TO: Board of Directors

FROM: George Russell
Superintendent of Schools

RE: Reports and Recommendations

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

III. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Student winners of the EEA Martin Luther King, Jr. contest will read their entries to the board.

VII. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. Receive the District’s Annual Report on Compliance with Oregon Minimum Standards (Staff: Tom Henry)

Annually, superintendents are required to report the district’s status with respect to the Standards for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools from OAR Chapter 581, Division 22. Deputy Superintendent Tom Henry has prepared the Annual Report on Compliance with Oregon Standards and the district is in compliance. Mr. Henry will present a brief overview of the report and respond to board questions. A copy of the report is included in the board packet.

2. Receive the Superintendent’s Report Implementing Recommendations of Shaping 4J Related to Enrollment Management and Boundaries

BACKGROUND

As part of the approved recommendations in Shaping 4J’s Future, the board adopted several district-wide strategies for implementation. One was related to open enrollment and choice at the secondary level, while the other related to boundary adjustments. While these two actions are related, they were not meant to be interdependent. That is, they were not meant to be implemented together as a strategy for managing enrollment and choice. The strategies approved by the board are listed below:

1. Limit transfers for middle and high schools:
   Each middle school could accept up to 5% of the middle school students residing within the boundaries of another region. No middle school could accept transfers that would result in a student enrollment that exceeds the middle school size maximum enrollment target of 600 students. Each high school could accept up to 7.5% of the high school students residing within the boundaries of another region.
No high school could accept transfers that would result in a student enrollment that exceeds the high school size maximum of 1500 students. IHS transfer students would be included in the 7.5% maximum; IHS transfer enrollment would be prorated to reflect the ratio of IHS students to regular program students in the receiving school.

2. **Boundaries:**
   Staff will conduct a review of existing school boundaries in 2008-09 and make any suggested revisions by February 2009 for 2009-10. Key considerations when redrawing boundary lines should include:
   - Keep bus route no more than 45 minutes, one way.
   - Current attendance area islands and optional areas should be reduced whenever possible and new ones not be created.
   - Avoid creating schools with high concentrations of low income families.
   - Keep geographically and historically defined neighborhoods together.
   - Consider the proximity of students to school when redrawing boundary lines, closing or consolidating schools.
   - Minimize impact to current students and families, particularly those directly impacted by recent school closure and boundary change decisions.
   - Consider ways to “grandfather” current students attending schools affected.

In the Shaping 4J’s Future report, I made the following comments regarding enrollment management policies:

> The concept of enrollment management is a controversial and complicated one. In a district where choice has been basically unfettered, the thought that one’s right to go to the school they choose would be restricted may be seen as heresy. But others view choice as having negative ramifications on their schools and their ability to offer comparable programs and services. From the Schools of the Future report through the Shaping 4J reports all pointed out the problems associated with families and students being able to choose to attend schools other than their neighborhood schools, whether that is at the elementary or secondary levels. Now with the declining enrollment impact being felt in the middle and high schools, the pressure for a fix has escalated.

> For us, I think this means there are several possibilities to address impacts of choice and open enrollment, and to find a way that is balanced and fair. The options range from cutting off all transfers to continuing open enrollment essentially as is. As reported earlier, at the secondary level the impacts on middle and high school enrollments can significantly affect the availability of resources, primarily FTE and program offerings, from school to school.

> The Schools of the Future Report and previous closure studies noted the relationship between school size and ability to provide a quality educational program. The Focus Groups Report and the findings of the Think Tank reinforced that fact. Yet, as long as funding is tied to the number of students in the district and at a school, the staffing resources and programs will be affected as enrollment declines. While I believe it is important that every student have the same opportunity for access to programs, I’m not convinced that every school has to offer, or even can offer, the same programs. In this District, there has been a long-standing value for site-based decision making, innovation and flexibility. This
means that sometimes a school makes choices that we may not like. And, this often includes what kind of programs will be available in their schools and how large their class sizes will be in order to afford additional services or resources for their students. In the case of small schools, choice may have to be interpreted as allowing schools and parents to decide that some tradeoffs are worth the luxury of smallness.

