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The School District of Fort Atkinson had their third Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) meeting last night, as a continuation of the development of a long-range Master Facilities Plan. The FAC is comprised of 28 volunteers from various areas of the community - students, community members, parents, business members, alumni, and School District of Fort Atkinson team members. Alongside representatives from CG Schmidt (CGS) Construction and Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA), the FAC's mission is to evaluate the facilities needs facing the School District of Fort Atkinson, and present potential facility solutions to the community and full School Board for feedback. These committee members will also serve as an informational liaison to the community throughout the planning process.

After the meeting was called to order by committee co-chairs Nicole Leibman and Kory Knickrehm, Nick Kent from PRA presented on the current space utilization at each of the schools. He began by explaining the baseline student to teacher ratios and national operational efficiency rates which are both considerations when looking at space utilization. Nick further explained that based on these regulated numbers, we can then formulate the max capacity, target capacity, and the number of actual learning spaces available in each school. The group was then presented with the past and current enrollment numbers at each of the schools, noting that there is an additional layer of complexity at the middle and high school due to the class schedule.

Following Nick Kent's presentation, School District of Fort Atkinson team members Lisa Hollenberger, Director of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Amy Oakley, Director of Instruction, presented on optimal learning environments. With an emphasis on spaces designed for the whole child and every learner, we glanced back at what education and special education looked like at the time these buildings were constructed. Learning environments nowadays need to be responsive to the needs of all learners and strategically leveraged to support the highest levels of learning. There are 3 characteristics of an optimal learning environment for the whole child,

1. Create emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe environments
2. Implement equitable, culturally responsive, standards-aligned curriculum and instruction
3. Meet the needs of every learner



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These environments require collaborative learning spaces with flexible furniture. Some great examples of spaces that have recently been converted include the Ed Karrels Innovation Lab, the Jones Kitchen, and individual classrooms that have applied for community grants or relied on the creativeness of the educator. The meeting concluded with a tour of the High School building.

FAC Committee Member and Kindergarten Teacher at Rockwell Elementary, Nicole Schafer commented, “Schools have evolved over the years. We have moved away from chalkboards to smart boards and smart TVs in the classrooms. We also need to consider the importance of having adequate space in classrooms along with flexible seating. Space and flexible seating is beneficial because it allows educators to respond to different learner abilities needs and interests. I have witnessed this positive change in my classroom over the last couple of years, and I am hopeful that we can make this a standard practice in every classroom.”

FAC Committee Member and student, Maddie Hansen shared, “I only have one class that has flexible furniture which is Computer Science in the Ed Karrels Innovation Lab, and I absolutely love it! It is one of my favorite classes to be in because it is so open. I really like the glass sliding door because it allows each student to be more interactive with each other and it is easier to be involved in the class compared to the traditional classes that currently have the row by row set up. Plus sitting in the same seat for 84 minutes gets pretty tiring! We try to stay interactive as best we can, but when you’re not comfortable and able to move around, it’s hard to stay involved if the teacher lectures the entire time. I am excited at the possibility of including more interactive furniture and equipment in the schools. I am a senior, so I don’t get much time with it, but the furniture will help increase the involvement of future students.”

All reports can be found on the district website. The next FAC meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 17th from 6-8 pm at Barrie Elementary School. If you have any additional questions about the FAC or the facilities planning process in general, please contact Jason Demerath, Director of Business Services at [demerathj@fortschools.org](mailto:demerathj@fortschools.org) or 920-563-7800.



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