

Comprehensive Transition Plan:
Rockefeller Elementary into Full Rockefeller Early Childhood Center

April 3, 2014

Revised April 13, 2015

Rockefeller Elementary and Early Childhood Center was built in 1987. The school has two sections – a K-5 school and an Early Childhood Section/Wing. At the request of administration, this plan is presented to describe the opportunities available in the conversion of the full site into another district Early Childhood Center.

This document provides information related to the physical, human capital, and overall considerations to transition of the current Rockefeller site into an Early Childhood Center.

HISTORY OF THE LRSD Pre-K PROGRAM

The Little Rock School District Early Childhood (Pre-K) program has its roots in the Kramer School, which was built in 1895 and named for Frederick Kramer who served as mayor of Little Rock and as a LRSD school board member for twenty years. The renowned Kramer Project gained national attention as the site for the Center for Early Development and Education established by Dr. Bettye Caldwell, professor of education at UALR. The Center opened in 1969 with a staff of 35. The project served infants through school-aged children side-by-side.

When Rockefeller Elementary was built, the decision was made to move the center into the school, and Rockefeller was designed to serve young children through elementary grades. In 1987, Rockefeller became a Pre-K – 5th grade school and named Rockefeller Elementary and Early Childhood Magnet School as the successor of the Kramer Project. Currently, the school operates in two parts, the Elementary School and the Early Childhood Center.

In 1991, LRSD received the first Arkansas Better Chance funds which were allocated for prekindergarten students in poverty. Initially, the district was allocated 78 students; throughout the years the district has been awarded, through competitive application, additional seats/slots to the current level of 1,137 funded students (more than 5.5 million annually). The district has a required 40% match which is met largely through in-kind funds (i.e. parent transportation, teachers completing their own required assessments, SNP/Child Nutrition reimbursements). The additional funds provided from ABC also allowed students with other qualifying factors to be eligible for funding (i.e. incarcerated parent, deployed parent, illiterate parent, low birth weight, etc.). Beyond the state-funded seats, the district decided to provide pre-k to other students who do not qualify and as a result about 350 four year olds participate in the LRSD program annually who would not otherwise qualify.

ABC requires that programs receiving funding must be evaluated by external evaluators to ensure the level of quality remains high. Quality in pre-k classrooms is the greatest predictor of long-term success and the retention of gains made in pre-k into the later grades. Classrooms are assessed using the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)*. A minimum score of 5 out of 7 on 43 indicators is required by ABC to maintain funding. An annual application must be submitted for continued funding pending compliance with ABC and DHS regulations.

Over the years, Pre-K classrooms have been placed in various elementary schools and in the four pre-k centers. In some situations, classrooms have been moved to other sites due to the need for more space for K-5 grade (i.e. Otter Creek, Roberts) or due to a change in the school (Geyer Springs). Currently there are 74 classrooms serving P3 or P4 students in the district, the majority of which are P4 students. As more seats have become available, we have increased the number of P3 classes to accommodate the

strong community interest in P3. In addition, a little less than half of incoming kindergarteners have attended the LRSD pre-k program, and 75% are still in the district schools at the end of 4th grade.

THE VALUE OF PRE-K CENTERS

Pre-K centers have a number of unique features. First, they focus solely on the development and needs of young children. This is evident when entering the pre-k centers and the different type of tone when children are singing when walking down the halls, working in their centers, and spending more time than older students in outdoor/gross motor play. When all activities, family events, and experiences are focused on young children, there is a strong level of community within the school and with families.

Pre-K Centers in LRSD have higher levels of quality on the ECERS than those located in elementary schools. Recent research showed significantly higher scores in almost every area over a five year review of all scores. These data support increasing the use of pre-k centers when it is feasible.

Pre-K Centers operate under different regulations (DHS, ABC) and do not require the same staffing as elementary schools. Pre-K centers do have a principal/coordinator who evaluates staff and runs the center, custodians, secretary, and child nutrition workers; however, pre-k does not have requirements for art, music and PE as these are a part of their integrated curriculum. They do not have the additional staff like counselors, facilitators, media specialists, etc. which keeps the cost at a minimum for a school setting.

Finally, LRSD Pre-K centers have been successfully developed within existing school sites with minimal changes required. Fair Park and Woodruff did require changes to playgrounds, restrooms (smaller toilets), and painting/décor specific to a school for young children. But, given the right location, the changes are easily accomplished.

