

Facility Advisory Committee member survey results

October 2023

“The specific two-school option that seems most viable to me is _____ because _____.”

- Definitely Spence as the south side school. Compared to Hintgen, it is outdated, poorly built, and save the district several million dollars if repairs are not needed. In addition, even with a couple of million dollars, it will still be an unattractive space with odd hallways, chopped up spaces and overall a poor investment. Hintgen is in much better shape, requires less capital expenditures, is laid out better and because of its close proximity, the bussing, neighborhood belonging and socioeconomic diversity impact is low. The second school is not as easy. Personally, I think closing Northwoods makes the most sense but that is based off my personal values which I do think reflect the concerns of the parents, community members and staff in the district. Northwoods was a mistake. It is a horrible location for more than 80% of the students that attend. I feel that the logistics of bussing are a nightmare for both the district and many of the children that are required to attend. I personally have choiced out of that school for my own family because the location is completely unrealistic. Yes, Emerson is outdated and in serious need of repair but Emerson is where the students are, Northwoods is not. The only way I would support a closure of Emerson is if it was temporary to tear down the building and rebuild.
- North Woods and Spence.
- The specific two-school option that seems most viable to me is North Woods and Hintgen because North Woods and Hintgen will be the biggest annual estimated savings of just over \$2,692,398. In addition, the number of students that live within a 2 mile radius of the North Woods and Hintgen combined is 986 compared to 2,768 for Emerson and Spence combined. Community wants neighborhood schools and North Woods does not necessarily provide that to a large population, while Hintgen does, but has two other schools within reasonable distance.
- Regarding Spence vs. Hintgen, I would support closing one school, temporarily transferring those students to other schools, to rebuild on that site. As for North Woods vs. Emerson, The impact that Emerson has on the neighborhood and community is far greater than North Woods. The activities inside North Woods can be relocated but the neighborhood impact on Emerson cannot. It is important for students to have the experience of walking to school, familiarizing themselves with their neighborhood and their community. It makes no sense to close Emerson. It makes all the sense to close North Woods. Just because that is newer and the shiny thing, has no comparison to the impact Emerson has on the core of our community.

- The two school option that seems most viable to me is Emerson and Spence because of the age of the buildings, deferred maintenance costs, socioeconomic balance, and number of students enrolled.
- The specific two school options that seems most viable to me is Northwoods and Spence. This is because closing NW would have the least negative impact on current students, the amount of students that are bused into this school making it not their community school also helps drive this decision. As for Spence I feel the need of repairs is what drives this thought and the land there is open at Hintgen is what makes it Spence for me. Between Spence and Hintgen is a tougher choice but I do feel looking at everything and how close they are that Spence would make the most sense to close. ALL of these are tough choices I really do feel but I do have confidence more in our teachers and the people than the physical buildings and feel that these closures would help provide more resources for our teachers to be able to flourish even more than they already do. I know they can build community everywhere and it is important we are able to help provide the tools and spaces they need to do that.
- North Woods/Spence
- North Woods and Hintgen. The location of North Woods is too far away from where the students live. Hintgen's boundary is closer to 3 other schools that parents choose to go to State Rd, Southern Bluffs and Spence. Combined they have the highest annual maintenance costs. There are not a lot of community connections for these two schools. Other schools (Emerson and Spence have ties to BGC, UWL, Park and Rec, walking field trip opportunities, pool, Myrick and Trane All Abilities Park, Altra, Central High, Longfellow, etc...)
- Emerson & Spence because it will save the school district the most total dollars over the next 10-20 years. While I understand the emotional attachment to individual school communities and buildings, I also believe that the sense of community can be created in any building based on the quality of the staff that the school district employs. Geographic location is far less impactful than the people and programs that are offered to our students.
- Northwoods & Spence. Northwoods boundary/location does not serve our community as a whole. Its unfortunate it's a new building, but it's not serving our students well. Spence has a significant amount of repair & the building layout is not ideal.
- The specific two-school option that seems most viable to me is Northwoods & Spence because: Northwoods: While Northwoods has less building remodeling associated, it has significant busing costs (translated - every year operational expenses) that will reduce the costs savings of closing Emerson over Northwoods. I am also looking at

the potential impact of reusing closed school sites - for which a large school property footprint would be helpful (for resale/redevelopment of site, etc.) Northwoods sits on 10.9 acres in an area that could easily be turned into middle & upper-income housing options within the City. The City of La Crosse needs middle and upper-income housing options (lack of developable areas is in part why we are closing schools in the first place). The Spanish-Immersion program could be transferred to another school with minimal impact in my opinion. Spence: Closing Spence seems to make most sense since it is one school in need of the most remodeling/upgrades. Its closure will have less impact on operational costs because its central location is close enough to other elementary schools that closure will not place a large burden on busing students. Additionally, Spence sits on 7.9 acres, tied with Hintgen as second largest campus other than Northwoods – therefore potential for redevelopment of housing in a very centralized part of the City.

