



Zachary Robock &lt;zrobock@gmail.com&gt;

## Questions re: Today's District-Wide Communication

Nora Katzenberger <nora.katzenberger@lakewoodcityschools.org>

Wed, Sep 3, 2025 at 11:09 PM

To: Zachary Robock <zrobock@gmail.com>

Cc: Betsy Shaughnessy <betsy.shaughnessy@lakewoodcityschools.org>, Colleen Clark-Sutton <colleen.clark-sutton@lakewoodcityschools.org>, Lisa Dopman <lisa.dopman@lakewoodcityschools.org>, Michael Callahan <michael.callahan@lakewoodcityschools.org>

Zach,

I agree that this should be the last email on this topic.

Nora

On Wed, Sep 3, 2025 at 10:35 PM Zachary Robock <zrobock@gmail.com> wrote:

Members of the Board,

This is my last email on this topic, although I would welcome genuine engagement should anyone like to have further discussion.

For reference, copied below are my full remarks that were intended for the Sep. 2 BOE meeting.

I have been so insistent over this email chain about using appropriate capacity/utilization data because it is the root cause of the classroom shortages discussed in my remarks. By using OFCC capacity data to develop the scenarios, without making adjustments to account for special education classrooms or doing a physical walkthrough of the buildings, the scenarios shift from our current state of relatively balanced utilization rates (see [Slide 12](#)) and create substantial imbalances and overcrowding (See [Scenario Tabs 1-6](#) of district analysis). Several other Task Force members raised concerns with using OFCC capacity data early on, and adjusted capacity/utilization numbers were prepared and [presented](#) in February; *however, the scenario boundaries were never redrawn to reflect the adjusted data.*

On March 3, 2025, shortly after the adjusted utilization/capacity data was shared, I recognized this issue and wrote privately to Sup. Niedzwiecki and Pres. Katzenberger:

- **Capacity / Utilization Data Corrections.** *There were significant corrections to the school capacity numbers (Slide 13 of FutureThink PPT), including a (-106) correction in Horace Mann and (-29) at Roosevelt, while other schools gained modestly. **Based on these corrections, we should re-work the district boundaries in any scenarios that remain under consideration following our next meeting to reflect the correct capacity.***
- **Remove CHAMPS/Rise & Stars from Capacity.** *We cannot interchange GenEd and SpecialEd students from one classroom to another, and we should therefore remove CHAMPS and R&S capacity and students from the capacity/utilization calculations. In other words, if a GenEd 2nd grade classroom at Horace Mann ends up overcapacity, those extra students cannot be sent to a CHAMPS classroom and the class cannot be split to take over a CHAMPS classroom. **So, we should proceed with Emerson at 440 capacity (not 480) and Horace Mann at 330 capacity (not 394).** (To be sure, we should absolutely make sure special needs students are provided for and supported - my point is just that these special needs seats are not interchangeable with gen ed and we need to categorize them differently)*

Throughout this process, I have provided data-based feedback through private channels in an effort to constructively steer the process. I never spoke out publicly during the Task Force process, and respected the integrity of the process. These private concerns were largely ignored. In May, Sup. Niedzwiecki went so far as to berate me during our first and only Task Force presentation committee meeting, reciting how many years of experience she has and scolding me "not to tell her how to do her job".

I realize I'm being portrayed by some as attempting to disrupt the process, but I have volunteered a hundred or more hours reviewing and analyzing data and providing non-public, constructively-minded feedback that has been largely dismissed or belittled. I am not sharing this background to try to shame or point fingers at anyone -- but this context is important for the Board to understand where I am coming from in my recent comments in hopes that you will take this feedback to heart, rather than the dismissive nature of recent emails.

I am deeply analytical by nature, and have probably been through this data more thoroughly than anyone else - paid or unpaid. Yes, my kids go to Lincoln, so it's easiest to dismiss my feedback as just a biased parent. But consider a different perspective -

- I have a vested interest in getting this right, not just for myself, but for my neighbors and friends at all the other schools and for the larger Lakewood community. I have done this amount of legwork and analysis precisely because I am a deeply invested parent -- a level of work which few if any others are willing to do.

I am the product of public education and believe in protecting public education for all so that we can raise an entire community of kind, intelligent and critical thinking children - this is not just about my kids or my small circle. Pigeonholing me as a concerned parent and dismissing my input is easy; taking my input seriously and grappling with critical feedback is much more difficult.

