

Section 4

Attendance Centers

The attendance center concept involves grouping students by grade levels within a particular building. A committee member visited a nearby school district, which implemented the attendance center concept for the 2009-10 school year. The following report provides information on transportation issues as well as the effects on teaching staff, principals, students, parents, and parent-teacher organizations. It shows that while there was a great deal of resistance initially, the concept has been largely successful and many of the negatives have been overcome. The savings amounted to one teacher per grade.

FROM: Gus Wegner

SUBJECT: Visit to Santa Fe Trail Attendance Center – USD 434

DATE: January 14, 2010

Santa Fe Trail School District (USD 434) implemented attendance centers for the 2009-2010 school year. In order to get information on the steps they took to bring it about and how it is affecting all stakeholders, I visited Sheree Gill, principal at Scranton Attendance Center. The following information will give us some things to think about.

Santa Fe Trail implemented attendance centers to save money. Besides the state cuts, they were losing approximately 30 students each year. Attendance centers allowed them to eliminate one teacher per grade level in kindergarten through eighth grade and some coaching positions at the junior high and high school.

Once the superintendent and the school board made the decision to implement attendance centers, he embarked on a communication blitz. The superintendent was up front with the teachers about the need and how this could best solve their financial problems. The superintendent and board president often met with teachers, principals, parents and community people. They also met with all civic groups in each area. Continuous communication seems to have been the key to its implementation. In the spring an orientation was held for parents and students at each building.

I will now outline Sheree Gill's comments regarding a number of important topics.

Transportation

- lease all buses, but do provide gas (all relatively new)
- student pick-up occurs concurrently at each attendance center, once the students are assembled in a gym, they will then board a bus to go to their appropriate school
- Overbrook - Pre-K - 2nd
- Scranton - 3rd & 4th
- Carbondale - 5th to 8th
- financially transportation was a wash
- para is assigned to each bus
- movement of students was smooth by the end of two weeks

Teachers

- superintendent's communication helped to get teachers buy in
- teachers saw need and savings
- able to plan, collaborate and problem solve as a grade level
- isolation gone
- able to support each other
- most teachers now like system

Principal

- for the first time able to be an instructional leader
- PLC, collaboration and planning have better outcomes
- communication with teachers has improved
- organized transportation system

Students

- right off liked it
- always be together
- goal was to keep students together two years at each attendance center
- "once together always together"

Parents

- many initially displeased with decision
- initially 30/40 students home schooled but now only one or two families

- programs never on same night
- one Scranton parent said, "I now have to travel more since my son's friend is in Overbrook."

PTO

- still struggling
- one PTO serves the entire district
- feeling their way
- allocated to each teacher \$5.00 per student
- fall carnival was great success

Negatives

- forced to eliminate some individual school programs
- bathroom facility a concern in some buildings
- librarian still carting some materials between buildings
- appropriate grade level maps are not available
- still some parent concerns
- no student mentoring or role models
- neighborhood school concept is lost

Overall

- lean district (no transportation or activities director)
- eliminated duplicate coaches
- transition was hard
- well-oiled transportation machine now
- lose community identity but as Sheree Gill says, " school will lose old identity but gain new identity"
- more efficient school
- reduction in force policy was put into effect

Our committee looked at two different scenarios for adopting attendance centers in USD#348 as a means of saving dollars:

Scenario One would house PEP/Rainbow Preschool/4 year olds/grades one and two at the PC as it is currently configured. The IC would also house grades 3-5 as it presently does. VES and MSE would then be reconfigured into a similar breakdown with all the rural K-2 students at Marion Springs and 3-5 at VES. All numbers are based on present enrollment projected into next year. The maximum savings would be a reduction of up to 5.5 teaching positions with student:teacher ratios ranging from 24:1 to 35:1.

Scenario Two would house PEP/Rainbow/4 year olds/and all first graders at BESPC; all second and third graders at the IC; grade four at MSE and grade 5 at VES. In the primary attendance center, all preschool classes would remain the same. The kindergarten configuration would include three half-day classes and one full-day class, which would save one FTE, based on a student:teacher ratio of 22:1. A second option would house five sections of kindergarten and drop the student:teacher ratio to 18:1, saving .5 FTE. First grade classes would house either 88 students in four classrooms with a student:teacher ratio of 22:1 or five sections with a ratio of 18:1. Savings would be two FTE and one FTE respectively.

