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## CONTEXT:

### **Rightsizing Evaluation Components:**

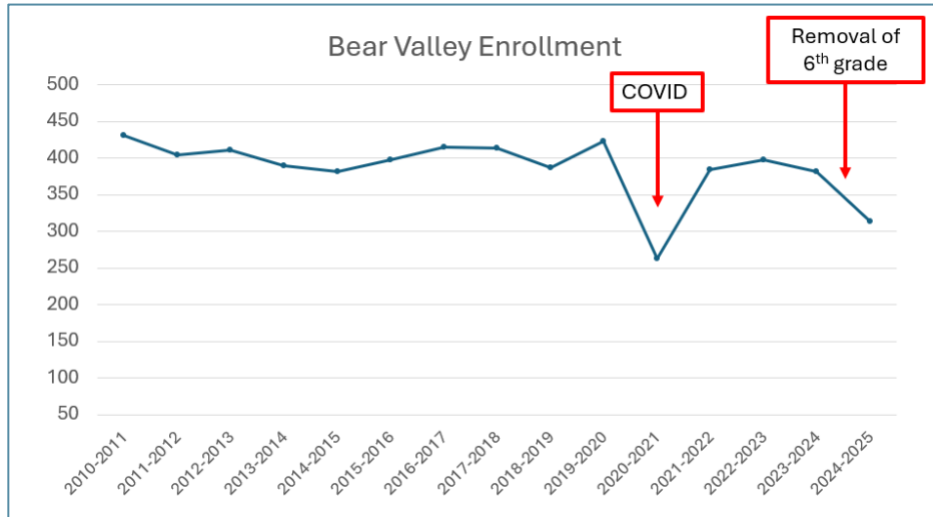
-Per [their website](#), the ASD administration prioritized the criteria listed below in their evaluation. They stated that these priority areas were informed with school board input and feedback from the community via a survey. Oddly, while student academic performance was [ranked as the third highest](#) priority among those who completed the survey (see pages 11-12 of linked document), the administration did not include it in their final rubric. Instead, they said that special programs were the highest priority for the community, though it was ranked lower than academic performance. You can see the omission in their final rubric on [page 5 of this document](#).

- Final Rubric Components:
  - Staffing Effectiveness
    - Partial staff increments for specials staff and SPED itinerant staff
    - % Combos
  - School Impacts
    - % economically disadvantages, % SPED and % ELL
  - Community Growth Potential
    - New Housing Potential
    - Enrollment Decline Expectations
  - Size and Utilization
    - Current utilization and projections for SY 25/26 and SY 29/30
  - Facility Condition
    - Component life cycle replacement costs next 2 years
    - Recent major maintenance improvements & repairs
    - Short-term planned improvements
  - Cost Effectiveness
    - Maintenance & operational cost per student
    - Utilities cost per sq. ft.
  - Alternative Use
    - Co-location potential of facility
    - % Age 0-4 population (potential incoming students)

## Key Talking Points and Questions:

- **Size and Utilization:**

- 21 schools across the district are under Bear Valley's [utilization percentage](#) (i.e. have a utilization of 68% or less). 5 other schools have the same utilization of 69%.
- What's more important though is the fact that Bear Valley's 69% utilization rate does not account for our preschool program. In its pilot year, we currently have 8 students enrolled, bringing the utilization rate up to 70.3%. The preschool program is anticipated to receive 20 students next year and has the potential to serve 40 if needed.
- From 2010 to 2024, the district states there has been a 13% decrease in enrollment. Over that same time frame (2010-2024), Bear Valley's [average student enrollment](#) has been 391 students. In the 2023-2024 school year, we had 382 students, just a 2.4% decline from the 10-year average- a stark contrast to the district-wide decline. Even if you exclude the 2020-2021 pandemic year from that 10-year average, Bear Valley's overall student decline has only been 4.8% in the last decade, still far from the district-wide rate. In fact, our student enrollment was growing, and we saw the second highest enrollment in the last decade in the year prior to the pandemic (423 students in 2019-2020). Bear Valley's recent drop to 313 students in the 2024-2025 school year (321 if you include our pre-k students) only happened as a result of the district removing the entire 6th grade from the school. The new preschool program provides an opportunity for us to recoup our recent district-caused student enrollment losses over time.



- The building utilization rate also does not account for our before/after school and summer programming which serve up to 115 kids. Bear Valley Community Association – the operator of these programs along with the preschool program – also rents out three classrooms and pays the district ~\$15,000 each year in rent.
- The building utilization rate also fails to account for the actual demand to attend our school. Bear Valley has a waitlist each year of students who want to come to our school. This year we had a waitlist of 43 kids who could not be admitted because the school was not allotted the staff to accommodate them.

- Bear Valley was at capacity prior to the entire 6<sup>th</sup> grade being removed this year. The utilization rate should have either been re-calculated, or the school district should give school an opportunity to catch its breath and grow its new pre-school program (which many schools do not have) to build its student population back up. Childcare is in crisis in our city and there are very limited pre-school options. Our preschool program can serve families throughout the area who are desperately seeking early childhood learning opportunities that will prepare their youngest children for kindergarten. Additionally, Bear Valley’s new preschool can support this need without forcing parents to drive to other side of town or pay astronomical tuition fees.
  
- By adding Bear Valley students to the three proposed schools slated to receive them, the district would increase each of those receiving schools’ capacity to 96%-98%. This would overcrowd those schools’ classrooms and leave zero room to accommodate additional students when families move into the homes in our area where there are a lot of housing developments in the works. It also leaves zero room for those receiving schools to accommodate Bear valley’s before/after school programs, preschool program, and summer programs.