In terms of boundary changes, I made the following observations:

We need to consider attendance boundary changes to address demographic changes impacting neighborhood schools, and to manage school sizes and to curtail the growth of very large schools and sustain enrollment of smaller schools. Some neighborhood schools in parts of the district are overflowing, while nearby schools are struggling to keep their enrollment at a level that allows them to maintain programs and staff. I believe its time to revisit the attendance boundaries to determine if by redrawing some of them we can reduce the size of some very large schools and enhance the enrollment at smaller schools in the same area. The attendance boundaries affecting all neighborhood schools should be reviewed to determine if some reconfiguring would help balance out school populations more evenly.

We have not undertaken a systematic boundary review in many years. Instead, we have adjusted boundaries as circumstances dictated, specifically as we’ve closed or consolidated schools over the years. As we closed and consolidated schools some of these boundary zones have become less practical when considering the distance to schools and the neighborhood and area attachments developed by families and students.

While I’m not convinced that we need a wholesale study of our current attendance boundaries, I do believe that its time for staff to propose some adjustments that would better reflect the situation today in light of the changes undergone over the years.

DISCUSSION

In developing the Shaping 4J’s Future report I tried to stay aware that whatever strategies are developed will impact children and their families. As we went through the process, we spent considerable time and resources on developing and reviewing the data and the numbers related to the many issues and challenges we were attempting to solve. But, I admonished us to remember that behind each dot on a map or each number or statistic, there are real students and families with very real needs and interests. As we move forward with these difficult decisions, it is important that we continue to keep that in mind. What I do know is that everyone sees these issues through their own lens, and that with all the differing viewpoints that exist, it will be very difficult to implement strategies in a way that makes everyone happy. My hope and intent is that in the end we can say we did our best to address the needs and interests of all involved in a way that was truly balanced and fair.
Implementing the Enrollment Management policy:

High Schools
The intent of the proposed enrollment management transfer limitations is to ensure that each high school has an enrollment that allows it to remain viable and able to offer an adequate level of programs and services to meet the teaching and learning needs of its students. The targeted enrollment range of 1200 to 1500 was intended as the goal. However, the number of students within the four high school attendance areas, not including students attending alternative education high school programs, ranges from about 1100 to close to 1600, with future projections indicating even further declining enrollment through 2014. My intent was never to force students from one region to attend high school in another region or to redraw boundaries to equalize enrollment between schools. It was rather to place sufficient controls on choice to mitigate the impacts on both sending and receiving schools caused by disproportionate transfer patterns between schools. Thus, while the overall result may be less choice, the intent is that choice at the high school level remains an option for students and their parents, as it is at the elementary level. The goal, therefore, is to manage enrollment in a manner that allows for an appropriate balance between choice and attendance at the neighborhood (attendance area) high school. And, to do so in a way that recognizes and respects the wishes and needs of parents and students, while at the same time trying to address the very real concerns of staff at the affected schools, which at times are quite different from each other.

To address these issues in implementing the enrollment management policy, I am proposing the following strategic implementation approach for high schools as a four-year transition and phase-in:

1. A high school that is within or below the target range of 1200 to 1500 will be able to accept up to 7.5% of students from another high school attendance area. Therefore, if the school has less than 7.5%, it could take more than 7.5% from a particular high school each year until it reaches the 7.5% limitation.

   • **Example 1**: North Eugene has an enrollment of 1006 with 1120 in its boundary. At the 7.5%, North would be able to take 119 students from Sheldon, but currently has only 32; 95 from Churchill, but currently has 21; and, 93 from South but currently has 6. Therefore, North can continue to take additional students from each of the other high school attendance boundaries until it reaches the 7.5% limitation.

   • **Example 2**: Churchill High School has an enrollment of 1158 with 1261 in its boundary. At the 7.5%, Churchill would be able to take 119 students from Sheldon, but currently has only 29; 84 from North, but currently has 74; and, 93 from South but currently has 45. Therefore, Churchill can continue to take additional students from each of the other high school attendance boundaries until it reaches the 7.5% limitation.