- The two-school option that seems most viable to me is closing North Woods and Hintgen because this option seems most realistic for the future of our district. If we agree that it is important for our district to close two schools to address the declining enrollment and budget constraints faced in our district and to capture staffing benefits of elementary schools that are closer to their true capacities, then the more important consideration is where should those schools be. The specific savings from each building scenario do not vary significantly, but the community impacts of keeping different school locations do. For example, not having a school specifically located where Emerson is has a much bigger impact than not having a school specifically where North Woods is in terms of transportation needs, etc. Closing a school where 1,194 students live within 2 miles compared to one where 61 live within two miles seems shortsighted. The difference is less stark between Spence and Hintgen, but many Hintgen students live near other schools. My support for this option is partially based on the idea that if we first consolidate elementaries, then our community can focus on rebuilding Emerson and Spence. Even if that doesn't happen, I still believe having schools where students are (and are most likely to be in the future) is most important.
- Emerson & Spence because of the long-term financial savings of both the identified maintenance needs and the need to replace Emerson's building in the near future.
- The specific two-school option that seems most viable to me is Spence and Emerson due to the opportunities that those choices provide. These opportunities include the potential sale of land and potential of where to build upon a new space, when the other schools age and need to be replaced and/or closed. This would support the multi-phase approach and provide an FAC recommendation that goes beyond the new few years and into the future, where families will want to live in La Crosse and combat the declining enrollment rate.

- In utilizing the parameters defined by the FAC according to the public survey outcome and administrative policies 9100 & 9800, I believe it is in the best interest of our district to close North Woods and Hintgen. Emerson vs. North Woods: When comparing North Woods and Emerson, Emerson is without a doubt the school we must sustain. It offers tremendous opportunities for community collaboration and one of our most neighborhood accessible schools. Emerson is surrounded by families, many of whom moved to the neighborhood for Emerson. Although the site is small, the adjacent park offers desirable green space and a wonderful playground. Additionally, Myrick Park, the marsh trails, and the Nature Place are all in walking distance, and the school has many partnership opportunities with UW-L due to proximity. Enrollment projections at Emerson are favorable due to the high density of families living within walking distance and the likelihood that the neighborhood remains family-oriented. Although Emerson does not offer the ideal pick up/drop off lane, most families can walk or bike to school, thereby making this a far less critical factor. Although Emerson has maintenance needs, it is a well-built facility and a long-term outlook justifies this expenditure. As a district and city, we would lose a lot more in the coming years by closing Emerson than we will save by avoiding deferred maintenance costs. Emerson is where more than 1,194 students live and can walk to school. We cannot close a school where so many students live in order to keep open a school on the outskirts of the city where only 61 students reside within walking distance. One of the primary concerns about closing North Woods is the IB program. Fortunately we can relocate the IB program and continue to offer this wonderful choice program in our community. No such replacement exists for closing Emerson - once the school is gone, the neighborhood faces collapse and the entire district and city will suffer the consequences. Hintgen vs. Spence: This is a more challenging decision. On the one hand, Hintgen is in great shape while Spence is poorly built and in desperate need of replacement. To me, the decision boils down to people and place. 1,574 students live within walking distance to Spence vs. 925 for Hintgen. Furthermore, 42% of Hintgen students live closer to another elementary school and 44% of Hintgen home boundary students opt to enroll in a different school. On the contrary, at Spence, 33% live closer to another elementary and only 21% choose to enroll in a different school rather than their boundary school of Spence. 16% of Hintgen students are eligible for busing while only 5.3% of Spence students are eligible for busing. From a long-term perspective, it is worth it to rebuild Spence on the existing site in order to maintain a school in a neighborhood where so many families reside. In the grand scheme, the annual operational cost savings gained by closing any of these schools are so similar that our decision must boil down to this: Who are we as a district, and where do we want our schools to be? We are a district of choice and a community that values neighborhood accessible schools. Therefore, we owe it to our community to sustain schools in the places where people live, and for that reason I wish to see our district commit to sustaining Emerson and Spence.