

Superintendent's Revised Recommendations for Achieving a Sustainable Budget

Responses to Board and Budget Committee Questions

December 14, 2010

The following questions were asked at the December 8 board meeting or submitted to staff following the meeting. Staff will be available to further explain these responses at the December 15 Joint Board–Budget Committee work session.

School Closures and Consolidations

1. What's the rationale for closing schools and what criteria were used?

Trends that cause us to consider closing and consolidating schools are:

- *Declining enrollment*
Enrollment has been declining for more than 20 years. Over the past 5 years, enrollment has dropped by 1,050 students. Fewer students means less revenue from the state for schools.
- *Less funding to support our schools*
State funding, local option property taxes and other revenue sources have dropped and are projected to be reduced for several years, based on state revenue projections.
- *Teacher and staff reductions across the district will make it more difficult for smaller schools to offer a strong educational program.*
With financial shortfalls of 15% or 20%, the district cannot avoid reducing staff. Larger schools with more students and staff enable teachers to group students in various ways for learning, to collaborate as a team with peers at the same grade level, and to have more flexibility to use their resources to serve a wide range of learners.

The criteria used in developing school closure recommendations are the same as the district has used in the past:

- *Enrollment* and enrollment projections
- *Program considerations:* A school's capacity to provide a strong instructional program was considered in light of our coming budget reductions and the district's capacity to provide a strong and equitable education program across all schools in the future.
- *Facility considerations,* such as geographic location; available classroom space throughout the district and capacity at a neighboring building to accommodate students; building condition; and potential for future remodel, addition or new construction.
- *Transportation of students* including travel time for students and transportation costs

2. Why move Meadowlark students to Willagillespie instead of moving Willagillespie students to the Meadowlark building?

- Fewer students/families are impacted with the current proposal. There are 312 neighborhood students attending Willagillespie (plus 9 from Meadowlark attendance area). There are 157 neighborhood students attending Meadowlark (plus 13 from Willagillespie attendance area).
- Transportation costs would be higher if Willagillespie students moved to Meadowlark.
- The Meadowlark building is more central to most of the families now attending Buena Vista, as most students reside in the Sheldon region. This year, Buena Vista students come from the following Sheldon school attendance areas: 63 Meadowlark, 42 Willagillespie, 70 Holt, 48 Gilham, 18 Coburg.
- The Willagillespie building is in better overall condition than Meadowlark. A major Willagillespie remodel occurred in 1995 and subsequent upgrades in 2006.
- Willagillespie is a much larger site and lends itself well for future school building replacement, making it a better long-term choice as a neighborhood school location. A new Willagillespie building could be constructed while students attend school in the existing building, which is difficult at Meadowlark due to adjoining Sheldon athletic fields.

- Using Meadowlark for Buena Vista leaves the option open to decommission the Meadowlark building in the future (if Spanish language immersion is relocated someday) and add to the Sheldon campus.

3. Why close Parker?

- Parker is projected to have 255 students in 2011-12 (K@1), and would sustain a .9 FTE reduction in teachers and other licensed staff.
- Edgewood (305 students; 400-450 capacity) and Camas Ridge (292 students; 300-375 capacity) can accommodate Parker's students.
- It would not be possible to move Edgewood students to Parker (400-450 capacity) without moving some Parker students to another school.
- Merging Parker with Edgewood consolidates two elementary schools that feed to the same middle school, Spencer Butte.

4. Why close Crest Drive?

- Both Crest Drive and Adams schools have small enrollments and staffs now. The consolidation provides enough students in combination to provide more staffing flexibility, especially after staff reductions that will occur next year.
- Adams is a better building with greater capacity: Adams' capacity is 350-425. Crest's capacity is 200-250.
- The Crest Drive site is a more difficult site for future development.

5. Why close Twin Oaks?

- Consolidating Twin Oaks with McCornack brings the students toward the core of the city.
- Twin Oaks' enrollment is 216 and many students reside in the northern part of its attendance area in the 18th Avenue vicinity.
- Twin Oaks' capacity is 225-300. McCornack's enrollment is 399; capacity is 400-450, which is why a building addition will be required to accommodate Twin Oaks students.

6. There seems to be a regional imbalance in terms of school closures, with two closures in the Churchill region. Please explain the rationale.

- The superintendent's revised recommendations close two schools in Churchill (Crest, with Twin Oaks in 2012-13); two schools in Sheldon (Coburg and Meadowlark) and one in South (Parker).
- In the Churchill region, closing Crest and Twin Oaks will bring students in toward the core of the city rather than moving students to schools that are farther out, and will place students in our larger elementary buildings in the region (Adams and McCornack).