FEATURES OF THE SITE

Rockefeller is located on the east side of Little Rock with easy access to downtown and highways. Its location is far enough from the current centers located in central Little Rock and Southwest Little Rock so as to have options throughout the city.

The current Pre-K area of the building includes modified open-space rooms in which 2 classes share one enclosed room. The K-5 section of the building is open space with movable partitions to separate classes. The current Pre-K area is licensed by DHS as required for Child Care Centers (Minimum Licensing). Using areas partitioned by existing partitions can be licensed without the addition of permanent walls as licensing depends only on the square feet per room/space. As the current Pre-K area includes multi-class rooms, indicates there is no requirement for permanent walls which would be prohibitive in consideration of a transition to an Early Childhood Center.

TRANSITIONING ROCKEFELLER SCHOOL INTO AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Actions/Process:

Rockefeller already houses an Early Childhood Center within a part of the building. Converting the rest of the building can be easily accomplished without major changes/renovation. The following recommendations are provided:

1. Close the Building for the Summer, beginning immediately following the last day of school.

No Summer School programs, no infant/toddler programs, etc. Formal conversion begins immediately following school ending.

2. Phase out the Infant/Toddler Program through the 2015-2016 school year.

Program will be closed during the summer (ending with the last day of school; reopening with the start of school for the 2015-2016 year only).

Rationale: While the Infant/Toddler Program was the hallmark of the Kramer Project and the Rockefeller ECC originally, it is no longer feasible to maintain. The Infant/Toddler Program is small with 10-15 infants and toddlers, it does not pay for itself, and the district provides funding for this small program, staffing and requirements. The P2 students will “roll up” into the P3 program if their family has applied. The Infant/Toddler program has offered extended hours each day (7am-5 pm daily) and operates year round. Eliminating this would save money on staffing and utility costs throughout the summer months and allow the space to be utilized to serve additional P3 students during the regular school year. In lieu of the program, there are many programs within the city that offer infant and toddler day care, while families are looking for P3 programs.

In addition, the new DHS regulations which will be in effect on May 1 will be extremely difficult to implement and maintain compliance without additional staffing and expenses, especially in a very large center. Further, as this site is the only one in the district to offer infant and toddler care, the site must complete separate Better Beginnings Quality ratings, must pass ITERS (infant/toddler version of ECERS) and maintain very stringent standards.

Information will be provided to families in the current Infant/Toddler program about the summer closing, area day cares with similar quality ratings, cost, etc along.

3. Use the existing Early Childhood area for P3 students and the current K-5 section for P4 students.

With the exception of the current Infant/Toddler area (during 2015-2016), the current EC wing will be allocated for P3 classes.

Rationale: By having specified areas for the ages, teachers and students can have areas unique to their age. This would allow P3 families to drop off/pick up students in the existing Early Childhood Area, and P4 students from the school entrance.

4. Establish Rockefeller ECC as a school that does not have an attendance zone.

Rationale: Just as Fair Park and Woodruff no longer have an attendance zone, this would allow families equal access to another center in a different part of town.

5. Relocate the district Early Childhood Office to Rockefeller.

Rationale: Assist with what will be the largest Pre-K center in the district.

6. Hold additional Open Enrollment to allow for the additional new spaces.

7. Move the one P4 class at Carver to Rockefeller.

8. If other Pre-K Centers are considered, they should be located in either southeast Little Rock or to the West

Rationale: Having centers too close together makes it difficult to accommodate families throughout the city. Recommend proposed to use Romine as a more western facility.

Considerations

Summer School/Programming

There will be no summer program held at Rockefeller in summer 2015. Any previously planned programs will be relocated (summer literacy and math) or suspended (Infant/Toddler Program).

Physical Space

The location is one level which with minimal stairs which is optimal for young children. There is a spacious cafeteria and a gym which will accommodate indoor gross motor play/development (required in inclement weather).

The current Early Childhood Center can house 8 P3 classes in the current EC wing. The current K-5 section of the school will require some adjusting of the current partitions and will accommodate 12-14 P4 classes. These plans are contingent on licensing by DHS based on square footage.

The teachers will have ample space either in teaching lofts in the P3 area, or in offices behind the P4 classes. Two P4 teachers would share an office which allows greater amount of space for students in the classrooms.