School	Current # Students @ School	Building Capacity (Max school can have)	Current % Capacity	Proposed Add (# Bear Valley students to come to school)	Total # students post-Bear Valley Add	% Capacity post-Bear Valley Add
Huffman	268	404	66%	121	389	96%
Rabbit Creek	290	404	72%	104	394	98%
O’Malley	349	437	80%	80	429	98%

- **Growth Potential in Area:**

- Per MLS, 52 New Construction Homes Constructed on Anchorage hillside within the last year. This includes Canyon View Estates; 20 out of 29 lots are built-up and sold; 9 lots are being built on currently. Listing agent for this development states out of the homes constructed, all but 3 of these have sold to young families with children.
  
- Spruce Terrace Development, in the Bear Valley boundary, includes 27 parcels.
  
- Equestrian Heights (immediate Bear Valley boundary) platted by Hulquist, construction starts within the year. 19 Lots planned.
  
- Per MLS, 26 *additional* vacant, buildable lots closed this year in the hillside area. Statistically, at least
  
- Given that the median days on market for our area is 8 days, and the months’ supply in housing is 1.4 months (an ideal balanced housing months; supply is 6 months), professionals are certain any development is purchased quickly in this market.

- **Declining Birth Rates:**
  - Relying solely on a declining birth rate metric based on the 0-4 age group data from the 2022 census to predict the future presence of children overlooks key factors like migration patterns. Many families move to this area– both locally from other Anchorage neighborhoods and from out of state– specifically to access top-quality schools, particularly Bear Valley. This ongoing influx of families can sustain or even increase the number of school-aged children in the area, regardless of local birth rate trends, and should be considered when assessing future enrollment trends. Birth rate data (where babies are born) is not a metric reflective of where school-aged children live or end up.
  
- **Specialty Programs**
  - [Alaska Statute section 14.03.123](#), concerning school and district accountability, mandates that “the department shall establish a program of special recognition for those public schools that receive a high performance designation, based on the accountability system that demonstrates (1) an improvement over the school’s performance designation for the previous year; or (2) maintenance of a proficient or high performance designation from the previous year... [including] student performance on standards-based assessments in language arts and mathematics.” Although Alaska state law emphasizes this recognition, and the district’s [2023-2028 strategic plan](#) highlights reading and math proficiency as key goals and guardrails, the district’s evaluation rubric does not include a measure for recognizing and retaining high academic performance. Prioritizing the retention of specialty programs – such as charter and immersion – over schools with strong student outcomes (like Bear Valley) fundamentally undermines the established state and district goals.
  
- **Building Condition:**
  - The deferred maintenance costs are estimated at approximately \$16 million. Please provide the structural engineering assessment and outline the methodology used to arrive at this figure. Please define what constitutes deferred maintenance.
  - Building age should not be the determining factor of building condition. Building condition should be an assessment of the structural integrity of the building, from its foundation to its roof.
  
- **Transportation:**
  - The administration stated that the ASD transportation department believes children from Bear Valley can be transported to more distant schools down the hill without issues *and* within their required 45 total bus route window. The confidence of the transportation department does not reflect the daily reality that our families face. Our buses *already* struggle to get our students to school and back home on time, especially in the winter months. Longer bus rides will mean even earlier mornings and later evenings, less time for family activities and homework, more fatigue throughout the day, and a very predictable loss of learning from late arrivals.
  - The administration also stated that all buses across the district will “of course be late in a snowmageddon event.” We live in Alaska. Winter is our longest season, and the amount

of snowfall we receive in our area is often much larger than communities further down the hill even when it isn't a "snowmageddon event." It is the district's responsibility to factor in the reality that large snowfall will be a common occurrence, especially in our mountainous communities where the weather is often very different than further down the hill.

- **Per ASD, Properly Resourced School Look Like the Following:**
  - **A. Have Balanced Class Sizes and Minimized Combination Classes (i.e. mixed grade classrooms):**
    - Bear Valley does not have any combination classrooms. This 2024-2025 school year for example, we have full classes for every grade:
      - K- 17 x2 classes
      - 1- 24 x2 classes
      - 2-26 x2 classes
      - 3-20 x3 classes
      - 4-30 x2 classes
      - 5-30 x2 classes
  - **B. Are Fully Staffed:**
    - All positions at Bear Valley are filled except school psychology
    - 100% of Bear Valley's teachers are fully certified and qualified to teacher their class
    - Bear Valley has an extremely high teacher retention rate, with many teachers spending the majority of their teaching careers at the school.
  - **C. Have Diverse Course Offerings and Activities for Students:**
    - Bear Valley's course offerings are incredibly diverse and with students actively participating in all of the following opportunities available to them: Choir, Battle of the Books, Art Club, Spanish, Cross Country, Spelling Club, STEAM Night and Science Fair, Multicultural Night, Filipino Dance Club, tennis club, school-based Girl Scout Troop #23082, additional music and additional sports clubs, BVCA before and after school child care, pre-school and summer camp programs.
  - **D. Have Adequate Budgets to Meet Student Needs:**
    - Bear Valley's PTA supplements the school's operating budget with roughly \$100,000 a year
    - Bear Valley currently spends \$9,032 per student (based on the # of students we have and our \$2,827,004 FY24 budget funds), which is below the [district average of \\$9,354.85 across all elementary schools](#).
    - In fact, there are 32 schools with a higher cost per student than Bear Valley, some as high as \$13,700+ per student.
  - **E. Are Safe and Healthy Schools:**
    - Bear Valley currently has a 94.16% attendance YTD
    - Bear Valley has a 0% Suspension Rate