In the IC attendance center, there are three options: Dividing the 205 second and third grade students into the same six sections we now have district-wide nets no savings. Dividing them into five sections gives us a student:teacher ratio between 18:1 (3rd) and 23:1 (2nd) students per teacher and nets one FTE. Housing four sections of each grade puts student:teacher ratio between 23:1 (3rd) and 29:1(2nd) and nets three FTE.

A Marion Springs attendance center would house fourth grade in one of two configurations; one would split 97 students into five sections with a student:teacher ratio of 20:1 or into four sections with a student:teacher ratio of 25:1. The second split would save one FTE (based on current combination classrooms).

The Vinland attendance center would house 103 fifth graders from across the district, either in five sections with a ratio of 21:1 or four sections with a ratio of 26:1. This would also result in a savings of one FTE. Total estimated savings for attendance centers ranges from one minimum position figured at an average of \$42,300 up to a 6.5 maximum totaling \$274,950 in teacher salaries.

Out of District Transfer Students

Involved in any attendance center concept is the effect on out-of-district transfer students. Our district currently enrolls 48 out-of-district students in the elementary grades, which is 14% of our total elementary enrollment. Any decline in this number could significantly impact our financial bottom line.

- Note that base aid per student is \$4012.
- Note that 8 out-of-district students = one teaching position

Both transportation and food service directors feel that their savings would be minimal, if any.

Transportation for attendance centers

As one looks at the attendance center concept, transportation is another factor to be addressed. A transportation process, using a hub system, has been used effectively by a similarly sized district in our area. Students are transported to their original attendance center, where they assemble in the gym. At a predetermined time, the students board the appropriate bus to travel to their assigned school. This model transports students in a rapid and effective manner.

PROS:

1. More efficient use of grade appropriate resources.
2. State reimbursement for busing could result in a profit if the state continues to reimburse.
3. Teachers are able to plan, collaborate and problem solve as a grade level. Isolation is gone and there is more teacher support.
4. Because they have been together in fourth and fifth grade, students could be better prepared for junior high.
5. Class size would be equalized throughout the district.
6. There would be a savings in reduction of teaching positions.

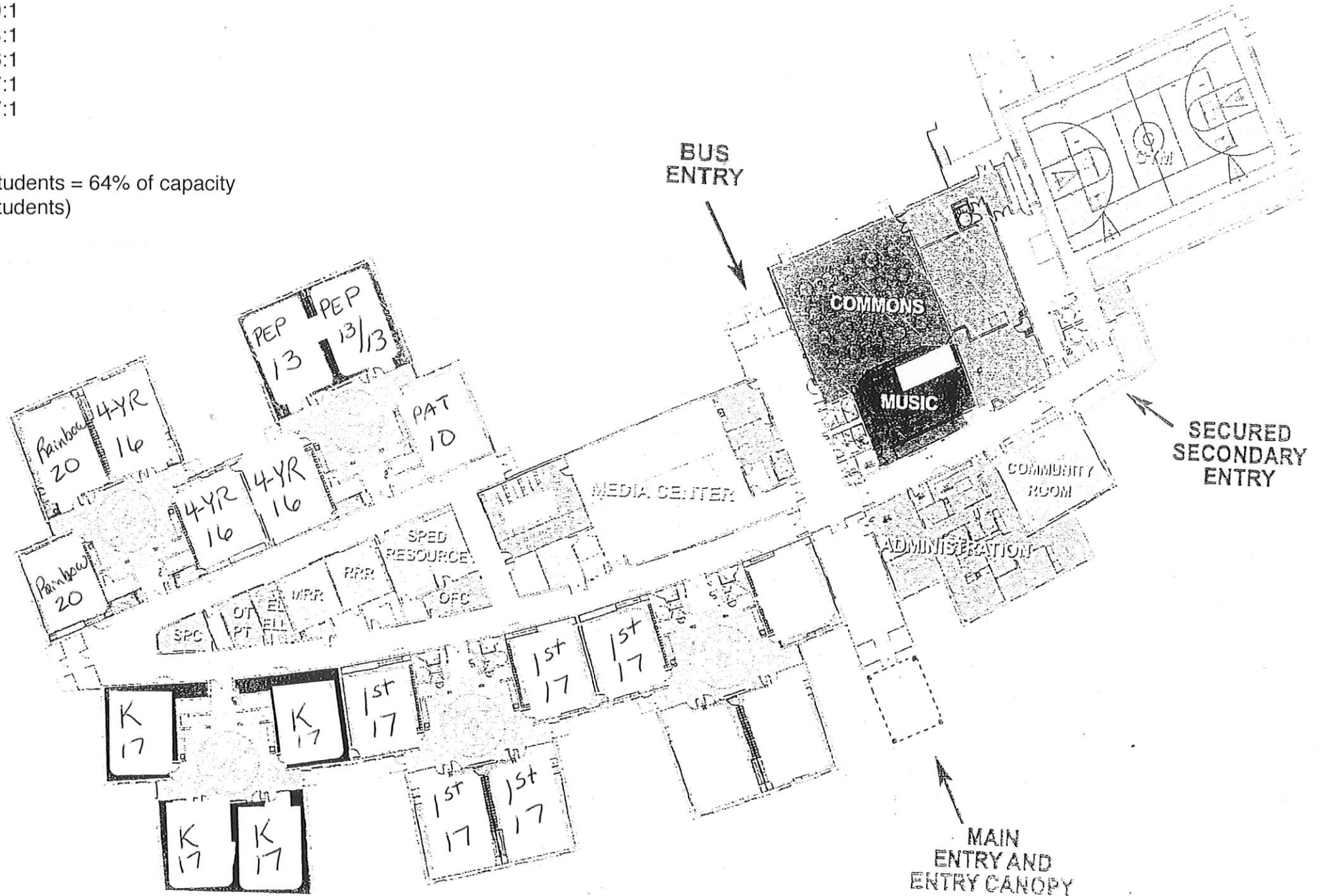
CONS:

