

WHAT NEXT YEAR LOOKS LIKE

It is no secret to those who live in the Big Walnut Local School District that we are growing. The area is growing at an unprecedented pace for our schools-- at twice the rate that it was just five years ago. Proactively managing our growth is something that we discuss and work on daily. In fact, it is the biggest issue facing our District right now.

Looking ahead to the next school year, the planning of which began right after this school year started, we are already seeing a different Big Walnut take shape next year. I want to continue to keep you informed of what we are seeing with the growth and how we intend to handle it when students return in the fall.

First, you should know that our enrollment continues to grow and no relief of this growth is in sight.

At the elementary level, not all of our schools have the same classroom size. That means that a classroom being full at Big Walnut Elementary, which has small classrooms, looks far different than it does at General Rosecrans Elementary, a building with larger classroom sizes. All of our elementary classroom spaces are being utilized. Between the four buildings, we anticipate having only four classroom spaces that can be converted to regular classroom spaces; currently these rooms are being used for therapies such as speech and occupational/physical therapy and are serving as computer labs and book rooms.

To accommodate some of the growth, we have begun renovating an existing aging trailer at Big Walnut Elementary to use next year. Additionally, we have started the process of purchasing a used double-classroom trailer that will be added to General Rosecrans Elementary.

At the intermediate school we are adding an additional lunch period to accommodate the increased enrollment. Whenever lunch periods are added, the entire schedule is impacted.

Our lunch periods are very full at the middle school and over capacity at high school. In addition to the cafeteria, the high school atrium is being used to accommodate the increased enrollment. If it were not for students working with teachers during their lunch period, additional periods would need to be added next school year. However, in 2018-2019 school year, lunches may have to start as early as 9:30 a.m.

I know that none of these are ideal fixes. Until our District has more of a long-term solution, we will continue to do what we can. In fact, I am very proud of our teachers and staff for all that they are doing in this regard. I routinely hear comments about them going above and beyond. At the high school, some teachers have even invited students to have lunch in their classrooms so that students have somewhere to sit while eating. I am deeply appreciative and not at all surprised by the way our staff shows flexibility in meeting our students' needs.

As far as a long-term fix for the enrollment growth and overcrowding, our Facilities Committee, District and Board are continuing to review options. A November ballot issue is likely. Although it is too early to say exactly what that will look like, we know it will need to provide some relief to the overcrowding that we are seeing. We are seeking input from you and the community so that we can thoroughly assess the District's needs and consider all options for meeting them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela S. Pollock". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Angela S. Pollock
Superintendent