Staffing/Personnel

The school will need a full-time principal who is carefully selected and who can work with a large number of young children. Careful selection of this person cannot be underestimated as the leader must also work effectively with the family members and the unique needs of young children.

Each classroom will have a certified teacher and a qualified aide/paraprofessional. In addition, for every three classrooms, a "rotational" paraprofessional is needed to maintain required teacher-student ratio, provide for teacher planning, and provide supplemental support (such as story time, lunch, and outdoor gross motor time). In order to cover planning for this many classrooms, one additional paraprofessional is needed. Pre-K does not have the requirement to have separate art, music, and PE as these are integrated into their pre-K day.

Summary of staffing needs:

- 1 Principal/Coordinator
- 1 Secretary + one paraprofessional to maintain COPA records and all EC required paperwork
- 20-24- certified teachers (one per class) (Depending on # of classes)
- 38 paraprofessionals (one per class for 24 classes plus 14 rotational paraprofessionals) (Depending on number of classes)
- 4 Custodians (current number)
- 1 Nurse (currently at school)
- 2 Security Guards (one on the P4 side/entrance; one on the P3 side/entrance)
- Cafeteria Works – maintain the ones at the site (very good)

Pre-K teachers and paraprofessionals from the schools where classrooms have been moved would be given the opportunity to move with their classroom.

Paraprofessionals in Pre-Kindergarten must hold a Child Development Associate (CDA), AA in Early Childhood, or a degree with at least 12 hours in Early Childhood topics. Any vacancies would need to be filled by qualified staff, or pay for the staff to complete the required training and assessment.

Materials/Furniture & Curriculum

A classroom set up of required furniture and materials for a P3 or P4 class is \$5500. In addition, the current curriculum is \$2500 per classroom. A total of \$8000 per classroom is needed to set up the new classrooms. Upon approval, the orders will be created.

An inventory of items in the K-5 school must be completed and items that can be utilized will be requested to stay at the site.

A significant amount of antiquated items are located in multiple storage areas. The contents will need to be inventoried, sorted for use or disposal and moved accordingly. At least 2-3 dumpsters will be needed.

The classroom set up for Carver will be moved to Rockefeller and any items needing replacement will be purchased.

Outdoor Playground and Equipment

Play equipment: Outdoor equipment for pre-k includes trikes, scooters, balls, hula hoops, sand/water tables, and items to stimulate jumping, kicking, hopping, running, walking, hitting, and bouncing. The majority of outdoor items can be transferred from the transitioning pre-k classes. Additional items will likely be needed to meet the requirements of the number of students.

Playground: The current P1-P2 playground would be renovated to provide age-appropriate options for P3 students through relocation of equipment from other sites or adding new equipment. The current P3-P4 playground would serve the P3 students as a second area. No changes would be needed.

The current K-5 playground would need to be converted to accommodate P4 students. K-5 playground equipment is not designed for 3-4 year olds, and therefore, new equipment is needed. The current equipment is newer and is recommended to be relocated to another site; while this is a cost, it is much cheaper than purchasing new K-5 equipment for a needed area. Likewise, it is recommended to relocate current Pre-k equipment that is in good condition and add only what is needed to accommodate the P4 students.

In addition, if the P4 playground is not completely enclosed with a fence, this must be completed per DHS regulations. The number of students that can use the playground at one time will be determined by the DHS requirement for 75 square feet per student, which can include grassy areas, etc.

Projected School Enrollment

Pending DHS licensing and the recommended class counts of 10 P3 classrooms (18 per classroom) and 14 P4 classrooms (20 per classrooms), the site could accommodate up to 180 3-year olds, and 280 4-year olds. P3 students are required to qualify by income, so all students are funded; however, at Rockefeller, those P2 students whose families applied for the P3 program are grandfathered in and we waive the income requirement (this is usually 10-12 students annually). We typically have 80%

of our students in P4 qualify for funding which would equal 224 P4 students, and an approximate of 400 students qualifying for ABC funding. Rockefeller currently has 2 P3 classes (36 students) and 3 P4 classes (60 students) for a total of 96 students. The net increase of funded spots would be approximately 300 seats. Removing the 2 rooms identified for P3 that are currently used for Infant/Toddler, the P3 total would change to 144 for the 2015-2016.

Licensing can be requested as soon as we determine where classroom dividers will be for P4 classrooms.