1. End of neighborhood school concept.
2. Possibility of longer bus rides, maximum of 1.25 hours.
3. Students would constantly be adjusting to a new attendance center.
4. Loss of older to younger student mentoring/role modeling.
5. Parents could have children in multiple attendance centers.
6. Potential decrease in parent/community support.
7. PTO/CSO support eliminated.
8. Where does equipment purchased by PTO organizations go?
9. Reshuffling of grade appropriate library materials (note: VES and MSE libraries are not automated! Potential costs in meshing them with other collections.)
10. Furniture and bathroom facilities could be inappropriately sized.

Pre-K - 1st Grade Attendance Center

Rainbow Preschool 2@20:1
 PAT 1@10:1
 PEP 3@13:1
 4YO 3@16:1
 K 5@17:1
 1st 5@17:1
 (3 unused classrooms)

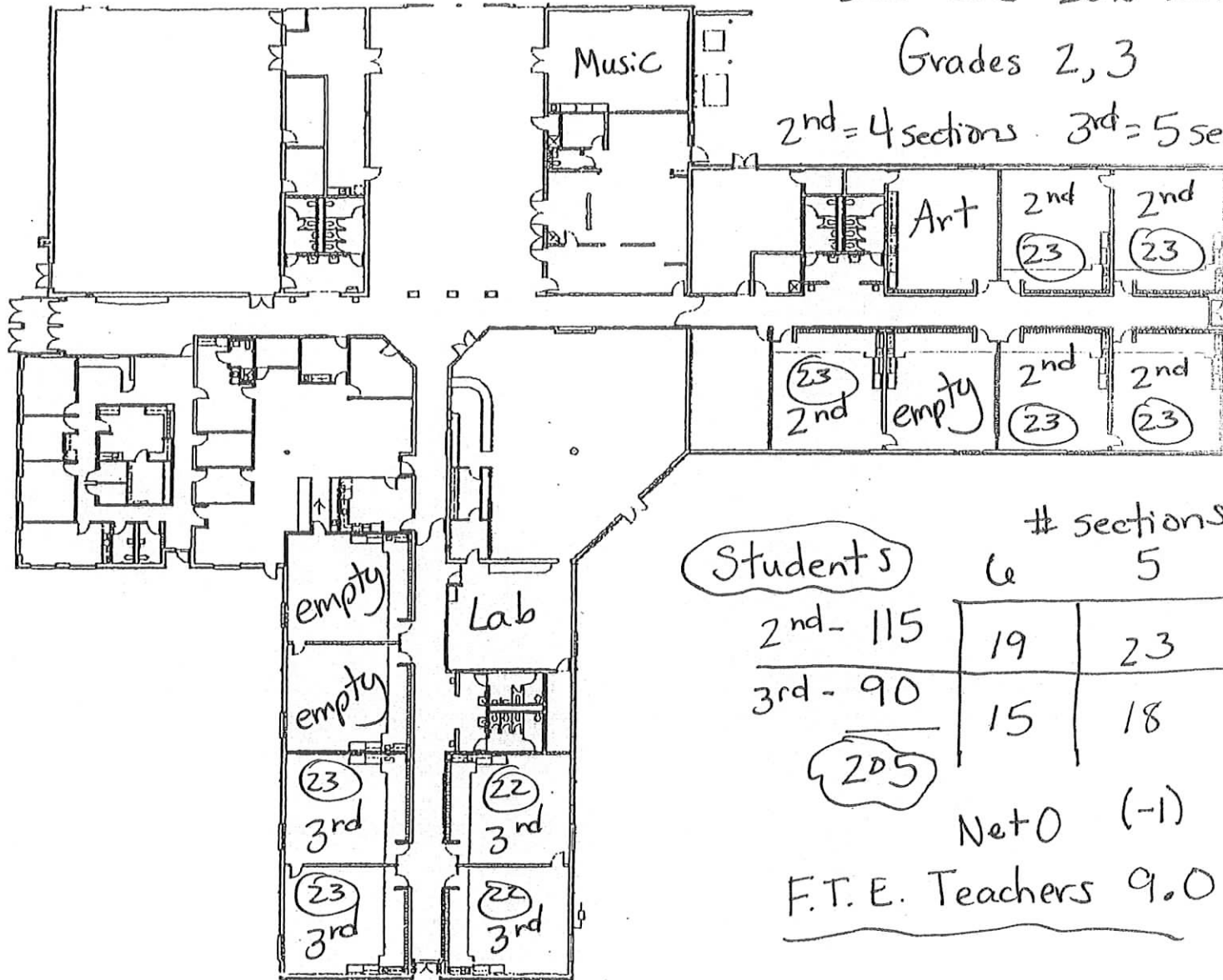
TOTAL 307 students = 64% of capacity
 (Building capacity = 480 students)



BES-IC 2010-2011

Grades 2, 3

2nd = 4 sections 3rd = 5 sections



Students	# sections		
	6	5	4
2nd - 115	19	23	29
3rd - 90	15	18	27.5
205	Net 0	(-1)	(-3)
F.T.E. Teachers 9.0			

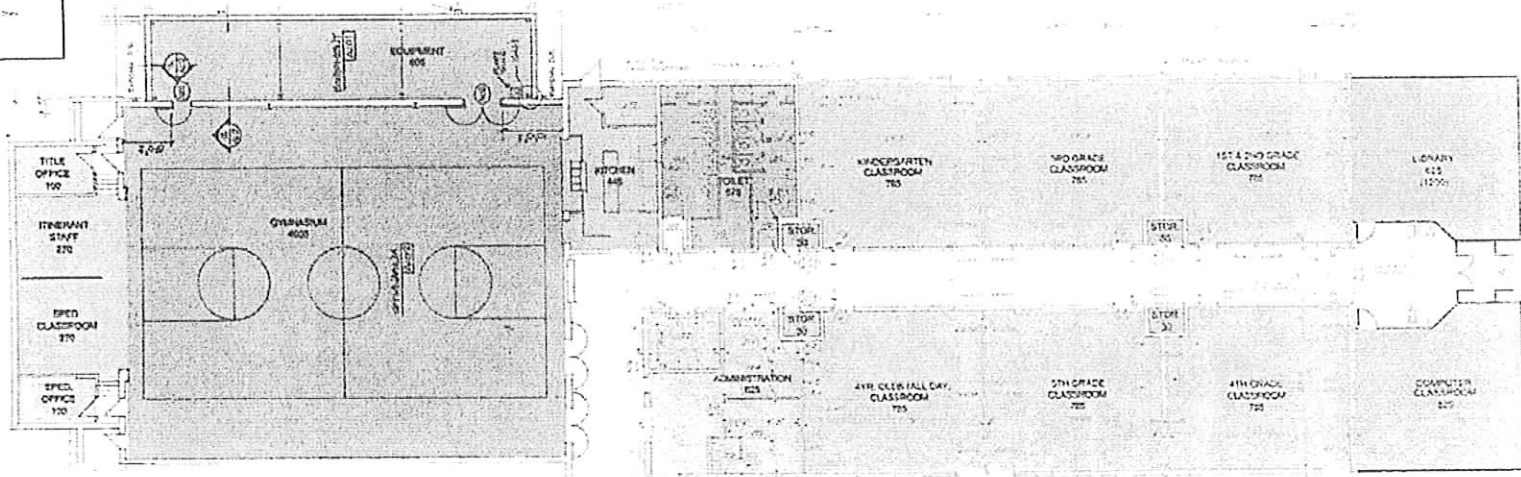
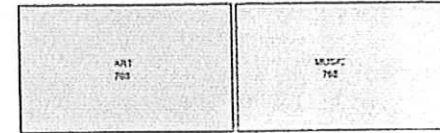
* BESIC 2/3

