

Shaping 4J's Future

Superintendent's Revised Recommendations and Alternative Options for Shaping 4J's Future: Setting A Strategic Direction For 2008 - 2013

Background

In response to the alternative school review report, the board directed in February 2006 that the district begin developing a process for larger review of enrollment patterns, school boundaries, alternative school relocation, school closure and consolidation, and possible new school construction or renovations. Included with that direction was the charge to reassess the placement of learning centers, regional learning centers, and ESD programs serving special education students.

As a result of that direction, the Shaping 4J's Future process was initiated in 2006 to address the following strategic question:

“What services and facilities will be needed to support the district's future instructional programs in order to increase achievement for all students and close the achievement gap?”

The process was underpinned by the school board's three instructional goals: (1) increasing achievement for all students; (2) closing the achievement gap; and (3) providing equal opportunities for all students to succeed. In answering the strategic question, I have considered the factors of declining enrollment, regional enrollment patterns, placement of special education programs, the location of alternative schools, and potential strategies such as boundary changes, grade and school configurations, and school closures and/or expansions.

The Shaping 4J's Future process built upon ongoing instructional planning and previous district plans. It focused on critical long-range facility and service options that arose from enrollment and student population trends and from related issues that were not fully resolved from the Schools of the Future Report of 1999, School Closure and Consolidation Report of 2001, and the Access and Options Report of 2004.

In Shaping 4J's Future Part I report, I tried to provide the background and context that helped shape my recommendations for Shaping 4J's Future. As part of that report, I said that our focus should be on how to provide both equity and choice in a system of excellent schools that provide excellent education for all students. The challenge, I suggested, is how to do that in an environment of declining enrollment and diminishing resources, especially in a system that seems to foster competition and opportunity. In Part I, I also suggested that the core values of excellence, equity and choice should guide our decisions for the future. At that time, I provided my definitions of excellence, equity and choice and then posed some goals and principles to help in guiding my deliberations around the challenges we're trying to solve. These were shared with the board as a part of the report the board received on January 30. At that meeting and in a subsequent work session, the board had considerable discussion about the proposed goals and principles, and suggested some revisions that were subsequently incorporated into Shaping 4J's Future Part 2.

Discussion

In Part 2 of Shaping 4J's Future, I presented a scenario for the board to consider that could be vetted within the system and throughout the community. I noted at the time that I did not

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expect that those recommendations would necessarily play out as recommended, but that it was important they be considered and discussed as the next stage of the process. That prediction has clearly played out over the past two months as staff, parents and the community have had the opportunity to weigh in with their opinions and viewpoints regarding the various scenarios presented in January and February. Through the course of board work sessions and public hearings, the multitude of meetings, emails and other correspondence and communication received by the board, hundreds of people have expressed their support, concerns, objections, and in some cases, disdain for the recommendations as presented or revised. While many may not agree, for me this public discourse has demonstrated the process is working as intended. And while in the end not everyone will be happy with the outcomes, I do believe that the process has given more than adequate opportunity for the voices to be heard.

At the end of January, I recommended moving Eastside to the Willard building. This option would have displaced the Village School from Willard and potentially required the move of the Natives Program from Bailey Hill to make space available to Village School. That recommendation was predicated on not closing a neighborhood school for 2008-09. The board requested that they have the opportunity to consider an Eastside recommendation in the larger context of the Shaping 4J recommendations when presented in February. The February scenarios were far more extensive and recommended a variety of actions over the next few years that would affect a number of schools and programs. Taken together, they were intended to help us move in the direction of realizing many of our Shaping 4J goals and principles as we strive to achieve the appropriate balance of excellence, equity and choice.

The actions proposed in my February 13 recommendations were grouped into the following categories: a) school closures and consolidations, b) program alterations, c) alternative school relocation, d) proposed boundary adjustments, e) enrollment management, and f) transportation. As some of the recommendations were subsequently modified or altered in response to board, staff and public feedback over the next several weeks, a set of alternate or revised recommendations was put forth on March 5 for the board's review and consideration.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion at the board work sessions on March 8 and March 12, there appeared to be support emerging around a number of the recommendations. However, there were also some recommendations where the board expressed a desire to see some alternate or revised options that could be considered as well. Alternate options, developed since the initial recommendations were presented in February, are presented in addition to the recommended action in case the board wishes to adopt one of these alternatives.

All recommendations and alternate options remain open for further board discussion, with board action scheduled for the March 19, 7 p.m. board meeting.

District-wide Strategies

1. Recommendation 1: Differentiated staffing allocation:

Implement a differentiated staffing ratio based on the percentage of free-and-reduced lunch students, English Language Learners, and special education students (excluding students receiving only speech and language services). Schools serving higher percentages of these students would receive more staffing than other schools.