Sincerely,  
Zach Robock

*Intended Remarks for Sep. 2 BOE Meeting - Zach Robock, Member of Elementary Task Force:*

*We have been evaluating the merits of closing one or two elementary schools for over a year. Stepping back, however, a threshold question was overlooked – Are the proposed scenarios physically possible as designed - are there enough classrooms available in each school? Surprisingly, the answer is “no”. **Not a single one of the district’s 6 scenarios can be implemented as proposed because at least one school in each case requires more classrooms than that school has available.***

*In March, the district modeled out the number of classrooms per grade per school using a 22-student maximum for K-2 and a 25-student maximum for grades 3-5.*

*Under Scenario 1 - Repurpose Lincoln - there would be a large influx of students to Horace Mann, which would require 18 classrooms. One problem - Horace Mann only has 15 classrooms available. The rest are reserved for the CHAMPS special education programs. These special education resources should not be on the table for consolidation.*

*Under Scenario 2 - Repurpose Roosevelt - Horace Mann still comes up 1 classroom short.*

*Under Scenario 3 - Repurpose Grant - Roosevelt would be short by 2 classrooms.*

*The other 3 scenarios involved repurposing 2 elementary schools and are even worse.*

*This data is available in the March 12 PPT on Slides 18-20 + the February 19 PPT Slide 11.*

*These scenarios were supposed to “optimize facility usage”. The district has steadfastly defended them against huge community concern. However, they fail to satisfy the basic math of ensuring enough classrooms in every school.*

*Could the scenario boundaries be redrawn to avoid overcrowding and ensure every student has a roof over their head? Possibly, but to make the math work, it appears to require adjusting a hundred or more students in each scenario – and this is just to achieve 100% capacity where every single classroom is occupied.*

*It's tempting to think that each classroom over capacity would require adjusting just the one classroom's worth of students. In other words, that being one classroom over capacity can be solved by adjusting boundaries for 20-25 students. However, it does not work that way. Boundary lines are drawn geographically, not by age. You cannot just redistrict one 5th grade classroom in isolation. Those kids don't all live on the same street. Each school houses 6 grade levels (Kindergarten through 5th). You would need to redistrict roughly 6 times the number of student overage - because for every 5th grader, you're also going to affect kids in grades K-4 who live in the same boundary.*

*To make the math work, it appears to require adjusting a hundred or more students in each scenario – and this is just to achieve 100% capacity where every single classroom is occupied. To achieve the district's desired utilization of 80% would require even more extensive rework.*

*I have been raising this issue to Sup. Niedzwiecki and Pres. Katzenberger privately since March, and to the larger Board since April when the full extent of the issue became clear. They dismiss this as a nonissue because,*

they say, the scenarios are based on projections and they will draw final boundaries with actual data. However, this is precisely the issue - those final boundaries will look substantially different than the scenario boundaries we have been evaluating. If boundaries for 100's of students need to be reworked from the current proposals, then it will affect all of the walkability, safety, teacher movement, and other data that underlies any decision whether to close a school – and if so, which one. This is not a data-driven solution.

*Shifting gears - I think starting the Task Force and evaluating elementary enrollment was a responsible idea with a levy on the horizon, and the Board deserves recognition for its foresight in evaluating whether there are savings opportunities before a levy. The Board articulates wonderful ideals about equal class sizes, minimizing teacher movement, and more - all while maintaining walkability, safety, community and expanding early childhood. I think we are all aligned in these ideals, and I'm personally open to repurposing a school where the supporting data demonstrates this vision and appropriate support for affected families.*

**The problem is that the district's proposals do not actually demonstrate that they advance these ideals. Not only that, the specific proposals offered demonstrate a worsening of some of the exact issues the district desires to improve.** After a year of discussion and tens of thousands of dollars on consulting fees, the district has not put forth a single plan where every student and teacher has a roof over their head - let alone demonstrated a measurable benefit to the community. How can we trust that this administration is going to somehow be able to design and execute a workable plan in less than a year, while also standing up a preschool?