Marion Springs Elementary

17,865 SF

- KEY**
- Office
 - Classroom
 - Kitchen
 - Conference Room
 - Administration/Teacher Planning
 - Restroom
 - Special Education
 - Gymnasium
 - Storage
 - Library
 - Computer Classroom
 - Art
 - Music
 - Title Office
 - Itinerant Staff
 - Special Classroom
 - Special Office

-Total: 17865 sq/ft



4th Grade
97 students
5 teachers

Ratio: 20:1

4th Grade
97 students
4 teachers

Ratio – 24.75:1

savings 1 classroom teacher

Vinland Elementary

25,548 SF

KEY

- ██████ Atrium
- ██████ Classroom
- ██████ Entry
- ██████ Gymnasium
- ██████ Kitchen
- ██████ Library
- ██████ Music Room
- ██████ Reading Room
- ██████ Storage
- ██████ Teacher's Office
- ██████ Washroom
- ██████ Workshop

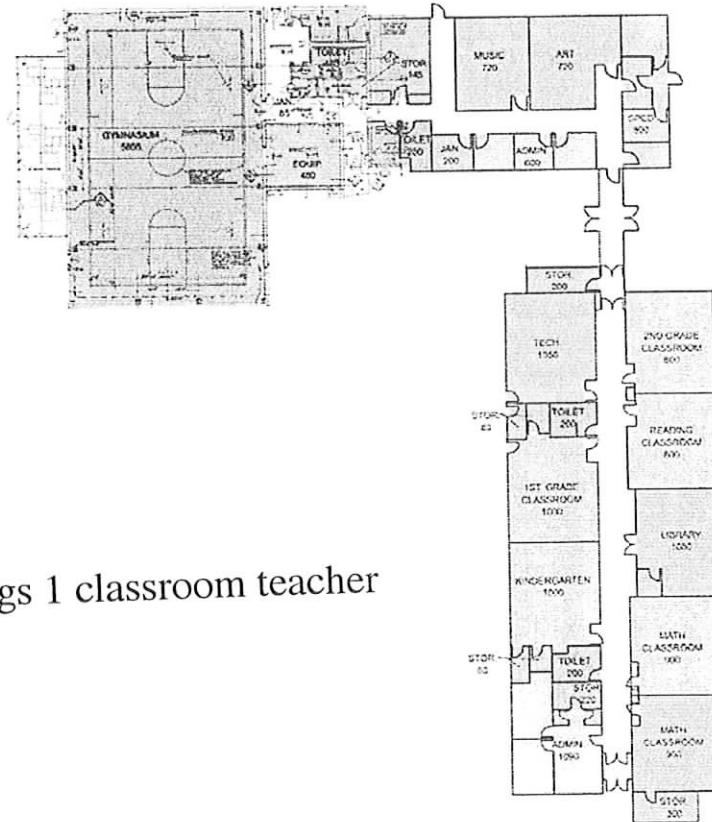
Total: 25548 sq/ft

5th Grade
103 students
5 teachers

Ratio – 21:1

5th Grade savings 1 classroom teacher
103 students
4 teachers

Ratio – 25.75:1



First Level Floor Plan
Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"
= 254'