Staff Notification

A meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 15 at 3:00 P.M. with the Rockefeller staff where they will be informed that Rockefeller Elementary will be restructured to Rockefeller Early Childhood Center for the 2015-2016 school year. All existing positions will be eliminated with the exception of the teachers in the toddlers/infants, and the three/four year old areas. The current Infant/Toddler paraprofessionals will have contracts changed from 12 month to 9 ¼ like all other paraprofessionals in pre-K All displaced staff members will have a job and will be able to select from vacant district positions in June. An official letter from the Human Resources Department will be sent to each staff member.

Family Notification

Parents will be informed regarding the restructuring of Rockefeller on Thursday, May 16 at 5:30 P.M. Students who have been assigned to Rockefeller Elementary for the 2015-2016 school year will have the option to relocate to Carver Magnet School, Washington and Stephens Elementary schools. An official letter (attachment) will be sent to parents on Monday, April 13 and will also be followed by a parent link call.

A broad advertisement will be made to announce the additional enrollment period for the additional P3 and P4 seats at Rockefeller. This will be completed very soon so as to qualify students for ABC, assign families, and prepare for 2015-2016.

Families in the current Infant/Toddler Program will receive a notification during the week of April 13 indicating the closure of the program for the summer and option for returning in the fall. A list of local day care providers will be given.

Scheduling/Pick up/Drop off

DHS requires families to walk students in, sign them in and out each day. To accommodate the number of families, it is recommended that an arrival period is at least 15 minutes and staggered for P3 and P4. A recommendation is to have P4 arrival between 7:45-8:00; P3 arrival between 7:55-8:10. Similarly, the end of the day would be staggered, with the required 7 hour day (ABC regulation).

We are looking at having the P4 staff meet families along the curb right outside their classes to reduce the families having to walk all P4 students into the school, have them sign them in/out at the curb, and as each room has a door directly to a curb outside. P3 will continue to walk and sign in children at the classroom.

CARE programs need to be offered for those students needing before and after school provisions.

Child Nutrition

It is recommended that students eat in the existing cafeteria. Snacks would be served in the classrooms and if possible, Breakfast in the Classroom.

Renovations

The initial walk-through of the building indicate the building is in good shape. A few renovations are required including:

- Removal of Wall between Infant/Toddler area to create new P3 class. (after 2015-2016)
- Update painting and addition of visual cues (i.e. shapes by classrooms, arrows, etc.) – quite a bit of touch up is needed (a detailed list will be provided shortly)
- The boys restroom near the cafeteria requires sheetrock repair and one stall needs a toilet seat. (Urinals have been approved by DHS; and there are enough restrooms to meet the number per children; size is ok for all restrooms)
- Addition of stairs to water fountains (3-4)
- Removal & Relocation of K-5 playground equipment
- Create age-appropriate P3 playground
- Create age-appropriate P4 playground
- Add necessary fencing around P4 playground

Technology

The school currently has Promethium Boards in each room. These are essential for the Pre-K classes and the implementation of the district curriculum and student engagement. In addition, each classroom should have 2 computers available to student, a computer hooked to the SmartBoard, and a teacher computer in the teacher office. There are many computers in the school currently which can be maintained to have the technology in the classrooms.

Safety for Staff and Students

The current Pre-K area has CCTV in each area. In speaking with Safety & Security, there are many cameras in the K-5 area, and once we determine the precise layout, we will if any additional cameras are needed.

The school currently has a security guard; we need to add an additional security guard for the P3 end of the building for student safety.

DHS Licensing

Upon approval and determination of specific plans, DHS will be notified and requested to measure spaces for licensing. As the site is currently licensed for some spaces, the additional spaces would be added to the current license. Licensing can be requested once we have the layout finalized and determine the exact space for each intended classroom.

Current Site Items

The movable partitions, rolling storage units, and tables that can be lowered to P3 and P4 range will be maintained. Additional chairs and tables will be needed to replace student desks and larger chairs.

It is recommended to either provide lower cafeteria tables (like Fair Park) but the must be lower overall as well as have lower seats, so that they are size appropriate as required in quality ratings.

At least 100 computers should be maintained at the site – 2 per classroom for student use, one connected to the Smart Board, and 1 for teacher use in the teacher office (teacher computer is required by ABC). In addition, the Promethium Boards are needed and consistent with all other pre-k classes throughout the district.

Items needed

Pre-K classroom set ups must be ordered for each class room, minus the existing P3 and P4 classes at Rockefeller (currently 3 P4 and 2 P3 classes). A total of 19 new class set ups would be needed as well as curriculum.