2. Recommendation 2: 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 pro-rated to reflect the ratio of IHS students to regular program students in the receiving school.

3. Recommendation 3: Boundaries:

Staff 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.

4. Recommendation 4: Transportation:

Study the possibility of adding transportation to all elementary schools within each region, including the possibility of adding transportation to alternative schools within the region only, or to neighborhood school transfers from within the region only, and consider developing a pilot project to test a new approach. There may be some additional transportation costs related to any boundary adjustments and possible school consolidations.

North Region

5. Recommendation 5: Howard and River Road:

Maintain existing schools and locations.

Churchill Region

6. Recommendation 6: Adams program alteration:

Explore program alteration options at Adams, which might include a dual language immersion with cluster services for English Language Learners or a Chinese Immersion school and implement new program beginning in 2009-10.

7. Recommendation 7: Family School:

Move the Family School grades 1-5 to share the facility with the Arts and Technology Academy at the Jefferson building. Postpone a decision to move grades 6-8 from Spencer Butte to the Jefferson building until after a review of middle school alternative programs in 2008-09. This review will carry out the board’s policy of regularly reviewing alternative schools and programs to ensure that alternative schools continue to meet board and district goals and perform consistent with board policy and expectations. By June 2008, the superintendent will develop a process and specify the criteria for the middle school alternative school review.

South Region

8. Recommendation 8: Harris and Eastside:

Relocate Eastside Alternative School from Parker into the Harris building for the 2008-09 school year. During 2008-09, direct and support Harris and Eastside to develop a school consolidation plan for consideration by the board no later than February 1, 2009. Establish the following guiding conditions for consolidation:

- School will be one school with one administrative structure and instructional program/model;
- School will have one budget, one site council; and
- Enrollment priority will be given to students from within the Harris neighborhood boundary, then South Region boundary and then all other students.

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.

Alternative option:

- Superintendent's initial recommendation on Feb. 13: Close Harris Elementary School for the 2008 – 2009 school year and redistribute students to Edison and Parker elementary schools. Redraw the attendance boundaries for Edison and Parker. Relocate Eastside Alternative School from Parker into the Harris building for the 2008-09 school year. During 2008-09, make additions to the school that will allow it to accommodate adding the French Immersion school for the 2009-10 school year.*
- Alternative recommendation 2: If discussion of consolidation is not successful or if a consolidation proposal is not approved by the board, then both Harris and Eastside will be considered for closure in June 2009.*

9. Recommendation 9: Charlemagne French Immersion:

Close the Fox Hollow building and move the French Immersion School for 2010-11 or after. Consider potential sites that are more centrally located to provide greater access to a demographically diverse student base, such as Willard, Bailey Hill, Roosevelt, or other potentially vacant schools, or to Harris for 2009-10 if the proposed consolidation with Eastside fails. The move to Roosevelt would create a K-8 French Immersion program. Ensure adequate space to place regional learning center or other special education services at Charlemagne.

Alternative option:

- Superintendent's initial recommendation on Feb. 13: Move Charlemagne French Immersion to share Harris building with Eastside beginning in 2009-10, and declare Fox Hollow site surplus in 2010.*

10. Recommendation 10: Willard Building:

End lease of the Willard building to charter schools after June 2010. Decommission building for possible sale, new school construction, or possible remodel, if relocating French Immersion to the site.

Sheldon Region

11. Recommendation 11: Coburg:

Postpone decision on closing Coburg until February 2009. Direct district staff to work with City of Coburg to develop an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) whereby the city offsets additional costs associated with continuing to operate Coburg Elementary School as a small neighborhood (community) school.

12. Recommendation 12: Meadowlark and Buena Vista:

Retain Meadowlark at current site as a small neighborhood school and move Buena Vista Spanish Immersion program and students to another site in the Sheldon region by 2012-13. Meadowlark would then become a K-5 stand-alone school at the Meadowlark site. Consider redrawing Meadowlark boundaries to balance neighborhood school enrollment in the Sheldon Region. Buena Vista could add kindergarten after moving to new site. Locate regional learning center or other special education services at new site with Buena Vista.

Alternative option:

- a. *Superintendent's initial recommendation on Feb. 13: Move Meadowlark students to a new school at the Kinney Loop site in 2011-12. Buena Vista would then become a K-5 stand-alone school at the Meadowlark site.*

A chart showing the time line for these recommendations is included in your packet.

The superintendent recommends approval of recommendations 1 through 12 as provided above, or as the board may determine to adopt any of the alternative options identified above or as otherwise modified upon discussion of the board.