2. A high school that is above the 7.5% limitation and/or above the higher target range of 1500, can take up to 7.5% of transfer students in 9th grade only from another region until its enrollment is within the target range. Except that if the number of transfers will cause the school to exceed the number of students from within its boundary or the 1500 cap, it will only be able to take in up to the 7.5% or the
number of transfers from the previous year, whichever is less until it is down to the 1500 cap or the number of students in its boundary, whichever is higher. Instruction will monitor the transfers to mitigate the impact on any particular region as part of the transition down to the 1500 or boundary limitation.

• **Example 1**: Sheldon has 1610 students and 1585 students within its boundary. At the 7.5%, Sheldon would be able to take 84 students from North, but currently has only 69; 95 from Churchill, but currently has 15; and, 93 from South but currently has 12. Sheldon however exceeds the 1500 enrollment cap, and therefore, can only take additional students from each of the other high school attendance boundaries at the 9th grade until it reaches the 7.5% limitation. In the entering freshman class, Sheldon could take 21 transfers from North, 24 from Churchill and 23 from South. Because Sheldon’s 7.5% would be a total of 68 freshman transfers and its number of freshman transfers was 25 last year, it would be limited to accepting only 25 transfers into the freshman class for 09-10, the lower of the two numbers.

**Example 2**: South has 1573 students and 1244 students within its boundary. At the 7.5%, South would be able to take 84 students from North, but currently has only 76; 119 from Sheldon but currently has 59; 95 from Churchill, but currently has 248. South, however, exceeds the 1500 enrollment cap, and therefore, can only take additional students from each of the other high school attendance boundaries at the 9th grade only until it reaches the 7.5% limitation. Therefore, in the entering freshman class, South could take 21 transfers from North; 24 from Churchill and 30 from Sheldon. Because South’s 7.5% would be a total of 68 freshman transfers and its number of freshman transfers was 80 last year, it would be limited to accepting only 7.5% transfers into the freshman class for 09-10, the lower of the two numbers.

**o** South Eugene exceeds the 7.5% limitation (95) of transfer students from the Churchill HS attendance area (a total of 253, with 58 ninth graders, 58 tenth, 70 eleventh, and 67 seniors) and is also above the higher target range of 1500 students. Churchill has 1261 students in its attendance area, approximately 315 who would be freshmen.

**o** For the transition period, therefore, South would be able to accept up to 7.5% of the 315, or approximately 24 students into the entering class in 2009-10. Thus, South could take approximately 24 transfer students from Churchill into each of its freshmen classes over the next four years until its overall representation from the Churchill region is down to 7.5% or approximately 95 students.

**Middle Schools**
I am proposing a 3-year strategic implementation approach for middle schools:

3. A middle school that is within or below the target range of 400 to 600 will be able to accept up to 5% of students from another high school attendance area. Therefore, if the school has less than 5%, it could take more than 5% from a particular middle school each year until it reaches the 5% limitation. This means an individual middle school within the target range could have up to 15% of 4J students from outside its boundary. A middle school that is above the 5% limitation and/or the higher target
range of 600 and the number of students residing within its boundary can take up to 5% of transfer students in entering classes from another region until its enrollment is at the 5% limitation. Except that if the number of transfers will cause the school to exceed the 600 cap, it will only be able to take in up to the 5% or the number of transfers from the previous year, whichever is less until it is down to the 600 cap or the number of students in its boundary, whichever is higher. Instruction will monitor the transfers to mitigate the impact on any particular region as part of the transition down to the 600 cap.