We speak often about the many other priorities that we'd all rather focus on than debating school consolidation. **Choosing to repurpose a school is not the end of this journey, it would only mark the beginning of the climb. Who is going to actually do all of this work?** How much will it cost in consultants, district resources, and community energy? **What other priorities will it detract from? None of this was ever meaningfully discussed during or after the Task Force** - it would be premature to make a decision without at least a preliminary project plan outlining the steps required and ensuring the resources required are budgeted and available.

Enrollment has stabilized, building utilization is relatively balanced, and we received increased funding under the latest state budget. Our local school system is and should be a bright spot of stability and success amid chaotic state and national circumstances, not a flashpoint for unnecessary community angst.

On Sat, Aug 30, 2025 at 2:39 PM Zachary Robock <zrobok@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Nora,

We can reasonably disagree on some elements in this discussion - such as whether the 60% OFCC threshold will ever pass. However, there are key objective facts that are not subject to differences in interpretation, which is where my email outreach began.

1. **Using OFCC Data to Consolidate or Redistrict Will Result in Overcrowded Schools.** The district's original 6 consolidation scenarios used OFCC data. When LCSD Treasurer Kent Zeman modeled out these scenarios into classrooms at 22/class (K-2) or 25/class (3-5), every scenario had at least one school where the number of classrooms required exceeded the number of classrooms physically available. For example, if we closed Lincoln, then under the district's proposal, Horace Mann would require 18 classrooms, but only 15 classrooms are available. This is also true for closing Grant and Roosevelt. [Source = [March 12, 2025 PPT](#) - Slides 18-20 + [Feb. 19, 2025 PPT](#) - Slide 11]

The core topic of this email chain was Sup. Niedzwiecki's district-wide email representing elementary utilization based on OFCC data, and your subsequent response on behalf of the Board defending her approach and stating that "we need to use the OFCC numbers in determining their actual capacity." This is an objectively flawed approach as demonstrated by the district's own data - if you use OFCC numbers in making consolidation scenarios or redistricting, you will create overcrowded and imbalanced school utilization. Representing only OFCC capacity data as the sole data source to the community is deeply misleading and borderline dishonest.

2. **Preschool Utilization Rates.** The data points described below to achieve a minimum 60% utilization or the stated target of 80% utilization are objective data. The district would need a 40% increase in preschool enrollment over 2024-25 data to achieve the minimum 60% utilization to avoid a forced charter sale, and would need a 105% increase in preschool enrollment over 2024-25 data to achieve the stated target 80% utilization. These massive increases

would be in the face of the enrollment decline being promoted by the district, and no information was ever presented to the Task Force or public to demonstrate the district's analysis that these numbers are reasonable. To achieve 80% utilization in a consolidated preschool building would require 320-350 students, whereas district-wide kindergarten enrollment is expected to be ~280/year. These are not interpretive questions where we can 'agree to disagree' - these are objective facts.

3. **Huffman Quote.** The quote you offered below from State Senator Matt Huffman. Here is the full quote again:

"The capacity issue is the next big issue on the horizon for school choice," Senate President Matt Huffman, R-Lima, said. "If there's no place for you to go, then there's no school choice."

The [article](#) is about Huffman pressing for the state to fund construction of more private schools in rural areas of Ohio. He supports EdChoice, and is saying that if there is not a private school to choose from, then there is 'no school choice.' **The article has nothing to do with underutilization and does not mention a 60% threshold, it is about lack of capacity for private schools in rural areas. This is not a matter of "interpretation"** - you took the quote completely out of context and attributed an objectively incorrect meaning to it. You say you are responding on behalf of the entire Board, but it does not seem like anyone actually read the article, and it strongly suggests you are using ChatGPT to respond to my email rather than meaningful engagement with the facts and underlying sources.

Thank you,  
Zach

On Thu, Aug 28, 2025 at 9:57 AM Nora Katzenberger <nora.katzenberger@lakewoodcityschools.org> wrote:

Hello Zach,

Much as it would be tempting to continue to debate our different interpretations of this information and data, we will have to agree to disagree. I'm sure we all have a lot on our plates that also requires attention.

Take care,  
Nora

On Wed, Aug 27, 2025 at 11:05 PM Zachary Robock <zroboc@gmail.com> wrote:

Good evening Nora and Members of the Lakewood Board of Education:

I appreciate you taking the time to respond promptly and thoughtfully, but disagree with several points and conclusions.

