

Cossatot River School District

The following slides are for review in advance to become acquainted with the full background of this matter.
Only a portion of the slides will be covered at the meeting in the interest of time.



www.cossatot.us

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- On July 1, 2004, Umpire School District was consolidated into the Wickes School District.
- Cossatot River School District (CRSD) was formed on July 1, 2010 with the consolidation of Wickes School District and Van Cove School District. The Umpire Campus (Umpire) has remained an isolated K-12 campus since formation of CRSD.
- After consolidation to form CRSD, both Wickes High School and Van Cove High School were replaced by the new Cossatot River High School (CRHS) for grades 7-12.
- The elementary schools in Van Cove and in Wickes remained open, each as separate K-6 facilities.
- Last year, the elementary schools in Van Cove and in Wickes were restructured to form Cossatot River Primary (CRPS), a PK-2nd facility, and Cossatot River Elementary (CRES), a 3rd-6th facility, respectively. The restructuring helped the district align K-6th curriculum, promote community unity, and improve staffing efficiency.
- All CRSD campuses, including Umpire, operate on a 4-day school week.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

- Enrollment is the number of students attending a school at any given point in time.
- Enrollment is different from average daily membership (ADM). ADM is the average days attended through the first three quarters of school.
- Districts are funded based on the previous year's ADM.
- Fiscal year (FY) means July 1 – June 30. The term FY 2020, for example, refers to the 2019-2020 school year.

STEPS TAKEN PRIOR

- The CRSD financial advisor, Ray Beardsley, from First Security Bank in Little Rock, advised the then-Umpire School District that enrollment is essential for an isolated campus. He advised the CRSD School Board each year thereafter about the status of the campus.
- In 2021-2022, concerns began to circulate from community members about the possibility of Umpire closing due to enrollment decline.
- On April 20, 2022, a Q&A about the campus was offered to help answer questions in response to concerns from community members. An agenda item was announced for the May 19, 2022 board meeting to provide more information to the community.
- In the weeks prior to the May 19, 2022 meeting, Ray Beardsley answered questions that had been submitted by community members. The answers to the questions were posted on the school website.
- On May 19, 2022, a board meeting was held during which Ray Beardsley provided an Umpire update for the school board and the community. At the meeting, Ray Beardsley communicated the urgency to try to get students who had left back to the campus.

STEPS TAKEN PRIOR

- After the May 19, 2022 board meeting, Umpire enrollment continued to be promoted consistently (see slides 30-36).
- FY 2023 saw a slight increase in enrollment at one point during the year; the K-12 ADM for FY 2023 was approximately 93 students.
- To start this current FY 2024, enrollment declined to 92 students, on trend for an ADM in the mid to high 80s for FY 2024.
- The school board, at its October 12, 2023 board meeting, heard a recommendation to close the campus at the end of this school year. The school board heard from all community members who requested to speak. The financials were presented by Norman Hill. After hearing all speakers, the school board voted 4-2 to close the campus. Norman Hill's resume is attached to the petition.

STEPS TAKEN PRIOR

- Steps were taken prior to the October 12, 2023 board meeting to ensure community members were kept informed about the meeting.
- Information was shared in person, by email, text alert, newspaper, radio, school website, and hardcopy letter.
- The central office communicated its availability for phone calls or in-person meetings.
- A tab was created on the school website. Several documents were put on the website in that location. One document is a Q&A form that was created in response to questions. Another document is Norman Hill's financial overview outlining the financial state of the campus, and another document shared instructions on how to get on the board meeting agenda to speak.

STEPS TAKEN PRIOR

- The central office responded to FOI requests for over 5,000 documents at no cost to the requesters. Those financial documents are compiled on the website in the same location as the other documents.
- A Q&A was offered before the meeting to help answer questions.
- Norman Hill and the superintendent met privately with a group of residents at their request before the board meeting to go over the financial documents.
- These steps were taken prior to the board meeting to facilitate communication and transparency.
- Overall, the community and the school board have been kept informed about the status of Umpire since it was consolidated.