- **Example:** Roosevelt has 650 students and 437 students within its boundary. Roosevelt substantially exceeds the 5% limitation for number of students from within the Churchill region (34 in grade 6, 32 in grade 7, and 44 in grade 8 for a total of 110), with most of those from ATA attendance boundary. The number of middle school students within the Churchill boundary is approximately 900 students, Roosevelt would be able to take a total of 45 students, or 15 into its entering classes for each of the next three years. So, in year one, 44 Churchill resident students would exit as 8th graders while only 15 would enter as 6th graders; in year two, 32 would exit and 15 enter; and, in year three, 34 would exit and 15 could enter. For the transition period, Roosevelt could take 5% in each of its 6th grade classes over the next three years until its overall representation from Churchill region is down to 5% and until its total enrollment does not exceed 600.

- Although the approved strategy for dealing with middle school enrollment management did not address the issue of within-region transfers between middle schools, it is my intent to implement procedures to manage the enrollment between middle schools within the same region to maintain appropriate balance and viability.

**Transition Support:**
During the transition stage, the schools negatively impacted would be provided some transitional staffing support to mitigate the loss of enrollment. Thus, the schools that currently lose more than the 7.5% at high school or 5% at middle school would be provided additional staffing FTE during the transitional period. Currently, those schools are Churchill High School and ATA at the middle level.

**Boundary Changes**
At the October 29 work session, staff presented preliminary school boundary change proposals. Since that time, staff has gathered input through a variety of public input activities, including community meetings, parent and staff surveys, and mailings to families. As a result of the public input, the staff team has forwarded modified recommendations to the superintendent for review and consideration. The report on *Proposed 4J School Boundary Changes: Public Input Summary and Staff Recommendations* has been included with your packet.

The superintendent has considered the staff recommendations and at this time is prepared to move forward on the following recommendations for implementation in the 2009-10 school year:
1. **Boundary Change #1: Laurel Hill Valley**  
(From Harris Elementary School to Edison Elementary School)  
- Very strong support from area parents reinforced historical anecdotal feedback. Edison has capacity to accept the increased student population from this shift in boundary without eliminating current transfers or their siblings, which was the greatest concern among those opposing the proposal.  
- Bus transportation will be provided for students going to the newly designated elementary school, Edison Elementary.  
- Due to financial limitations, 4J cannot provide bus transportation for the previously designated elementary school, Harris Elementary. Among the feedback cards received, a few parents wanted bus service to Harris. Staff recommends a heightened outreach for carpooling coordination to help meet this need.

2. **Boundary Change #3: Hawkins/Blacktail Drive Vicinity**  
(From Cesar Chavez Elementary School to Crest Drive Elementary School)  
- Staff expanded the initial proposal slightly to include the west ends of Southview Drive and Tanner Park Drive.  
- Bus transportation will be provided for students going to the newly designated elementary school, Crest Drive Elementary.  
- Due to financial limitations, 4J cannot provide bus transportation for the previously designated elementary school, Cesar Chavez Elementary or McCornack Elementary. None of the parents of the three students currently attending Chavez returned feedback cards requesting bus transportation. Students who choose to stay at McCornack (“grandfathered) may ride the bus to McCornack should they provide their own transportation to the nearest bus stop.

3. **Boundary Change #4: East Skinner Butte Historic District Area**  
(From River Road Elementary to Edison Elementary; From Kelly Middle School to Roosevelt Middle School; From North Eugene High School to South Eugene High School)  
- Very strong support from area parent and at public meetings reinforced historical anecdotal feedback. The change involves a very small number of families/students and will not noticeably change the student populations at either the current or proposed neighborhood schools.  
- If requested, bus transportation will be provided for students going to the newly designated elementary and middle schools, Edison Elementary School and Roosevelt Middle Schools.

4. **Boundary Change #6: West College Hill Area**  
(From Arts & Technology School to Roosevelt Middle School; From Churchill High School to South Eugene High School)  
- Very strong support from area parents reinforced historical anecdotal feedback. There were a number of requests to expand the area included in this boundary change. However, staff did not think a further shift of students from Churchill High School to South Eugene High was advantageous for either school. South Eugene High is almost at capacity and increasing its neighborhood boundary would make it more difficult to phase in transfer limits.
5. Boundary Change #7: Fox Hollow Road Area Contiguous to the South Region Boundary
(From Twin Oaks Elementary School to Edgewood Elementary School; From Kennedy Middle School to Spencer Butte Middle School; and From Churchill High School to South Eugene High School)

This boundary change proposal was suggested during the community input process. It involves shifting a small area of south Eugene that is south of the city limits from the Churchill region to the South region. Seventeen 4J students would be impacted by the change. Of that number, 5 currently attend a Churchill region school, 9 attend a school in the South region, and 3 attend a school in a different region.

