



DEJONG

CASE STUDY

Olentangy Local School District
Lewis Center, Ohio

February 2007

Olentangy Local School District

“DeJONG continuously monitors our demographics on an annual basis to make sure enrollment projections are accurate, and they always deliver findings in a timely manner.”

- Andrew Kerr, Director of Facilities Development

The Objective

The Olentangy Local School District, located north of Columbus, is one of the fastest growing districts in the state of Ohio. Since 1996, enrollment has increased by 174 percent. For instance, enrollment at the start of the 1992-1993 school year was 2,462 students. By 2001-2002, it nearly tripled to 6,740 students.

New housing continues to fuel the increasing enrollment, and plenty of land has yet to be developed. In fact, the Delaware County Regional Planning Commission (DCRPC) projects the district’s population will reach approximately 127,000 when all planned land development is complete (also called “build-out”), compared to 39,121 in 2000.

To accommodate this booming population, school district officials hired DeJONG and DeJONG-Healy (one of its affiliates) to project future enrollment and help plan new facility construction.

The Strategy

Projecting future enrollment involves many factors. First, we looked at community demographics from the 1990 Census and from the DCRPC. Based on a 165 percent growth rate from 1990 to 2000, we projected a 2020 population of 87,010. The current population is roughly 51,000.

Then we reviewed the number of single-family building permits issued in the district compared to the increase in the number of students by grade. This comparison allowed us to develop average-yield factors by grade, or in other words, the number of students the district can expect from each new home built.

We also looked at historical enrollment by grade, live birth data, and previous projections. Combining these elements, we determined 10-year projections by grade. Then we incorporated these 10-year projections with population and housing statistics based on when the district is completely developed to project a build-out environment for the district by grade group (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). Projected enrollment at build-out is approximately 26,500 pupils:

- K-5: 12,800 students
- 6-8: 6,090 students
- 9-12: 7,625 students

CASE STUDY

With 25,000 housing units left to build, we estimated the approximate amount of years it will take until all planned land development is complete:

- 32 years at 800 new homes per year
- 28 years at 900 new homes per year
- 25 years at 1,000 new homes per year
- 23 years at 1,100 new homes per year

Our enrollment projection was based on the 900 new homes model because it aligns with an earlier study we completed regarding planned land development and represents the slowing housing market the district began to experience in 2006.

With 900 new homes built each year, student enrollment is projected to increase by 42 percent (8,796 students). During the 2016-2017 school year, approximately 20,754 students are expected, compared to 11,958 students during the 2006-2007 school year.

We used this same information (plus a review of where students live) to plan an appropriate number of future school facilities. Based on the current grade configuration and 650-student elementary schools, 900-student middle schools, and 1,600-student high schools, the district will eventually need a total of:

- 20 elementary schools
- 7 middle schools
- 5 high schools

The Results

Our research provides district officials with a valuable planning tool as they determine future direction. Based on the projections, we also offered the following recommendations:

- Enlist the DCRPC to update the student enrollment by grade database each year. This will allow the development of yield factors, which measure the number of new students gained per new home over a period of time (by grade and by township).
- Identify long-term feeder patterns, (i.e., which elementary school students attend which middle school and which middle school students attend which high school) and grade configurations to help determine the exact number of needed schools and location of future school sites.
- Identify school size by enrollment in order to determine the number of schools needed, and also pay close attention to birth rates.
- Watch for changes in the rate and density of housing growth.

CASE STUDY

Even though each of these factors will have an impact on future student enrollment and the number of school facilities needed, any fluctuation in new housing will most likely be the driving force behind decreases or increases in the student population.

The district has followed DeJONG's recommendations and is currently building new facilities in strategic locations to meet the demand of this growing population. For more information on district's plans, please visit www.olentangy.k12.oh.us

***Tracy Healy** is the current president of DeJONG-HEALY, a new affiliate of DeJONG, where she was a former vice president and one of its founding members. In her new role, Tracy will continue to focus on demographics and facility planning projects.*

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