CONSIDERATION OF STUDENTS' BEST INTEREST

- Academic Integrity
- Fiscal Integrity

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- All students will have more access to courses without having to learn virtually.
- All students will have more in-person courses in improved facilities.
- All students will have more opportunities for friends and networking in general classrooms.
- All students will have more opportunities for collaboration in GT, ESL, and intervention programs.
- All students will have more opportunities for athletics and extracurricular activities.
- All students will engage in high-quality learning while still in a small-school environment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- Elementary students will no longer have to split a classroom with multiple grades (i.e. 1st/2nd, 3rd/4th, 5th/6th in same room at the same time).
- Elementary teachers can channel their professional development to a single grade level.
- Elementary students will have access to more extracurricular activities such as chess, quiz bowl, and youth sports and will be part of a peer group that leads to more opportunities in high school.
- The other CRSD campuses will benefit from the Umpire staff and additional collaboration brought by Umpire students.
- The recommendation for closure is not based on poor academics at Umpire. The teachers are good and students generally perform well.
- The primary consideration is the best interest of the students in CRSD as a whole when weighing opportunities for all students and campus efficiency.



CRHS





CRES





CRPS





Umpire
K-12th



<i>Additional Opportunities</i>		<i>More Expansive Opportunities</i>
Baseball/Softball	BETA	FFA
Soccer	Trap Shooting	FBLA
Volleyball	Chess (3rd-12th)	FCCLA
Football	Quiz Bowl (3rd-12th)	Choir
Band	ETS	K-12th Music Programs
Golf	Upward Bound	Track/Cross Country
Cheer	EAST	Basketball (more teams)
Youth Sports		

Career Centers

Through a partnership with University of Arkansas Rich Mountain and University of Arkansas Cossatot, all students will have the opportunity to attend these institutions' career centers in the afternoon with school transportation. The primary goals of career center courses are to give a student the ability to make an informed career choice, to teach marketable job skills, and to encourage students to continue their education after high school.

UARM Career Center

Medical Professions, Machine Tool Tech., Welding

UA Cossatot Career Center

Industrial Maintenance

CRHS Concurrent College Credit Classes

All students will have access to 35 concurrent college credit hours in the courses below. All classes listed except college algebra and trigonometry are offered in person by CRHS teachers.

AP Chemistry I & II	8 Hours
American National Government	3 Hours
College Algebra	3 Hours
College Trigonometry	3 Hours
English Composition I & II	6 Hours
Oral Communication	3 Hours
United States History II	3 Hours
Teacher Preparation	6 Hours

DISTRICT SERVICES

Approximately 24% of our entire district are students with English as a second language (ESL). CRSD has a full-time ESL Coordinator who services all campuses. All students would benefit directly from the full-time ESL Coordinator along with an additional 14 teachers who are certified in ESL and from several who are bilingual. The best interest of our ESL student population would be served by allowing them to learn with many more ESL students with access to more direct services. The table below breaks down the total number of ESL students served per campus.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

CRPS (PK - 2nd)	29 Students
CRES (3rd - 6th)	48 Students
CRHS (7th - 12th)	105 Students
Umpire (K-12th)	24 Students

DISTRICT SERVICES

CRSD has a full-time GT Specialist who services all campuses. High school GT is serviced via advanced placement (AP) courses. CRHS has two teachers on site who teach AP courses for composition and chemistry. Overall, the best interest of our GT student population would be served by allowing students to learn with more GT students and access to more direct services. The table below breaks down the number of GT students served per campus.

Gifted & Talented Students Served

CRPS (PK - 2nd)	All K-2nd Students
CRES (3rd - 6th)	20 Students
CRHS (7th-12th)	65 Students
Umpire (K-12th)	All K-2nd, 1 High School Student

FISCAL INTEGRITY

- Umpire operated cost above revenue at nearly \$500,000 for FY 2023 at a K-12 ADM of about 90. That gap is on the pathway to widen for FY 2024 with higher expenses and lower enrollment. The campus needs approximately 150 students.
- Expenditures per student are approximately \$4,000 over revenue per student at Umpire with an average class size of five students.
- By acting now, staff at Umpire will be offered positions at our other campuses. Staff overage will be addressed through attrition, which should level out in less than two years.
- Finances are only one component of the recommended campus closure. The guiding principle is to serve the best interest of the students in CRSD as a whole
- Prolonging the action will likely result in the same decision to be made later but under more drastic circumstances.