- Staff recommended making the west boundary an access road approximately one mile west on Fox Hollow from Woodsia Lane so that bus transportation stayed under an hour. Very strong support from area parents and at public meetings for the proposal.
- Bus transportation would be provided for students going to the newly designated elementary, middle and high schools, Edgewood Elementary, Spencer Butte Middle School, and South Eugene (the latter because the area is beyond LTD routes).
- Due to financial limitations, 4J cannot provide bus transportation to the previously designated neighborhood schools. Several parents indicated they already drove their children to school and would continue to do so.

Students who will be impacted by the boundary changes will be able to continue attending their current school, rather than change to the newly designated neighborhood school, if these families are willing to provide their own transportation. The district will notify all families of currently enrolled 4J students of the boundary changes, once a final decision has been made.

Boundary Proposals Not Recommended to Go Forward at This Time

In terms of the other staff recommendations, the following proposed changes are not adopted at this time and will be referred for future review following budget decisions for the 2009-11 biennium:

- **Boundary Change #2: Vicinity East of Morse Ranch to Hilyard (From Adams Elementary School to Parker Elementary School)**
- **Boundary Change #5: West Downtown Area (From River Road Elementary to Adams Elementary; From Kelly Middle School to Roosevelt Middle School; From North Eugene High School to South Eugene High School)**

3. **Receive a Legislative Report** (Staff: Barb Bellamy)

Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Director of Communications, will brief the board about legislative issues and board and staff communications with legislators.
VIII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT THIS MEETING

1. Approve the 2009-10 Lane Education Service District Local Service Plan

As required by House Bill 3184, Lane Education Service District has developed a Local Service Plan. The process in developing this plan included analysis of all resolutions/core services with the 16 component districts. Through this process component districts had the opportunity to gain knowledge, share and discuss their needs and provide recommendations for the local service plan.

The Local Service Plan contains all services mandated by law. These services are intended to: improve student learning; enhance the quality of instruction provided to students; assure equitable access to resources; and maximize operational and fiscal efficiencies. These services include:
1. Programs for children with special needs.
2. School Improvement services.
3. Technology support.
4. Administrative services and other required services such as home school registration and truancy.

Copies of the Local Service Plan Report for 2007-08, the 2007-08 Summary of Services for Eugene School District 4J and the Resolution Adopting the Local Service Plan are included in the board packet. The superintendent recommends adoption of the 2009-10 Lane ESD Local Service Plan.

IX. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. Approve Grant Application: Beyond the Asphalt – An Outdoor Experience in Science and Technology (Staff: Kay Mehas)

Staff from Kelly Middle School submitted a grant application to Wells Fargo for $8,000. The Kelly Middle School “Beyond the Asphalt” outdoor experience has been designed to provide opportunities for students to increase their understanding of the relevance of environmental science and technology, helping them to make connections to the natural world. All activities will take place at the McKenzie River Conference Center for three days of intense learning and fun along the banks of the McKenzie River in the Willamette National Forest. The experience will offer students, many of whom rarely explore beyond the asphalt parking lot in their urban environment, an opportunity to participate in GPS navigation in a natural setting, study ecosystems, learn survival skills and identify and appreciate plants and wildlife.

The superintendent recommends approval of the grant application. A copy of the grant description form is included in the packet.