7. Will boundary changes be necessary along with the school closures?

There may be minor changes – we are looking at that in greater detail. For example, we may wish to place the Willamette Gardens area in the Holt attendance boundary. This is an "island" area within the Holt attendance area that is assigned to Willagillespie because there was not capacity at Holt when this area developed. The long-term intention was to move the area back to the Holt/Monroe attendance area when enrollment and capacity allowed.

8. Provide a flow chart for the proposed school closures (as was done for the reconfiguration proposal) showing:

- Where the students are projected to go (with the caveat that neighborhood school choice affects the projections).
- The flow of students to identified middle and high schools.
- The capacity for each school and the current enrollment.
- What needs to be done with transferee buildings if the closures occur?

Staff are working to prepare a chart. Middle or high school boundary changes are not envisioned with the elementary school closures. The Stakeholder Task Force could consider this as it examines reconfiguration.

9. How does elimination of TOSAs fit with school consolidations? For example, will funds be allocated for additional teacher planning time for this transition?

- The reduction/elimination of TOSAs and staff development specialists will impact the system, and require that we rethink our professional development delivery model. We intend those discussions to begin in depth after the winter break, along with discussions of how and to what extent we will incorporate 21st century skills and pedagogy next year.
- We will definitely need funds for teachers and administrators to begin planning for the transformation/transition this spring, and will be looking at ways to ensure time for collaborative planning as part of the regular schedule next year.

10. How will special education students be affected?

Staff is assessing how special education programs would be relocated as we consolidate schools. The intent of consolidation is to deploy our special education staff more effectively with the resources that we will have.

We're also analyzing the effect of the proposed consolidations on school socioeconomic status (SES).

11. How will Title I school status be affected?

Title I status will probably be affected at some schools. For example, if Crest and Adams merge, it is likely that Adams will no longer be a Title school. However, there is a large body of research that indicates that when schools have a higher average SES, all kids do better. Our challenge will be to ensure there are supports in place to continue supporting struggling students. We will also be exploring if we want to move to a targeted assist model; staff can explain this at the work session.

Language Immersion and Alternative Schools

12. Moving French Immersion to Parker: Would Charlemagne have the entire building or would other programs be located there? Would this allow Charlemagne to become a K-8 in the future?

- We envision 4 classrooms serving special education students would be at Parker with K-5 French immersion. The Lifeskills program and Learning Center now at Parker would remain and an additional special education service, such as early intervention, may also be located there.
- The Parker building has the capacity for Charlemagne to become a K-8 school in the future at the Parker site.

Could Charlemagne move to an even more central location—for example, ATA?

- ATA would be over capacity considering the number of special education programs at ATA (5 classrooms) and Family School remaining.
- Other options: Roosevelt has the capacity to add K-5 Charlemagne; however, traffic congestion and parking would be problems, unless the move is done after a new replacement Roosevelt is built using future bond funding. If Adams or Camas Ridge were closed, Charlemagne could move to one of those buildings, but we would need to make significant boundary changes across several schools to accommodate students at other nearby schools.

13. How do the dual language immersion school at River Road and the Howard technology immersion school fit in our plan? Are they part of the recommendations regarding language immersion schools and alternative schools?

River Road and Howard are *neighborhood schools* with specific focuses, and therefore are not part of the recommendations regarding language immersion/alternative schools. As we discuss long-term planning, we will include both schools in the visioning for the North region.

High School Course Offerings and Graduation Requirements

14. If our goal is to prepare all students for career or additional education, is there a minimum realistic course offering that should be required by the district at each high school?

Is that minimum what it takes to get into an Oregon college or an Ivy League school? Do any of these concerns suggest maintaining fewer high schools?