First, the quotation you cited does not mean what you suggest. Here is the full quote from the article:

*"The capacity issue is the next big issue on the horizon for school choice," Senate President Matt Huffman, R-Lima, said. "If there's no place for you to go, then there's no school choice."*

The [article](#) is about Huffman pressing for the state to fund construction of more private schools in rural areas of Ohio. He supports EdChoice, and is saying that if there is not a private school to choose from, then there is 'no school choice.'

**The article has nothing to do with underutilization and does not mention a 60% threshold, it is about lack of capacity for private schools in rural areas.** You say you are responding on behalf of the entire Board, but it does not seem like anyone actually read the article.

Second, Huffman is considered extreme in his positions, and articles much more recent than your 2023 article outline extensive [pushback from Republicans](#) in the Ohio legislature on Huffman's positions. Even with strong Republican majorities in both the state house and senate and a national environment with education funding under threat, the strict 60% OFCC threshold was removed early in the state budget bill debate this year.

Kowtowing to a fringe threat like Huffman's is not vigilant or realistic. It is defeatist. The Board should be doing what is in the students' and teachers' best interests - and then advocating against the voices calling to defund public education. Consolidating schools in fear of a 60% threshold only facilitates the extremist positions coming to fruition without ever actually becoming law and emboldens those extreme voices to yell louder.

Stepping back, I agree that the 60% OFCC threshold is a risk that should be monitored. We should be prepared if the threats materialize, but we should not jump to preemptive action based on a fringe threat. There is a significant difference between preparation and preemption. In addition, as the article you cited explains, there is already a substantial concentration of private schools in Cuyahoga; Huffman's focus is on expanding private schools in *rural* areas where there

is no school choice, so Lakewood is less likely to be a target even if the 60% threshold passes.

Third, in the event the 60% OFCC threshold does pass and Lakewood is targeted, then consolidating schools preemptively would likely *weaken* LCSD's position. Utilization in the repurposed preschool is likely to be lower than if the district kept 7 elementary schools. By consolidating elementary out of the single repurposed school, and then underutilizing it for preschool, we would essentially serve up a school for a forced charter sale.

The district has presented no evidence that there is demand for a centralized preschool sufficient to fill the repurposed school to the minimum 60%, let alone the desired 80% utilization rate the district claims as optimal.

- Current enrollment is 175.
- Using OFCC 25/classroom capacity, it would require 240-255 preschool students just to hit 60%.
  - A 40% increase in preschool enrollment would be required just to hit the bare 60% minimum (amid overall "declining enrollment").
  - To hit 80% utilization would require 320-350 students, more than *double* current preschool enrollment, and *substantially more than an entire incoming Kindergarten class*.
  - A shift to centralized preschool may attract some new families, but it's also likely to lose some existing families.
    - Neighborhood 9:00-3:00 programs filled up before centralized Taft this year, suggesting more demand for neighborhood preschool.
    - Preschool students who need full day + aftercare are also likely to need summer programming, which the district does not offer. Preschool age kids are not eligible for school-age summer camps.

Finally, a 60% threshold that does not accommodate for special education needs is not only cruel, but is also unlikely to survive legal challenges. It is a major error for the district to count the 12 combined special ed classrooms as having capacity for 25/classroom - a capacity difference of 200 students at Horace Mann and 100 students at Emerson. This approach ignores reality and is likely to cause overcrowding as I've previously explained.

Thanks,  
Zach

On Wed, Aug 27, 2025 at 11:06 AM Nora Katzenberger <[nora.katzenberger@lakewoodcityschools.org](mailto:nora.katzenberger@lakewoodcityschools.org)> wrote:  
Good morning Zach,

When I reply to emails, I reply on behalf of my fellow Board Members. As this email exchange demonstrates, Superintendent Niedzwiecki has been very responsive to your extensive questions. Furthermore, as a Task Force member, I'm sure you are aware that while the District used a different set of capacity numbers to demonstrate how we would like to use the buildings, we need to use the OFCC numbers in determining their actual capacity.

Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives Matt Huffman (R-District 78) was quoted in the Columbus Dispatch on 7/12/23 as saying, "The capacity issue is the next big issue on the horizon," demonstrating that this measure has support at high levels of our state government. It is quite likely that the 60% threshold will reappear in some fashion, whether it is part of the next biennial budget, or if it is part of a bill sometime in the next few years, as is often the case with these measures. For example, Senate Bill 104 in 2024 inserted "Bathroom Bill" language as a floor amendment on page 28 of a bill primarily dealing with College Credit Plus programs. As District leaders, we must be vigilant and realistic.