<i>Cost to Educate Per Student</i>	
Cost Per Student at Umpire	\$20,070.17
Cost per Student at All Other CRSD Campuses	\$11,119.36

FISCAL RESPONSIVENESS

- CRSD has adjusted districtwide to become as efficient as it can under the status quo including the restructure of its other two elementary schools last year. Over \$300,000 in salaries have been saved districtwide in the past two years.
- Examples: The assistant principal at CRHS was not replaced. The curriculum coordinator was not replaced and duties were distributed to district administration.
- Many classrooms at CRHS are at or near the maximum. Kindergarten classes at CRPS are at maximum with a paraprofessional assigned to one class to be in compliance. Third grade at CRES is full, making it necessary to seek a waiver to add additional students.

FISCAL RESPONSIVENESS

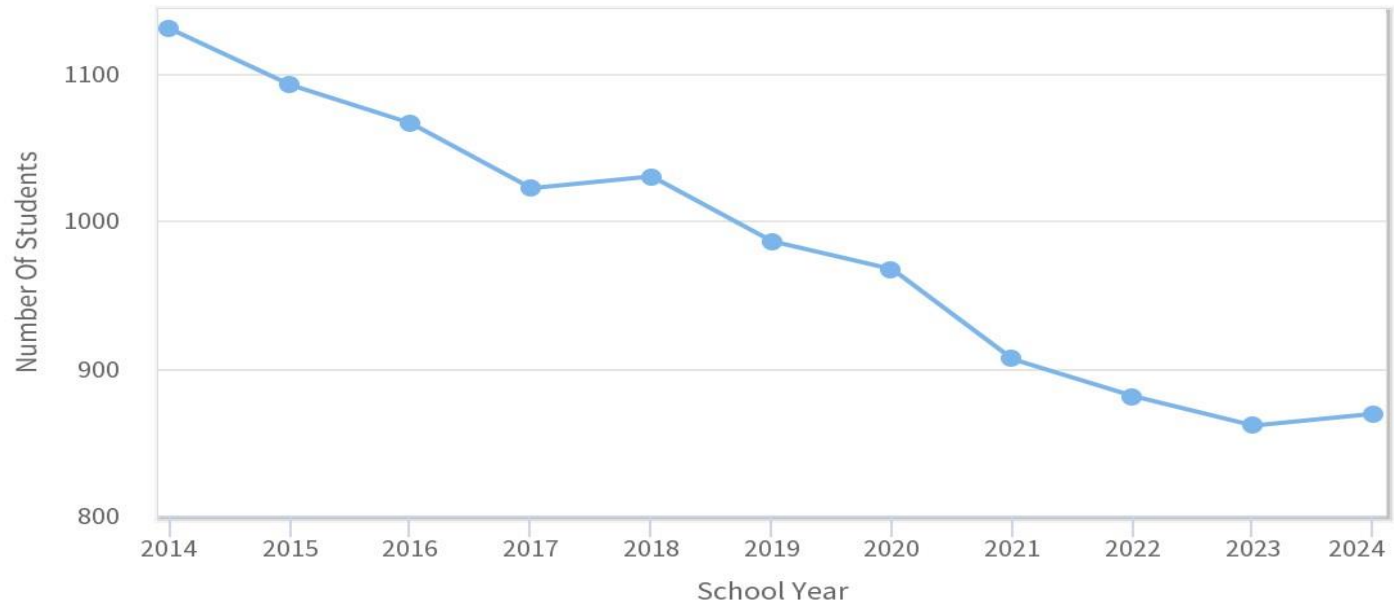
- The principal at Umpire is also the CRSD 504 Coordinator and the CRSD Parental Involvement Coordinator.
- We have cut electives at Umpire in order to keep the campus staffed for required positions.
- The previous slides demonstrate some of the efforts made districtwide to remain efficient as a district.
- With the closure of Wickes High School and Van Cove High School many years ago, and the restructure of the previous two elementary schools in Van Cove and Wickes more recently, CRSD is familiar with making necessary changes in the best interest of all students progressively since its formation.

The table below reflects enrollment data for CRSD as a whole from FY 2018 through FY 2023, with Umpire included, as well as data broken out specifically for Umpire.