Portable stairs/risers for the Shared area in the current Media Center.

Timeline

Pending approval of the plan with any modifications, a re-design of the current classroom partitions in order to be measured and licensed by DHS. Upon verification of space and licensure, the following are projected tasks to be completed:

Task	Anticipated Completion	Person(s) Responsible
Notify Rockefeller staff of changes	Week of April 15	District
Notify families of change to Rockefeller	Week of April 13	District
Selection of Principal	April/May	District
DHS Licensure	May	Dr. James
Advertise/Notify families of changes to Infant Toddler for Summer	Week of April 13	Dr. James, District, Student Registration
Plan Additional Enrollment Period for Rockefeller	TBD	Dr. James & SRO
Inventory furniture and items in school; begin process of removing items for surplus	April/May	Early Childhood & Procurement
Create list of Infant/Toddler Parapros on 12 mo contract; delete 12 mo position; HR to send letter to staff; they may apply for the EC	April/May	Dr. James & HR
Any displaced teachers to attend Displaced teacher meeting to select position	TBD by HR	Human Resources

Ordering Class Materials	May/June	Early Childhood and Procurement
Boxes provided to closing Pre-K classrooms (at selected schools) and K-5 classrooms at Rockefeller	May/June	Procurement
Inventory Carver P4 classroom to determine what replacement items are needed	Early June (before items are boxed)	Procurement/Early Childhood
Move Carver P4 Classroom to Rockefeller	Mid June (after school is out)	Procurement
Move K-5 classroom from Rockefeller to designated areas	June/July	Procurement
Move P4 classes in Rockefeller to new P4 areas	June/July	Procurement & Staff
Staff building	June/July	Principal
Move District EC Offices to Rockefeller	July	EC Department & Plant Services
Complete Playground Changes	July	Plant Services
Order additional necessary outdoor equipment	July	Dr. James and Procurement
Replace lunchroom tables	July/early August	Child Nutrition
Update paint (restrooms, halls)	July	Plant Services
Update signage outside	July	Dr. James and Plant Services, Interplan
Receive new classroom materials & assemble	July	Procurement
Teachers return 2 weeks early to set up and also complete at least 2 required ABC trainings	July	Dr. James, HR, EC Department to set up

Initial Conversion Estimated Budget

Removal of wall between Infant/Toddler Area	\$1000
Update Painting	\$3000
Warm water in "Gang Restroom"	TBD
Sheetrock repair in boy's restroom	\$ 400
Replacement Lunch Tables	\$5,000
Stairs for Water Fountains	\$400
Removal & relocation of K-5 Playground Equipment	\$30,000
Additional P3-P4 Playground Equipment	\$150,000
Additional Outdoor Play Equipment	\$15,000
New Classroom Set ups for 19 classrooms (\$5500/per)	\$104,500
Classroom Curriculum for 19 classrooms (\$2500/per)	\$47,500
Portable Stairs/Risers (shared Area in Media Center)	\$2,000
Shorter/lower media carts for Media Center	\$5,000

Additional Books for younger children for Media Center	\$10,000
Update Parent Center with Pre-K Materials/Take home items	\$5,000
Creation of Café (for cooking, learning social skills)	\$3500
Update Signage	\$3500
Office Furniture for EC Office	\$7,500
General School Start Up Supplies (etc)	\$2,000

Initial Estimated/Costs -Start up	\$393,300

Recurring Budget

Center will operate on the typical pre-k funding of \$2000/classroom for materials/supplies and \$100 per child for food (cooking experiments as part of the curriculum). The centers usually require a small amount of additional funds (\$5000-\$10,000 annually from the Early Childhood Budget) as they do not have any additional funding sources. Costs differ annually, but there are no funds allocated by ABC to replace furniture and materials that just fall apart after 8-10 years of use.

ABC FUNDING AND MATCH

An additional 300 seats/slots would be needed to accommodate the additional classes. (This would allow for 80% of the P4 students and all but 10 -12 of the P3 students who “roll up” from P2 class).

ABC pays \$4860 for qualifying students per year pending attendance. There is a district match of 40% or \$3240.

Needed funding from ABC: \$ 1,458,000

District Match: \$972,000 (largely in kind or through classroom set up, playground and curriculum costs)

A detailed budget would be required and can be provided to detail the match funding.