As a Task Force member, you also know that student and teacher needs and experiences are the reasons why Superintendent Niedzwiecki convened the Elementary Facilities Task Force to begin with, in addition to our responsibilities as a District for being good stewards of the District's resources out of respect for the support we have received from the Lakewood Community.

Take care,

Nora

On Tue, Aug 26, 2025 at 9:52 PM Zachary Robock <[zroboc@gmail.com](mailto:zroboc@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Members of the Lakewood Board of Education:

In my emails below, I outlined why the district's "FAQ" email on 8/25 and subsequent "clarification" on 8/26 are incomplete and misleading. I offer citations and screenshots of the district's own data in support of these positions.

In response to my feedback that correctly identified district errors, Superintendent Niedzwiecki stated that she will no longer answer emails and refuses to provide any citations or substantiation for her data. So I am turning to the Board

that is ultimately responsible for district oversight. **Does the Board stand behind the district's recent emails? Do you intend to take action to clarify the district's recent communications?**

In response to Maggie's last email below, the OFCC data is an incorrect baseline of capacity for several reasons - most importantly because it does not account for special education classrooms in Horace Mann or Emerson. It also seems not to account for STEM, Art, Music or other "special" classrooms and uses a 25/classroom student ratio for all grades K-5, including for special education rooms.

Our elementary planning should be rooted in the reality of what's best for student and teacher needs and experiences, not made in fear of a 60% OFCC threshold that was removed from the latest budget with bipartisan opposition due to its unworkable nature.

Regards,  
Zach

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Maggie Niedzwiecki** <maggie.niedzwiecki@lakewoodcityschools.org>  
Date: Tue, Aug 26, 2025 at 12:33 PM  
Subject: Re: Questions re: Today's District-Wide Communication  
To: Zachary Robock <zroboc@gmail.com>

Zach, this will be the last time I respond via email. The data I used is from our website. I am using the data that the OFCC would use.

Like I stated in the previous email:

"Over the past year of facilitating an open and organic task force, we've collected extensive data and made numerous adjustments to our parameters and assumptions."

On Tue, Aug 26, 2025 at 12:28 PM Zachary Robock <zroboc@gmail.com> wrote:

Maggie: Quick follow-up, I just noticed the update email already went out this morning with the incorrect capacity figures, so I trust another correction will be forthcoming. Please confirm.

If you would like, I am genuinely willing to take the time to review the next clarifying email and provide feedback so that we are working together and the community is receiving clear data that is consistent with the underlying data on the district's website.

On Tue, Aug 26, 2025 at 10:35 AM Zachary Robock <zroboc@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Maggie, this data still reflects important inaccuracies in the "capacity" figures. You are seemingly using the original data from August 2024, instead of the (mostly) corrected data from February 2025. Even within the February 2025 data, you overstate Horace Mann by 64 students (8 CHAMPS classrooms x 8 students per class) and Emerson by 40 students (4 Rise & Stars classrooms x 10 students per class). Horace Mann's capacity should be 330 and Emerson's 440 according to the district's data. It is critical to separate and protect special ed capacity from gen ed capacity because the classrooms are not interchangeable.

Other school capacities are also incorrect, some higher and some lower than reflected in your chart.

See Slides 10-13 here: [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

I'd be happy to review the data before you send out a correction email if you would like.



Lakewood City School District							
School Capacity							
School	# of Gen ED CR	# of Students	CR x Students	# of Rise & Stars/CHAMPS CR	# of Students	CR x Students	Total Capacity
Emerson ES	20	22	440	4	10	40	480
Grant ES	18	22	396	0	0	0	396
Harrison ES	19	22	418	0	0	0	418
Hayes ES	20	22	440	0	0	0	440
Horace Mann ES	15	22	330	8	8	64	394
Lincoln ES	17	22	374	0	0	0	374
Roosevelt ES	16	22	352	0	0	0	352
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>		<b>2,750</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>104</b>	<b>2,854</b>

Source: Lakewood City School District, FutureThink  
Rise & Stars has 10 students per classroom; CHAMPS has 8