<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>FY 2018</i>	<i>FY 2023</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Overall CRSD	1,030	861	-169	-16%
Umpire	133	92	-41	-31%

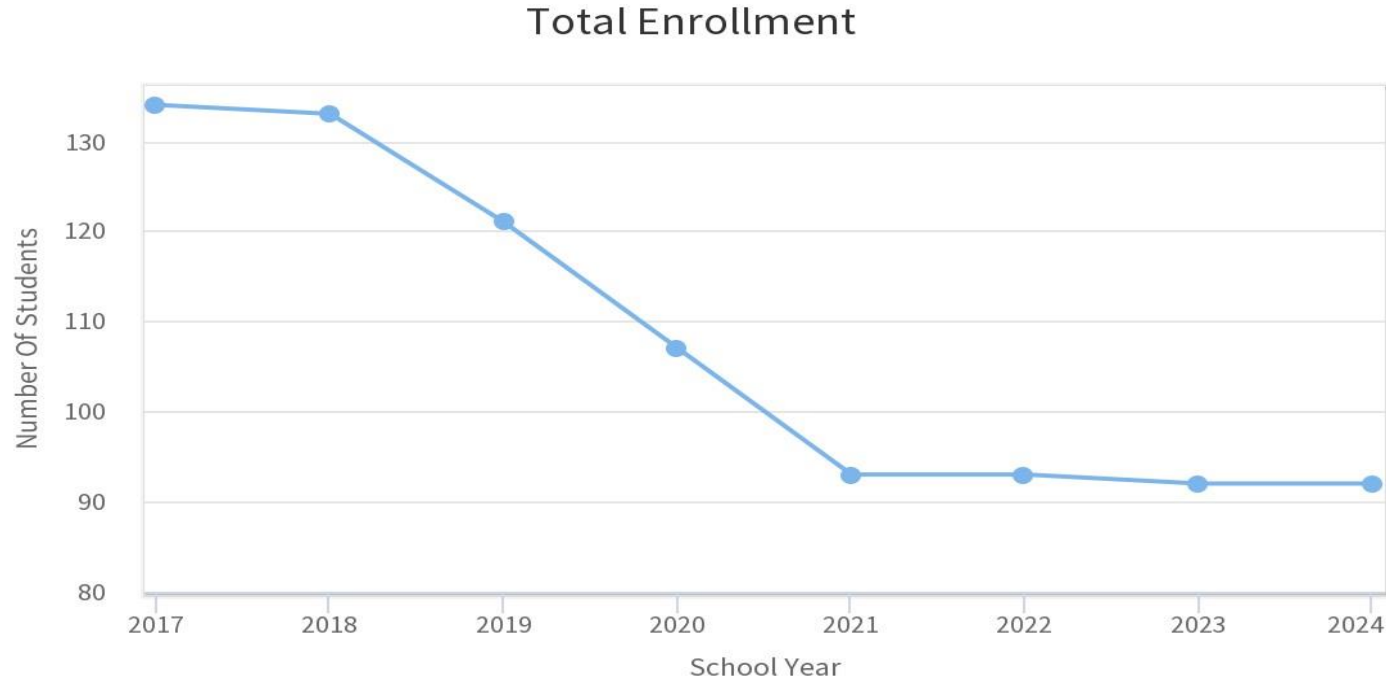
Overall CRSD

Total Enrollment



Source: My School Info

Umpire K-12th



Source: My School Info

The table below reflects ADM data for CRSD as a whole from FY 2020 through FY 2023, including Umpire, as well as data broken out specifically for Umpire. Currently, for this FY 2024, CRSD as a whole is in one of the only years since formation where it is not on track to decline in ADM. With a current enrollment of 92 students, the FY 2024 ADM for Umpire is on a pathway to decline to an estimated mid to high 80s.

<i>ADM</i>	<i>FY 2020</i>	<i>FY 2023</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Overall CRSD	962	865	-97	10%
Umpire K-12th	106	93	-41	12%

<i>Current Campus Enrollment</i>	<i>October 12, 2022</i>	<i>October 12, 2023</i>
<i>CRPS (PK – 2nd)</i>	155	171
<i>CRES (3rd-6th)</i>	242	220
<i>CRHS (7th-12th)</i>	374	385
<i>Umpire (K-12th)</i>	93	92
<i>Totals</i>	<u>864</u>	<u>868</u>

The enrollment decline at Umpire is a combination of students leaving to attend other school districts and homeschool. Students can move to another school district by either school choice or board transfer. When choosing a different school, students at Umpire generally leave to attend Dierks or Kirby. Dierks is about 12 miles from Umpire, and Kirby is about 30 miles away. The table below represents students who have left Umpire since 2021.