2. Approve Grant Application: Mounting Ceiling Projectors at Kelly Middle School (Staff: Kay Mehas)

Staff from Kelly Middle School submitted a grant application to Qwest for $19,999. The project will mount 20 projectors on classroom ceilings at Kelly Middle School in addition to purchasing five new projectors. Currently, projectors are stored on mobile carts located in the center of the classroom. The carts store the projector as well as other
electronic equipment which can be unsightly and present potential tripping hazards due to loose cords and wiring. Mounting the projectors on the ceiling will alleviate the safety hazard and free up workspace in the classroom.

The superintendent recommends approval of the grant application. A copy of the grant description form is included in the packet.

X. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. Approve Superintendent’s Recommendations Regarding the Middle School Alternative School Review Process (Staff: Carl Hermanns)

Board Policy IGBH: Alternative Schools directs the district to regularly review alternative schools and programs “in order to ensure that alternative schools/programs continue to meet board and district goals, and perform consistent with board policy and expectations.” In accordance with that policy, the district’s middle school alternative school programs were reviewed this past fall.

The district currently has five middle school alternative programs. Three of the programs are language immersion programs that provide the opportunity for students in the elementary language immersion schools to continue their intensive language studies in middle school. The French immersion program is offered at Roosevelt Middle School; the Japanese immersion program is offered at Kelly Middle School; and the Spanish immersion program is offered at Monroe Middle School. The fourth middle school alternative program, Family School, is also an extension of an elementary alternative school and is offered at Spence Butte. The fifth program, da Vinci, is a stand-alone middle school alternative program offered at Kelly Middle School.

Prior to proceeding with the formal review process, the district review team conducted a preliminary assessment with da Vinci and the Family School middle school program, during which both schools chose to forgo the formal review process. Da Vinci notified the review team that they intended to begin the process of merging with Kelly Middle School, in order to create a new, combined school that capitalizes on and maximizes the strengths and talents inherent in both programs. Family School middle school program notified the review team that they proposed to begin the process of merging with the elementary Family School to create an integrated grade 1 through 8 Family School program beginning next year, and also hoped to add a kindergarten.

The formal review process for the three language immersion middle school programs took place in October and November, and consisted of a written response by each immersion program to the assessment criteria approved by the board, followed by a site visit by the district review team.

The review team determined that each of the immersion programs represents a distinctive educational strategy for achieving the board’s educational goals, and recommends no change in status for the programs. However, the review team does pose suggestions for the programs to consider, and recommends minor modifications in the Japanese immersion program.
District staff will present the report’s findings to the board and be available to answer your questions.

A copy of the Middle School Alternative Program Review Report is included in the board packet. The superintendent will recommend approval of the report’s recommendations.

2. Receive Superintendent's Recommendation Regarding Harris/Eastside Merger
(Staff: Yvonne Curtis and Wally Bryant)

At the March 19, 2008 board meeting, the board directed Harris and Eastside to develop a school consolidation plan for consideration by the board no later than February 1, 2009. The board also requested that they receive a status report on the consolidation conversion in November 2008.

The following guiding conditions for consolidation were established:
- School will be one school with one administrative structure and instructional program/model;
- School will have one budget, one site council;
- Enrollment priority will be given to students from within the Harris neighborhood boundary, then South Region boundary and then all other students; and
- Both school communities commit to engage in this conversation with equal voice and to work in good faith toward a potential collaboration, recognizing that the stakes are equally high for both schools.

At the time, the superintendent suggested that if the board approves a Harris and Eastside consolidation proposal, then strategies to manage enrollment among elementary schools in the South Eugene and the Churchill region should be implemented in order to ensure that all schools have sufficient resources to offer strong programs and to address a diversity of student needs. These strategies might include setting a cap on each school’s enrollment based on building or program capacity and the need to balance student populations, a limit on transfers into a school, and/or boundary adjustments.

Over the course of the spring and summer, Eastside Alternative school moved from Parker to Harris. A new principal, secretary and lead custodian were hired. Ten new teachers were hired between the two schools. During August and September, the staff focused on the start up of both schools at the co-located site. Conversations about the new merged school began in October and have continued with staff, parents and district facilitators. The schools provided a progress report to the board on December 3, 2008. Since that time, the schools have continued their work on a program proposal for board consideration. An update has been included in the board packet.

