in 2015 with a partnership with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission. This State of Ohio organization brought teams of architects and construction experts to walk each Worthington school. They provided individual assessments of every system within our schools. Based upon the OFCC

reports, we learned that to bring our schools up to a statewide standard we needed \$260 million worth of replacements and renovations.

After receiving the OFCC assessments, we partnered with Cooperative Strategies to create a Master Facilities Plan. Sixty-one community members led by community chairs Nikki Hudson and Amy Lloyd invested 18 months to create a plan that would address our aging buildings, balance high school enrollment and create capacity for all students. (Our enrollment has grown by 1,200 students in the last five years and is projected to continue to grow by another 800 students in the next five years.)

We are working with the community and our educational leaders to come up with a long-term plan so that our schools can continue to offer vital programming and the variety of opportunities for students that our community expects and values. We are also committed to the delivery of excellent education in the most financially efficient manner possible.

We intended to come forward with this plan in phases. Phase One required funding of approximately \$89 million dollars and was passed by the community (70% voted in favor) this fall as Issue 9. This plan provides capacity for our elementary schools by moving 6th grade to the middle school in the fall of 2021. It will address our aging buildings by rebuilding Worthingway Middle School and Perry Middle School (Perry would reopen as a 6-8 grade middle school, while Phoenix, Worthington Academy and Rockbridge remain on that site). The plan balances high school enrollment by moving to 4 traditional middle schools (plus Phoenix) with two middle schools feeding to each high school and by moving a current TWHS feeder elementary to the WKHS feeder pattern.

This is just Phase One of our plan. We'll propose to come back to the community in 2022 with Phase Two of the plan and likely back again around 2026 with Phase Three. By phasing the work we are able to maintain our state-mandated debt limits and hopefully make the work more affordable for community members.

Certainly, Phase One does not solve every issue in Worthington. As our enrollment continues to climb, we have multiple elementary schools that have exceeded their capacity. Redistricting our students is not an option that will solve our capacity issues because all schools are utilizing their full allotment of classroom space (even Sutter Park and Phoenix). However, when we rebuild several elementary schools in Phase Two, they will be rebuilt larger than they currently are and redistricting would need to occur at that time. (I'd project that to be around 2024.) Therefore, we will continue to overflow students to other schools when they enroll in a specific grade level without space. We have already added modular classrooms at Colonial Hills and Worthington Hills and for the upcoming year, we will add modulars at Bluffsvew, Evening Street and McCord. Until Phase One of our plan is complete (Fall of 2021), we will add modular classrooms at schools as they are needed.

It is our belief that the Indianola Terminus Parcel would be an ideal site for a new Colonial Hills Elementary. This parcel of 13.7 acres would allow the school to remain in the Colonial Hills neighborhood while building a modern educational facility that meets the needs of Worthington students for the next 60 years.

This property has always served the public and a school would fit with the natural character that the community expects. Worthington Schools understands the need to protect the natural environment, to partner with the community on walking paths, outdoor recreation space and an exterior building that fits within Worthington's Architectural Review Board guidelines.

We believe that Worthington Schools and Boundless are natural partners with aligned missions to serve students and families in our community.

Our proposal for this site includes:

- Building a 600 - 750 student elementary school to replace the current Colonial Hills Elementary
- A purchase price of approximately \$1.9 million based on the appraisal we had completed (although market rates may dictate a higher price which we are willing to negotiate.)
- A cost-sharing formula for the shared driveway and bridge maintenance.
- Access to the property from both Indianola Avenue and Dublin-Granville Road, recognizing that property owners do not want a cut-through road on this property.
- Funding for this project would likely be placed before the community in November 2022 (subject to Board of Education vote) and if successful construction could begin in the fall of 2023 for a school opening in August 2024.

Sincerely,



Trent H. Bowers, Ed.D.
Superintendent