<i>School Choice</i>		<i>Board Transfers</i>		<i>Homeschool</i>	
<i>School Year</i>	<i>Student #</i>	<i>School Year</i>	<i>Student #</i>	<i>School Year</i>	<i>Student #</i>
2020-2021	0	2020-2021	0	2020-2021	5
2021-2022	4	2021-2022	2	2021-2022	8
2022-2023	14	2022-2023	0	2022-2023	9
2023-2024	1	2023-2024	2	2023-2024	6
Total Students to Other Districts			<u>23</u>	Total Homeschool Students	<u>28</u>

PROMOTION EFFORTS

- Efforts have been made to promote Umpire, even more so over the past few years since its significant enrollment drop.
- Some examples are shared on the next few slides. Efforts include:
 - Social media
 - Newspapers
 - Special events
 - Recurring radio ads
 - School board recognition
 - Cosmetic campus improvements

PROMOTION EFFORTS

Cosmetic campus improvements were made over the past few years in an attempt to make the campus more attractive for students and staff. Some of the improvements include:

- Playground surface replacement
- Playground barrier replacement
- Exterior building paint
- Door security upgrades
- Furniture upgrades
- Professional power washing of all buildings
- Construction of awnings connecting buildings
- A few examples are shown on the next few slides.

PROMOTION EFFORTS

Before

After



Before

After



PROMOTION EFFORTS

Before



After



PROMOTION EFFORTS

A partnership was formed with Bunyard Broadcasting over the past few years to promote CRSD on 92.1. The station reaches most of Southwest Arkansas and into some areas of central Arkansas. Promotions were also created specifically for Umpire to help target our stakeholders in that area. The following is a breakdown of some of the Umpire ads that were run over the past few years.

<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Date Range</i>	<i>Time Range</i>	<i>Total Slots</i>	<i>Total Minutes</i>
Live Remote Event	2/8/22 – 2/12/22	6 a.m. – 8 p.m.	15	450
School Choice	4/18/22 – 4/29/22	6 a.m. – 7 p.m.	12	360
Campus Promotion	11/4/22 – 12/12/22	6 a.m. to 8 p.m.	54	1,620

PROMOTION EFFORTS

In addition to radio ads, Umpire was also featured live on air for special events. On July 29, 2021, the principal at Umpire along with an Umpire teacher visited the 92.1 station for a live interview to promote the campus. On August 16, 2022, the new principal at Umpire visited the same station for a live interview to introduce herself and to share exciting things happening at the campus.



PROMOTION EFFORTS

The CRSD School Board recognizes various groups occasionally throughout the year for its “Cossatot River Pride” award. The school board recognized the campus at its regular October 2022 board meeting. The campus has also been featured in paid social media ads in an attempt to reach a wider audience. Additionally, the campus was also the spotlight of a few promotional videos to inform stakeholders of events on campus.



FUNDING MATRIX CONCERNS

Umpire Enrollment By Grade as of 10/12/2023

Grade	Enrollment	Grade	Enrollment
<i>K</i>	9	<i>7th</i>	5
<i>1st</i>	6	<i>8th</i>	7
<i>2nd</i>	10	<i>9th</i>	7
<i>3rd</i>	6	<i>10th</i>	10
<i>4th</i>	4	<i>11th</i>	5
<i>5th</i>	8	<i>12th</i>	7
<i>6th</i>	8		

FUNDING MATRIX CONCERNS

- At an enrollment K-12 of 92 students, Umpire is overstaffed by approximately 10 staff members. This is per the matrix formula for K-12 teachers, library media specialists, principals, secretaries, counselors, and nurses.
- Umpire staffing efficiency per the matrix is about 40%. The target is 90 to 95%.
- Staffing has been adjusted significantly over the years. The staff totals leading to the overstaffing and low efficiency number is what is needed to be in compliance.
- At the current staff totals at Umpire, the K-12 campus could serve a student capacity of up to approximately 231 students.
- In response to the declining enrollment over the past two years, additional adjustments have been made to the extent possible as explained in the following slides.