Capacity Update

Lakewood City School District							
Capacity vs. Current & Projected Enrollment							
School	Capacity	2024-25 Enrollment*	Utilization	2029-30 Projection	Utilization	2034-35 Projection	Utilization
Emerson ES	480	319	66%	293	61%	295	61%
Grant ES	396	322	81%	321	81%	314	79%
Harrison ES	418	260	62%	256	61%	254	61%
Hayes ES	440	277	63%	261	59%	257	58%
Horace Mann ES	394	263	67%	262	66%	255	65%
Lincoln ES	374	267	71%	272	73%	272	73%
Roosevelt ES	352	229	65%	226	64%	224	64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,854</b>	<b>1,937</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>1,891</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>1,871</b>	<b>66%</b>

Source: Lakewood City School District, FutureThink

\*Total does not include Pre-K students at Taft Center of Innovation (34) or K-5 students at Franklin School of Opportunity (2)  
Projected Pre-K enrollment of 178 students is distributed between Grant (29), Harrison (30), Hayes (30), Horace Mann (30), Lincoln (29) and Taft Center of Innovation (30) (buildings which currently house Pre-K)

Lakewood City School District			
School Capacity Comparison			
School	Current	Previous	Difference
Emerson ES	480	500	-20
Grant ES	396	381	15
Harrison ES	418	400	18
Hayes ES	440	400	40
Horace Mann ES	394	500	-106
Lincoln ES	374	382	-8
Roosevelt ES	352	381	-29
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,854</b>	<b>2,944</b>	<b>-90</b>

Source: Lakewood City School District, FutureThink

On Tue, Aug 26, 2025 at 9:00 AM Maggie Niedzwiecki <maggie.niedzwiecki@lakewoodcityschools.org> wrote:  
Thank you for bringing this to my attention. It doesn't read right. The document omitted the word "average". One school was at 85%. My public relations coordinator is updating and will send a correction. Please take a look at the chart below.

Over the past year of facilitating an open and organic task force, we've collected extensive data and made numerous adjustments to our parameters and assumptions.

Helen, please reach out to Zach to schedule a meeting.

Lakewood City School District							
Elementary School Capacity vs. Enrollment							
School	Capacity	2015-16	Utilization	2019-20	Utilization	2024-25	Utilization

		Enrollment		Enrollment		Enrollment	
Emerson ES	500	470	94%	378	76%	319	64%
Grant ES	381	240	63%	330	87%	322	85%
Harrison ES	400	426	107%	303	76%	260	65%
Hayes ES	400	442	111%	311	78%	277	69%
Horace Mann ES	500	339	68%	288	58%	263	53%
Lincoln ES	382	348	91%	271	71%	267	70%
Roosevelt ES	381	234	61%	245	64%	229	60%
Total	2,944	2,499	85%	2,126	72%	1,937	66%

On Mon, Aug 25, 2025 at 10:28 PM Zachary Robock <[zrobock@gmail.com](mailto:zrobock@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Maggie,

Could you please address #1? This is a straightforward data question where a simple table should be easy to provide via email.

- Utilization. You state that schools are "operating at around 62-68% capacity". However, according to TF data ([Slide 12](#)), schools ranged from 81% - 62% in 2024-2025. The district's [website](#) also acknowledges utilization "exceeding 80%".
  - Can you share how you calculated figures for your email?

Are you available on Monday, September 8 at 12:00 or 4:00?

Thank you,  
Zach

On Mon, Aug 25, 2025 at 9:01 PM Maggie Niedzwiecki <[maggie.niedzwiecki@lakewoodcityschools.org](mailto:maggie.niedzwiecki@lakewoodcityschools.org)> wrote:  
Good evening, Zach.

Email is not a sufficient way to respond effectively. I would be happy to meet with you. Please let me know when you're available.

Respectfully.



**Margaret Niedzwiecki**  
Superintendent, Lakewood City Schools  
2165294092 | 13701 Lake Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio 44107

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On Mon, Aug 25, 2025 at 8:00 PM Zachary Robock <[zrobock@gmail.com](mailto:zrobock@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Good evening Maggie:



Your district-wide email this afternoon raises several questions. Relevant screenshots are at the end of the email.

