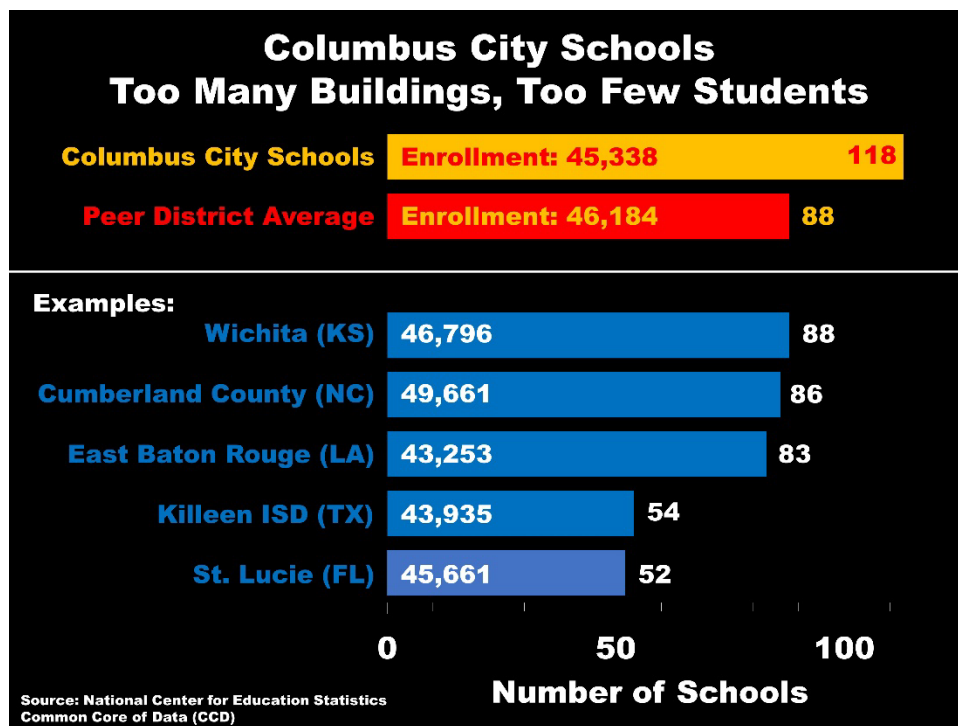


Undisputed Facts Related to Facilities Task Force Recommendations

Vladimir Kogan
May 21, 2024

Good evening President Vera, Vice President Pierce, board members, and Dr. Chapman. Given the ongoing facilities controversies, I want to highlight some basic facts — facts that no one has disputed (and I suspect no speakers tonight will either).

The first is that Columbus has way more schools¹ than other districts serving similar numbers of students, including students of comparable racial diversity (i.e., majority non-white) and economic disadvantage (i.e., high poverty).



In this figure, the length each bar corresponds to the number of schools in each district and I've overlaid student enrollment on top. As you can see, Columbus has **30 more schools than peer districts**, and many others you see at the bottom have even fewer.

¹ The federal data on which this figure is based counts schools, not school buildings. Co-located schools — such as the elementary, middle, and high school Africentric programs — are counted separately, as is the Online Academy, which doesn't have a building. That's why the federal data shows Columbus with 118 schools. But note the same counting rule applies to other districts as well, so double-counting of co-located schools cannot explain the gap between CCS and other peer districts.

Some have mentioned population growth projections — projections, I should stress, for the metro region (including Delaware and Licking counties).² But as the last 30 years show, population growth does not equal student growth. Since 1994, the school-aged population within CCS boundaries has increased, while actual enrollment has fallen **28 percent**.

Columbus City Schools: 1994 vs. 2024

of Students: -28%
of Schools: -19%

Average Enrollment by School	1994	2024
CCS Elementary Schools	378 students	315 students (-17%)
CCS High Schools	876 students	667 students (-24%)

Why are families leaving Columbus City Schools?

CEA Officers

 Columbus Education Association- John Coneglio, President
 • Phil Hayes, Vice President

[Columbus Education Association: COVID-19 Vaccine Must Be Made Available Prior to In-Person Return of Students](#)

COLUMBUS, OH – The Columbus Education Association, the Union representing more than 4,000 teachers, librarians, nurses, counselors, psychologists, and other education professionals in Columbus City Schools, called today upon the Superintendent of Columbus City Schools to ensure that the initial round of COVID-19 Vaccination is available to all Columbus City Schools employees prior to a return to blended learning. A date of February 1, 2021 was announced by the CCS Superintendent today for a return to the blended learning model.