Staff and parents from the two schools have made a sincere and dedicated effort to develop a proposal that has mutual support, is intended to be based on best practices, and that would merge the two schools into one new school. The staff and parents have developed a more refined proposal laying out the proposed consolidation program and how it would work to meet the criteria previously established. Clearly, there appears to be strong support and enthusiasm among those involved in the design and development of the proposal. The staff report supports the belief that the consolidation should go forth and that the board should approve the merger of Harris and Eastside as
a new community school with the following instructional practices and programs as the backbone for the new school:

- The teaching staff will be working in teams as professional learning communities. Ongoing professional development for the teaching staff will be a key component of our program.
- Core - provide core instruction in the district’s language arts and math curriculum.
- Project Based Learning - teaching to strengths and interests with mixed age groups of students. Student projects will include community-based activities. Projects may vary in length and will extend & enhance core skills.
- Arts - teachers offer classes that allow them to teach to their talent & passions. The arts integration will allow partnering with local artists and other community resources.
- Advisee Class - The Advisee multi-age class will provide an opportunity for social problem solving, caring, sharing and decision-making.

Additional components of the school program as described in the report will include the following:
- Technology
- Kindergarten
- Extended Learning Day
- Childcare
- Garden
- Parent Involvement

In normal times, I would recommend that the schools continue their work toward developing a unified program, but these are not normal times. Since the board directed the two schools to begin work on a merger, our state’s financial environment has changed considerably and, rather than enjoying stability, we are preparing to make significant budget reductions next year. If the financial predictions that we have heard recently from state officials come true, our budget shortfall for next year could reach $14-$17 million. Cuts of that magnitude will impact school staffing as well as programs and require us to talk once again about closing small elementary schools.

Proceeding with the merger of Harris and Eastside into one school would create a school with an enrollment of about 280 students, making it one of the larger elementary schools in the south Eugene area. We would be left, however, with the familiar dilemma of having too few kids and too many schools. So moving forward with the Harris-Eastside merger will likely put us in the predicament of having to choose what other school to close in that area.

Some key questions related to the merger are difficult to answer or to predict. For example, how will staffing at Harris and Eastside be impacted by district-wide staffing reductions? At least 10 (staff) members at the building are new to their assignments this year, including some who are recently hired. It is quite possible that staff who have been involved in planning for the merger may have different assignments next year, if bumping occurs.

What additional resources will be needed to support the merger is also a concern. Additional resources were provided to the two schools this year to assist with the planning and program design. Will additional resources or planning time be needed to
support a successful transition? The report seems to indicate that some sort of additional support will be necessary to help in transition, including ongoing design implementation.

Another question is related to school size. Our target is to have elementary schools of 300-450 students in order to have adequate resources to provide programs and services to serve a wide range of students. Although most of our elementary schools in south Eugene are smaller, should we by design create a new school with less than 300 students?

In essence, the final question is whether allowing the merger of Harris and Eastside to proceed is a good idea in the short term, even though it may not be viable in the long-term, considering our declining enrollment and the number of small schools that we now have and the current picture of our financial situation?

**Recommendation:**

Given the issues outlined above, I recommend that the board approve the consolidation of Harris and Eastside only with the understanding that, should we decide to close more schools, the newly merged school may still be considered for closure just as any other elementary school in the district. I also recommend that the board delay action on the consolidation proposal until the March 4 board meeting.

Principals will receive their staffing packets for 2009-10 on February 13, and the state’s updated financial forecast will be released on February 20. In the interim, I ask that the Harris/Eastside staff and the planning group discuss my concerns and indicate whether they are interested in moving ahead with the merger, considering the conditions I have described.

**XI. Comments and Committee Reports by Individual Board Members**

**XII. Adjourn**

**CALENDAR FOR BOARD MEMBERS**

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<td>Regular Board Meeting</td>
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<td>Wednesday, February 18</td>
<td>Board Work Session</td>
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<td>Monday, March 2</td>
<td>Budget Committee Meeting</td>
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