- Utilization. You state that schools are "operating at around 62-68% capacity". However, according to TF data ([Slide 12](#)), schools ranged from **81%** - 62% in 2024-2025. The district's [website](#) also acknowledges utilization "exceeding 80%".
  - Can you share how you calculated figures for your email?
- Enrollment Trend. As I explain in a recent [Lakewood Observer article](#), it paints an incomplete picture to constantly invoke a 10-year declining enrollment trend without acknowledging: (i) the more recent 5-year trend of stable elementary enrollment, (ii) the positive Birth-Kindergarten retention rate, and (iii) the elementary consolidation that occurred in 2013-2016 when the district shrunk from 11 schools to 7 schools (and the community voted to issue bonds to remain at 7 instead of 6). You may still think we should consolidate schools against these facts, but an unbiased narrative should not omit these critical facts and context.
  - Can you explain your rationale for not including the recent 5-year elementary stability in your analysis or public communications?
  - Can you explain your rationale for not including the 2013-2016 consolidation from 11 schools to 7 schools (and the associated bond vote that passed by a 70% margin) in your analysis or in your public communications?
- Aftercare Capacity for Elementary. Many elementary schools are already at full capacity for aftercare. A parent at my son's Kindergarten orientation this morning was very stressed that her incoming Kindergartener was unable to enroll in aftercare. A parent from Horace Mann shared a similar sentiment with me last year during community conversations.
  - What is the district doing to address the *existing* shortfall in *elementary* aftercare?
  - How will the district address a likely worsening shortfall if elementary schools consolidate?
- Preschool Capacity / Demand.
  - Has the district surveyed existing full-day preschools in Lakewood to determine whether they are at capacity or otherwise gathered quantitative data to assess the prek needs?
  - If we are short on preschool capacity, why do we continue to offer preschool to non-residents? It does not seem appropriate to consolidate elementary schools to create space for non-resident preschool. (Note: I support continuing eligibility for children of LCSD teachers and staff)

Thank you,  
Zach

District-Wide Email Snapshot:  
(The typos and formatting issues are from the original email)

**Timeline & Rationale Behind Starting the Task Force**

- **Decline and Stabilization Trends**  
The District had experienced a significant long-term decline over 1,000 students lost since 2015, resulting in underutilized schools operating at around 62-68% capacity.
- **Right-Sizing Over Time**  
As enrollment declined, the District responded by right-sizing staffing through attrition-choosing *not* to replace retiring or departing staff-to manage costs responsibly before initiating major structural changes.
- **Timing of Task Force Launch**  
The District convened the task force in August 2024, marking the transition from internal operational adjustments to a formal strategic and community-driven planning phase.

Slide 12 from February 2025 Capacity Data:

Capacity vs. Current & Projected			
School	Capacity	2024-25 Enrollment*	Utilization
Emerson ES	480	319	66%
Grant ES	396	322	81%
Harrison ES	418	260	62%
Hayes ES	440	277	63%
Horace Mann ES	394	263	67%
Lincoln ES	374	267	71%
Roosevelt ES	352	229	65%
Total	2,854	1,937	68%

Source: Lakewood City School District, FutureThink

\* Note: Horace Mann is understated in the slide above as its capacity should be 330 and enrollment 230 (70%) to accommodate for special ed students and ensure their resources are fully protected.

District's Website:

This overall decline in enrollment has led to underutilized buildings, unbalanced class sizes, and disruptions to both student learning and teacher collaboration. Currently, our elementary schools operate at an average capacity utilization of just 68%, with some schools as low as 62% and others exceeding 80%. When applying the state standard of 25 students per classroom—compared to Lakewood's ideal class size of 22—capacity utilization in some buildings drops even further, falling below 60%. This means that many of our buildings are operating well below their intended capacity of 80-85%, which affects the consistency and quality of education.

Non-Resident Preschool (District Website):

**Taft Center for Innovation**

Age requirement: 4 years old by September 30, 2025

All-day preschool including before and aftercare. Preschool in session 9:00-3:00.

- Before and aftercare provided on-site from 7:30-9:00 AM and 3:00-5:00 PM.\*
- Preschool with before and aftercare: \$870 per month, resident/\$895, non-resident
- Before care \$140 per month, Aftercare \$180 per month
- Non-resident fee additional \$25 per month

\*Must use before and/or aftercare.

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**Margaret Niedzwiecki**  
Superintendent, Lakewood City Schools

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**Margaret Niedzwiecki**  
Superintendent, Lakewood City Schools

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