



City and Borough of Juneau
City & Borough Manager's Office
155 South Seward Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Telephone: 586-5240 | Facsimile: 586-5385

TO: Borough Assembly
Board of Education

DATE: April 4, 2022

FROM: Rorie Watt, City Manager

RE: Demographic Trending and Facility Planning

At the joint meeting on March 7, 2022, between the Juneau School District Board of Education and the Borough Assembly, the two bodies briefly touched on the topic of demographic trending. I advise the bodies to take a deeper dive on this issue.

Attached is the enrollment forecast for October 2022, prepared by Gregg Erickson of Erickson and Associates. Erickson has provided Juneau School District (JSD) with forecasting for nearly a decade and those forecasts have been quite accurate (excepting the COVID induced volatility). This current forecast should cause all policy makers to sit up and take notice. While the forecasts are mostly used for planning, budgeting and staffing of the upcoming school years, Erickson also provides ten-year projections. The entire report is attached, but a high level summary includes the following projections:

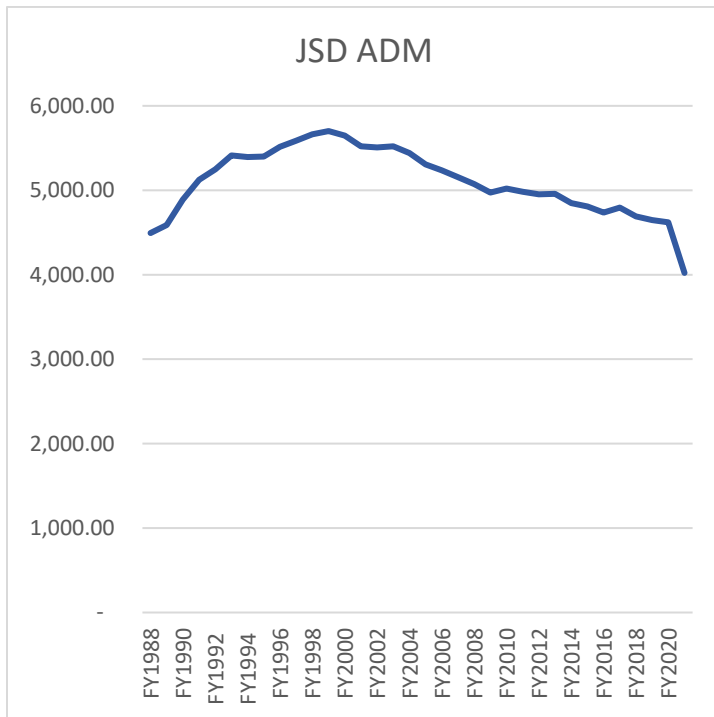
Year	Facility Type	Enrollment
2022	Elementary	1860
2032	Elementary	1197
	Change:	Loss of 663 Students
2022	Middle School	1012
2032	Middle School	734
	Change:	Loss of 278 Students
2022	High School	1353
2032	High School	1104
	Change:	Loss of 249 Students

As shown in the annotated mid-case chart, Erickson predicts significant population change. Some of his estimates are based on hard cold facts (2nd graders today exist and will be Seniors in 10 years). Some predictions are founded on other factors (is our population shrinking or growing, and if so how fast, rates of in and out migration, etc.) and predictions of new parenting (while 2032 2nd graders haven't been born yet, their parents are alive and as our median age increases or decreases, it is not unreasonable to guess at community birth rates). In sum, predicting next year is a whole lot easier than ten years from now.

For a different and less precise view of demographic trending, one could also consult with the State Demographer (an employee of the Department of Labor Research Division). The Demographer uses census data and produces public data in 5-year age brackets that do not exactly correspond to school ages, but the data can easily be used to infer predicted changes in school age population. One summary:

Year	Juneau Age 5-19 Population
2020	5982
2030	5353
Percent Decline: 11-12%	

A third method for looking at trending is to look at ADM – Average Daily Membership, the metric used by the State Department of Education and Early Development for the purposes of school funding. The below graph shows 30 years of data including a decline from a peak of 5701 students in 1999 dropping to 4620 in the last pre-pandemic impacted year of 2020.



At my recommendation, the Assembly and School Board contemplated demographic trending in 2016/17 and for a time received information and discussed the issues. The bodies felt that no action at that time was necessary.

We are now five years later, the population trends continue and there still is no funding available from the State for new renovation projects. From an operational/delivery of education stand-point, it does not seem like there is cause to react strongly to this data. The population changes are happening year by year and the District adjusts its operations accordingly. However, from a capital project renovation perspective, it is much more timely to discuss this data and the projections. Both Marie Drake and Mendenhall River continue to age. If the projections are accurate, and there is not much reason to doubt them, then it is more appropriate to add potential school closure into the mix of the discussion about facility renovations. This will be a difficult topic to discuss.

Recommendation:

The Assembly and School Board should prioritize this discussion and discuss how/when to analyze our current situation and to review the work from five years ago.