

Why is the millage in Fayetteville currently 10% higher than Rogers or Springdale? Does it cost more to operate Fayetteville schools than Rogers and Springdale and, if so, why? Does Fayetteville pay its teachers 10% more than Rogers or Springdale? If not, where is the variance?

Fayetteville's millage is higher than neighboring districts primarily because:

1. *Our smaller schools and smaller student/teacher ratios create a higher cost per pupil*
2. *We offer more and varied course offerings than other schools*
3. *Our technology expenditures are higher, due to our emphasis on integrating technology into the curriculum to support 21st century learning*
4. *The Fayetteville property tax base is lower than our neighbors (the value of each mill is less); therefore we must request a higher millage to finance our capital projects*

The Fayetteville School District is competitive in teachers' salaries across the salary schedule after a concerted effort to reduce expenses across the district and direct more funds to the salary schedule.

How did Rogers and Springdale manage to build new high schools with a millage rate lower than Fayetteville and without raising their millage rate to at least equal to Fayetteville?

The proposed new FHS is the model designed by the citizens of Fayetteville, which is a campus-type model versus a single building model. A new FHS will be built on the existing campus site with a much different topography and time schedule due to students on site during construction. Building materials, LEED certification, 2010 dollars, larger square footage, new State building standards, and virtually no State facilities funding are also key reasons that this project will require more millage than other facilities built in the last decade.

If the Fayetteville School District had managed to sell the current Fayetteville High School to the University of Arkansas, would a millage increase still be necessary?

A millage increase would still be required because the current project cost is estimated at approximately \$110 million. Even if proceeds from the sale of the current FHS could offset some of the expenses, a new site would require an estimated \$30 million to replace facilities on the existing site that would need to be built elsewhere but will be retained on the existing site. Assuming proceeds of \$50 million, the calculation would look like this:

$\$110 \text{ million} - \$50 \text{ million} + 30 \text{ million} = \90 million

It's also critically important to note that the Fayetteville School District's last millage increase was in 1995. We have spent \$59 million on capital projects in the past 14 years with no increase. In fact, the millage rate today (42.8) is lower than it was in 1995 (44 mills). Another factor that cannot be ignored is the lack of a politically favorable site for a new high school, other than the current site. The community made it clear that a majority of patrons prefer the current site and would not support relocating to a new site

Would having a millage rate of nearly 20% greater than Rogers and Springdale make Fayetteville a less attractive place to live relative to Rogers and Springdale?

Due to the growth in the Springdale and Rogers districts, it is highly likely they will need to have millage increases in the near future as well, so that differential will be much less than 20% even within a couple of years.

This community intends to build a campus to be a reflection of its pride in the Fayetteville education system. As mentioned in response to question above, the education culture between our cities has always reflected different values, and the construction of the people's plan for a high school with small learning communities is a part of that continuum. People who know Fayetteville know the value its citizens place on our unique culture and our ambition to benchmark nationwide.

In 1995, the Fayetteville Public Schools actually had 12 more mills than Springdale Public Schools. Due to rollbacks in millage and increases in the Springdale millage, the current difference is 4.3 mills.

What decisions regarding the high school have been made by the School Board?

In February of 2007, the board voted to support one high school and in March of 2007, the board voted to add 9th grade to the high school. In September 2008, the board voted 7-0 to commit to building a new 21st century high school on the current FHS site. The board also voted 7-0 to authorize the administration to "conceptualize and present a plan for a 21st century school district."

In December 2008, the board voted to set a target size for a new high school of 3,000 students in grades 9-12, to be contingent upon the curriculum and architectural design being centered around a 21st century learning model and small learning community concepts. In January 2009, the board will set criteria for the community design charette.

The final decision was a vote on the millage title and proposed budget of expenditures, made June 25, 2009, for an election on September 15, 2009.

What problems are we trying to address by building a new high school?

Classroom space is not the principal issue but several classrooms need more flexible spaces to accommodate 21st century teaching strategies. All of the common areas are much too small and most fall well below state standards. Areas for performing arts, gymnasiums, cafeteria, and band rooms cannot satisfy the current population. The school was built for a maximum 1,000-student capacity when it opened in 1952.

Several renovations later, only a few spaces (such as the media center) have grown to accommodate more than the original 1,000 planned. Building safety is an issue due to the high number of entries to the buildings (54). Parking for the current 10-12 graders is also inadequate.

The building is not designed for teacher teaming and collaborative spaces for both teacher and student projects. One of the issues we are trying to address in a new building is to provide a more personalized, student-centered environment. A new design that makes every effort to create a small school atmosphere, when combined with personalized advising and mentoring programs, will have positive outcomes, providing opportunities for collaboration and engagement of all students. There are numerous examples of new, flexible spaces being built in high schools across the country that provide a more personalized learning environment. Research shows many different models that can work, including one model called Small Learning Communities.