The Columbus Dispatch
 Sports Entertainment Business Opinion Advertise Obituaries eNewspaper Legals
 NEWS
Columbus City Schools reopening plan changes again for students with special needs
 Jim Woods The Columbus Dispatch
 Published 10:06 p.m. ET Oct. 28, 2020 | Updated 11:13 a.m. ET Oct. 29, 2020

Right-sizing efforts failed to keep pace with enrollment decline — the number of schools was reduced just 19% during this period. Today, the average Columbus high school **enrolls 210 fewer students** than 30 years ago, limiting curricular offerings such as advanced courses and career and technical education.

Operating and staffing so many half-empty buildings diverts resources from where they could have the biggest impact on learning. This negatively impacts the education of every Columbus student, regardless of which school they attend.

Others argue you should do more to understand families like ours have left the district. One reason is that Columbus was one of the last districts in Ohio to resume in-person learning during the pandemic. Between 2019 and 2021, enrollment in CCS declined by more than 2,300 students, or 5 percent (from 49,008 in 2019 to 46,664 in 2021).

² [One petition](#) making the rounds claims: “At the end of 2023, Columbus was the fastest growing city in the United States. More work must be done to align CCS planning with the city’s current and future growth.” This is based on a [Bank of American Institute study](#) that includes not just parts of City of Columbus beyond the CCS boundaries, but the entire ten county metropolitan area!

Delayed reopening was due to the teachers' union intransigence, not public health. When the former superintendent tried to partially reopen schools in October 2020, based on guidance from the Columbus health commissioner,³ the Columbus Education Association blocked her from doing so. CEA President John Coneglio called her effort a "unilateral decision," cited "trust issues"⁴ and urged the district to — you guessed it! — "Press Pause"⁵ on reopening — literally the same language he's used to criticize the facilities task force process!

For CEA leaders to now question the district's response to falling enrollment feels a bit like an arsonist complaining that not enough is being done to put out the fire he started. (To be clear, I'm talking about CEA leadership, not rank-and-file teachers.)

I'm not here to defend the task force recommendations. I disagree with several. But we must have an honest conversation about which schools to close — instead of pretending that none need to and letting adult political and employment concerns drive the decision.

Student outcomes don't change until adult behaviors change. And we have seen a lot of behaviors by many of the adults in this room. This is your opportunity to lead by example.

³ Columbus Health Commissioner Dr. Mysheika Roberts spoke at your board meeting on Oct. 6, 2020. The video of the meeting is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc81GlwbmoE>. She said: "Again, just more evidence that we're moving in the right direction and it's a good time for our kids to back to school" (at 24:37 in the video). Later in the meeting, Board Member Beckerle asked Dr. Roberts to clarify: "You said in your presentation that you felt that it was the right [time] to start bringing students back into the buildings. I would like some clarity on that but just please answer this: Is it safe? ... I want to know unequivocally from your professional opinion, you are the lead expert in this area in Franklin County, is it safe for us to begin bringing students and staff back into our building?" (at 31:42 in the video). Dr. Roberts answered: "I would say that, knowing all the precautions that have been put in place by the state, and knowing all the work that Columbus City School has done to protect the students and staff, I would say it is as safe as it can be. ... So again, if all the precautions are followed then it is safe as safe as it can be for our kids to go back into the classroom." After CEA unilaterally blocked Dr. Dixon's limited reopening plan, Columbus schools stay closed for another four months (except for some career technical education students). Columbus schools resumed (hybrid) in-person instruction in February 2021 — only after Gov. Mike DeWine made in-person learning a requirement for CCS teachers to receive priority access to the Covid-19 vaccine (a requirement CEA opposed).

⁴ Alissa Widman Neese, 2020, "[Columbus City Schools Pushes Back Start of In-person Classes](#)," *Columbus Dispatch*, Oct. 12.

⁵ Alissa Widman Neese, 2020, "[Columbus City Schools Delaying In-person Classes Until January as COVID-19 Worsens in Ohio](#)," *Columbus Dispatch*, Oct. 20.