

The Future of High Schools in Roanoke City Public Schools

Feasibility Study

On August 13, 2024, Spectrum Design presented a Feasibility Study to the Roanoke City School Board. As part of this study, Roanoke City Public Schools (RCPS) provided capacity information for each school in the division. The information illustrated a looming problem: overcrowding at the division's high schools.



Current State

William Fleming High School

Constructed Student Capacity	% of Capacity*
1,649	123%

Patrick Henry High School

Constructed Student Capacity	% of Capacity*
1,674	122%

*Capacity data as of 6/20/24

Options to Reduce Overcrowding

Spectrum cited the overcrowding at the high schools as a priority that RCPS needs to address, given the slight population growth expected in Roanoke City over the next 26 years. Three options were proposed to alleviate overcrowding:

- Renovations to expand the current high schools;
- Construction of a third high school;
- Establishment of a magnet high school.

This preliminary summary is intended to outline financial, logistical, and community impacts to be considered when evaluating each option.

Option 1:

Renovations to Construct Additions to High Schools

Feasibility Study

Spectrum Design’s feasibility study proposed an option to increase the student capacity at both high schools by 450 students with the construction of additions to the existing buildings.

Fast Facts



Estimated Costs \$30 - \$40 million combined for both schools



Schedule 3 - 5 years

** Does not include staffing costs.*

High School Capacity

School	Student Capacity	Future Capacity
William Fleming	1,649	2,099
Patrick Henry	1,674	2,124



Pros to Adding Additions

- Increases capacity at over-enrolled schools, providing relief and potentially improving the student-to-teacher ratio.
- Addresses the immediate need to increase capacity and utilizes existing infrastructure and locations.
- Lower cost compared to building a new high school.

Cons to Adding Additions

- Potential for construction to disrupt daily operations and student experiences during the build phase.
- Limited by available space on existing campuses.
- Does not alleviate the long-term need for additional high school capacity.
- More students to manage.
- Larger student populations across both campuses will likely result in new athletic classification, creating greater travel distances for student competitions.

Staffing

Twenty-six additional staff members would be needed per school to serve the increased student population and the larger schools. Additional staff includes:

- Administration:** 1 Assistant Principal
- Instructional Staff:** 18 Teachers
- Safety Support:** 1 School Resource Officer
2 School Security Officers
- Student Support:** 2 School Counselors
- Operations:** 2 Custodial Staff

Option 2:

Construction of a New High School

Feasibility Study

Spectrum Design's feasibility study proposed an option to construct a new high school with a capacity of 1,500 students.

Fast Facts



Estimated Costs \$90 - \$120 million*



Schedule 5 - 7 years

* Does not include land acquisition and staffing costs.



Pros to Constructing New School

- Long-term solution.
- Provides a significant capacity increase with modern facilities.
- Opportunity to design a school that meets current and future educational needs.
- Alleviates pressure on existing high schools without disrupting their operations.
- Reduces the number of students to manage.



Cons to Constructing New School

- High upfront cost and a longer timeline for completion.
- Initial cost and timeline would strain the city's capital budget and delay relief for overcrowded schools.
- Requires identification and potential acquisition of a suitable site.
- May face community resistance depending on location.

Option 2 continued:

Construction of a New High School

Space Considerations

Land Availability: Requires collaboration with the City of Roanoke's Economic Development Department to identify appropriate acreage to accommodate a new high school. Factors include zoning, access to infrastructure, and proximity to residential areas.



Consideration for a Leased Option:

Developer Involvement: Partnering with a developer to build and maintain the property, with RCPS paying a lease, could make the project more financially feasible. However, this would increase long-term costs compared to outright ownership.

Staffing*

Staffing for the new high school would be based on serving 1,500 students. Seventy-six new staff members would be needed, not including cafeteria staff:

Administration:	1 Principal 2 Assistant Principals
Instructional Staff:	60 Teachers 12 Special Education Teachers 20 Instructional Assistants <i>(Estimate - depends on the number of students receiving special education services)</i>
Safety Support:	1 School Resource Officer 4 School Security Officers
Student Support:	3 School Counselors 1 School Nurse 1 Social Worker
Operations:	Cafeteria Staff (through SFE) 8 Custodial Staff
Front Office Staff:	4 Administrative Assistants 1 Attendance Secretary 1 Bookkeeper

** Some staff could move from existing schools as a result of alleviating overcrowding.*



Option 3:

Establishment of a Magnet High School

Feasibility Study

Spectrum Design's feasibility study proposed an option to create a magnet high school to serve 600 to 900 students. This could be done by renovating an existing building or constructing a new facility. The school would offer specialized programs such as fine arts, humanities, and STEAM.

Fast Facts



Estimated Costs* Renovation: \$20 - \$30 million
New Construction: \$40 - 60 million



Schedule 3 - 6 years

** Does not include property/land acquisition and staffing costs.*

Academic Programming

Establishing a magnet high school offers RCPS the opportunity to create a high school with a specific focus on the arts, humanities and/or STEAM.

The Arts: An arts program that focuses on cultivating and developing students' talents and skills in the visual and performing arts. Similar programs or schools offer a rigorous academic curriculum alongside concentrated arts training, generating an environment where student artists can flourish and prepare for careers in creative fields or further education. Students receive instruction in core subjects, including mathematics, science, English, social studies, and world languages, which is intentionally interdisciplinary, designed to complement the arts curriculum.

Humanities: A humanities program that focuses on the study of human culture, history, philosophy, literature, and the arts. These programs are conceived to cultivate critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and a deep understanding of diverse cultures and societies.

STEAM: A STEAM program that integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to provide a holistic education that advances creativity, innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The goal of a STEAM program is to prepare students for future careers by emphasizing both the technical and creative aspects, encouraging relationships between disciplines and knowledge application to real-world challenges.



Option 3 continued:

Establishment of a Magnet High School

Pros to Establishing a Magnet School

- Provides a specialized educational environment to benefit students citywide.
- Unique offering in the area, potentially drawing residents to the City of Roanoke.
- Enhances educational offerings in the city and could serve as a model for future magnet schools.
- Potential to revitalize an area and integrate the school within the community.
- A smaller student body allows for a focused, intimate learning environment.

Cons to Establishing a Magnet School

- Limited capacity will not address high school overcrowding if adequate space is not found.
- Urban site constraints could limit expansion or require compromises in facility design.
- Higher per-student cost than larger schools.

Space Considerations

Urban Site Considerations: Requires an in-depth evaluation of potential sites in the area, considering factors like existing building conditions, potential for historical preservation

requirements, and integration with surrounding businesses and residential areas.

Consideration for a Leased Option:

Developer Involvement: Leasing a renovated or newly constructed building could be a viable option, providing flexibility and reducing upfront capital expenditure. This approach, similar to agreements for the Social Security Office and City Health Department, would allow RCPS to focus resources on core educational functions.

Staffing

The smaller magnet high school would require fewer teachers, and some could potentially come from existing schools. Sixty-seven staff members will be needed, not including cafeteria staff:

Administration:	1 Principal 2 Assistant Principals
Instructional Staff:	36 Teachers 6 Special Education Teachers 10 Instructional Assistants <i>(Estimate - depends on the number of students receiving special education services)</i>
Safety Support:	2 School Security Officers
Student Support:	3 School Counselors 1 School Counselor Administrative Assistant
Operations:	4 Custodial Staff
Front Office Staff:	2 Administrative Assistants 1 Attendance Secretary 1 Bookkeeper