FUNDING MATRIX CONCERNS

- Some teachers at Umpire teach multiple grade levels in mixed classrooms. For example, 1st/2nd grade, 3rd/4th grade, and 5th/6th are each respectively taught in one room at the same time. The kindergarten teacher is ½ time teacher and ½ time elementary counselor. Two teachers each teach both elementary and high school classes.
- Staff members from our other campuses contribute to save positions at Umpire. For example, the CRPS library media specialist serves ½ time as the library media specialist at Umpire, and the CRES counselor serves ½ time as Umpire High School counselor.

FUNDING MATRIX CONCERNS

- The CRSD gifted & talented specialist, ESL coordinator, math specialist, migrant tutor, and dyslexia specialist all visit Umpire regularly to service students but are not counted as staff in the matrix total for Umpire.
- Additionally, district-level staff members for maintenance, technology, and child nutrition service the campus regularly. They are also not listed in the matrix staff total for Umpire.

FUNDING MATRIX CONCERNS

- We have cut staff at Umpire as much as possible to the essentials over the last few years.
- As evidenced in the previous slides, CRSD has made all the staff adjustments it can at Umpire without operating even further against the best interest of the students.
- District resources like the staff listed in the previous slides would be better allocated to service all students in CRSD. They can spend more time at campuses with all students.