What is the current enrollment and what are enrollment projections for Fayetteville High School?

Adding 9th grade to the 10-12 campus today would result in a population of 2,422 students. The district has projected enrollment using historical data from the past 8 years rather than the traditional, cohort survival method that has produced dramatically inflated projections. Since the 2000-2001 school year, the average student change from year to year results in a decline of 6 students per year. Even given the housing bubble in 2004, a year in which we gained 104 students in these grade levels, we have lost an overall 52 in those 8 years.

What are population growth trends in the region and in Fayetteville?

While Fayetteville has a larger young adult population than Springdale, Rogers, and Bentonville

(due largely to the presence of the UA), the city has a much smaller 35-44 year old population than our neighbors to the north. In comparing the 2000 and 2006 U. S. Census data, city planner Tim Conklin discovered that household size in Fayetteville has decreased slightly over time. There are many more school-age children per household in Springdale, Rogers, and Bentonville (e.g. Using end of year 2007 population growth estimates, Springdale city population: 64,865; Fayetteville city population: 68,924; Springdale school enrollment: 16,834; Fayetteville school enrollment: 8,406).

During the 1990's Fayetteville grew 3+% but between 2000-2006, only 2.4%. Mr. Conklin believes that while it is difficult to project, it is unlikely that we will sustain this growth rate into the future. Combining this knowledge with the numbers regarding fewer children per household, we believe the slow enrollment and declining growth trends described above should guide FPS planning for the future.

What is the acreage of the current FHS property?

The existing high school, including the Bates Annex to the high school, currently sits on 19 acres. The total acreage of the entire property, including athletic fields and administration building is 40 acres.

What committees have been charged with which decisions regarding the high school?

The original FHS Select Committee was charged with working with the community to determine whether the district should build one high school or two and what that grade configuration should look like (9-12 or 10-12). Today's FHS Select Committee II was charged with making a recommendation to the School Board about the future location of Fayetteville High School. An Architect selection committee has been formed to determine who will be hired to build the new FHS if the millage passes on September 15th.

Why did the School Board decide to add 9th grade to the high school?

Based on the research during the first high school committee work that included over a hundred citizens in a dozen focus groups, the primary reasons that emerged included:

- *Because grade 8's curriculum is configured as middle school and grade 9's is configured as high school, aligning 9th grade curriculum into the high school curriculum would offer better academic paths through best placement of courses and resources.*
- *Moving 9th grade allows for acceleration of 9th graders into upper level classes to which they do not currently have access.*

- *Arkansas standards dictate that instructional time requirements are written along grade configuration divisions (k-4, 5-8, 9-12). Assessments are also aligned according to grade configuration divisions (3-8, 9-12).*
- *Teacher certification follows grade configuration and since requirements for high school certification are different, so would requirements for professional development within a building. It is difficult to accommodate the 8-9 grade span for appropriate instruction in many areas.*

Other effective reasons regarding maturity and high school readiness were also cited as advantages for moving the 9th grade to the high school.

- *Almost every grade level is positively affected by moving the 9th grade up. This would allow the district to create a two-tiered middle school approach (5-6 and 7-8), which would allow 5th and 8th grade teachers the benefits of the middle school model. Having elementary schools configured at K-4 would also relieve overcrowding of the elementary schools and provide more space for growing Pre-K.*
- *Benchmark testing occurs in 6th and 8th grades, which currently is a transition year. Testing occurs before 6th and 8th graders have had a chance to adjust to their new environments. Moving these grade levels would allow time for negative effects of transition to be accounted for. This would have a high impact on test scores and help schools avoid school improvement status.*

This is difficult to answer as both options have environmental impacts, from demolition and removal to potential development of currently undeveloped property. In principle, the district is striving for LEED certification in upcoming building/renovation projects. At the November 2008 board meeting, the board agreed to allow the architects the freedom to determine whether any of the existing structures would be viable to be included in the 21st century design for a new high school.

Why did the School Board decide to build one high school rather than two?

Building two high schools was considered and discussed at length by the FHS Select Committee I and by the School Board. Based on the research during the first high school committee work mentioned above, the primary reasons that came to be known dealt with how to build equity into two facilities, both in terms of the academics and population distribution so as to avoid a "have/have not" school environment.

The result of focus group respondents who answered the question regarding one or two high schools was overwhelmingly in support of one campus. Of 177 respondents, 94% supported one high school over two.

What would be the most environmentally sound choice: remodel or build a new facility?