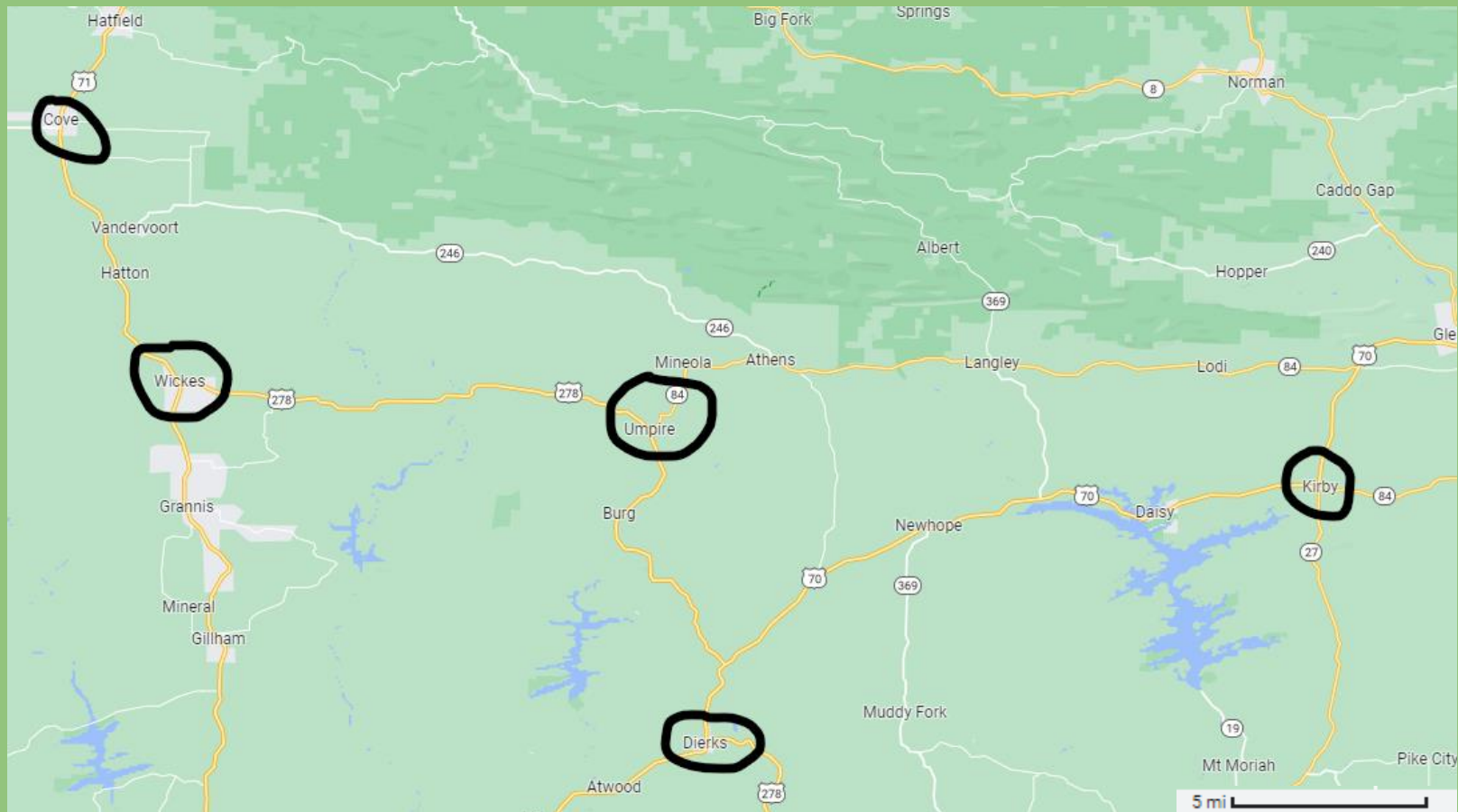
TRANSPORTATION

- The Umpire community currently has two bus routes. The plan is to keep those routes to service students.
- It is our hope that our Umpire students choose to remain at CRSD. However, many have gone to nearby Dierks School District or Kirby School District over the years given their proximity. There is an estimated 50 students who live in the Umpire communities currently attending Dierks Schools.
- At 92 students K-12, no bus would hold more than 50 students each assuming all 92 stayed with CRSD and all of those ride the buses. Realistically, fewer may ride the buses.

Umpire Community Area

The following table shows estimated bus route times to the other CRSD campuses. Estimated route times to other nearby districts are also shown. Route times would be shorter if fewer students rode the buses. We will explore adding Wi-Fi hot spots to buses along with a set of devices to promote extended learning while on bus rides. We will also explore purchase of another bus if necessary to shorten bus ride times.

Umpire to CRSD	30 mins – 1.80 hours
Umpire to Dierks	15 mins – 1 hour
Umpire to Kirby	45 mins - 1.5 hours



Mena School District

The Mena School District is in the same county as CRSD to the north. Mena went through a similar matter about 20 years ago when Hatfield Schools were closed and became part of Mena. The following are a few remote communities that are in Mena's school district along with approximate bus route times confirmed by its administration.

<u>Community</u>	<u>Bus Route Length</u>
Cherry Hill	2 Hours
Big Fork	2 Hours
Shady	2 Hours
Mt. Fork	2 Hours

De Queen School District

The De Queen School District is also near CRSD in a neighboring county to the south. De Queen went through a similar matter on two occasions when both Lockesburg Schools and Gillham Schools were closed and became part of De Queen. De Queen has a few bus routes that are two hours confirmed by its administration.

South Pike County School District

The South Pike County School District (SPCSD) is a farther school district in a nearby county to our east. SPCSD went through a similar matter when Delight Schools were closed and became part of SPCSD. SPCSD has bus routes that are one hour and fifteen minutes confirmed by its administration.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

- The concept of a campus closure is familiar in our local area.
- Having the remainder of the school year will allow us to plan for student transfers, work out staff contracts, transfer any building assets to other campuses, facilitate necessary code changes in APSCN, and communicate with families to ensure timely information is shared.
- We will work to continue an inclusive culture for all students. Many students are already familiar with other campuses due to events held districtwide.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

- We will arrange for our Umpire students to visit the other CRSD campuses before next school year - explore formation of a student leader guiding coalition.
- We will meet with community leaders to help facilitate the transition.
- We will arrange for our Umpire families to attend spring parent-teacher conferences for a chance to see the campuses and meet teachers.
- The ESL Coordinator will meet with families in the Umpire community to offer support for the transition.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

- We will continue partnerships with groups like our Educational Coop (DMESC), APSRC, and Bailey Education Group to further academic progress.
- A survey will be sent to staff seeking their input on what campus they would prefer for next school year.
- Ultimately, there is no “good time” to close a school. The same set of challenges will exist at any point in time. We will help make the transition smooth for our students and families.

CONCLUSION

It is an exciting time for Arkansas education. School districts must be proactive to make their schools the best choice for families. CRSD has already experienced many campus adjustments since its formation to continue providing a quality education as a united community. Acting now on this closure can help minimize the long-term impact on the district. The result would be in the best interest of all students in the district as a whole.