<p>Minimum to graduate from Oregon high school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ English: 4 credits ○ Math: 3 credits (at the Algebra 1 level and higher) ○ Science: 3 credits (scientific inquiry, 2 with lab experiences) ○ Social Science: 3 credits ○ Health: 1 credit ○ PE: 1 credit ○ Second Language/Art/Career & Technical Education: 3 credits ○ Electives: 6 credits 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>COMMENTS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requirement of 3 credits within three subject areas (Second Language, Art, CTE) poses challenges. Each high school must provide options in each area, or schools would need to specialize, e.g., NEHS would offer the CTE option, SEHS would offer the art option, CHS would offer the second language option. • Schools must offer electives so that students can earn 6 elective credits. • This does not meet admission requirements of universities in the Oregon University System.
<p>Minimum for admission to Oregon university</p>	<p>14 credits of college preparatory courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ English: 4 credits ○ Math: 3 credits (at the Algebra 1 level and higher) ○ Science: 3 credits (scientific inquiry, 2 with lab experiences) ○ Social Science: 3 credits ○ Health: 1 credit ○ PE: 1 credit ○ Second Language/Art/Career & Technical Education: 3 credits 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>COMMENTS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>English</u> credits should be in composition and literature with emphasis and frequent practice in writing expository prose. • An advanced <u>math</u> course in Grade 12 is recommended. • <u>Science</u> credits must include a year each in two fields of college-preparatory science. • Two credits of the same <u>second language</u> (or the equivalent) are required. • This does not meet admission requirements of some institutions outside the Oregon University System. For example, Willamette University requires <u>4 credits</u> of math, <u>4 credits</u> of social science, and preferably <u>4 credits</u> of a second language.

15. How many high school students have a full schedule? How many students will have access to a full day's worth of classes under the new ratio?

- Grade 9 students have the fullest schedules at the high school level; our estimate is that 50%-95% of Grade 9 students have full schedules.
- Most Grade 12 students have schedules that are half-day or less.
- Over the past several years, as enrollments have declined, high schools have lost enough teaching FTE that it is no longer possible for all students to have full schedules.
- It could become necessary to limit students to taking 6 credits per year (6 credits for 4 years each = 24 credits to graduate).

Comment: *If this limit were imposed, we assume the district would lose students to private schools and to schools in other districts where, without this limit, students could earn more credits per academic year and thus, overall, show a more varied and possibly more rigorous academic experience on their high school transcript.*

Comment: *According to its admissions information, Yale University looks for a "high level of rigor and success throughout high school, including the senior year."*

16. What courses will be lost with an increased student-teacher ratio?

- Courses that are only offered for one or two sections, and therefore serve fewer students.
- Classes with small enrollments, e.g., higher-level second language classes, advanced classes including AP and/or IB, select music groups
- Electives, e.g., video production, newspaper, yearbook

Comments: *State universities in California and Washington identify fine, visual, or performing arts as a core subject. For admission, they include a requirement of ½ credit in fine, visual, or performing arts.*

- CTE classes and/or career experience classes such as those created in partnership with local businesses
- Options within a subject area, e.g., yoga as an option for general PE

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS regarding high schools

• **Progress toward Access to General Education**

As classes become larger, it is possible that general education teachers will find it challenging to provide instruction and services for special education students in general education settings.

Comment: *We believe this will put one of the district's main initiatives, Access to General Education (ATGE), in jeopardy.*

• **Interventions**

Classes that provide interventions and study support are increasingly needed at high school to support students not on track to graduate or who are not at grade level in reading and/or math.

Comment: *Intervention classes are especially necessary to ensure that all students can demonstrate proficiency in essential skills, particularly in language arts and math. Demonstrating proficiency in essential skill areas is a new graduation requirement in Oregon.*

• **Delivering Instruction**

It could be helpful to look at options for delivering instruction such as (1) using a collegiate lecture hall model for some classes and (2) broadcasting a class in one school to students participating via video/audio technology at other schools.

• **Making Schools More Alike**

Deciding to make schools more alike requires a central office with a departmental structure that provides a way to talk about and implement what that "sameness" will be. In general, becoming more alike would be a change in District 4J that would require changes in central office structure.

Reserve Funds

17. Please review our reserve accounts and amounts again at the Dec. 15 work session.

See attached PDF file, which reviews the reserve funds.

18. What would our reserve levels be, if we spend reserves and one-time funds as recommended?

Projected June 30, 2012 reserve levels (after using recommended reserve strategies to help address the 2011-12 shortfall):

- General Fund: \$6.7 million or 5%
- Contingency Fund: \$1.5 million or 1%
- Fleet/Equipment Funds: \$1.5 million
- District Retirement Fund: \$1.4 million
- Capital Funds, assuming no bond measures or property sales: \$0

19. Does restoration of reserves as pictured in 2013-14 and beyond assume that we have new revenue?

Yes, it will mean we have new revenue and/or further reductions.

What If Revenues Don't Meet Expectations

20. What is our "first alternative" or strategy if:

- a. Our shortfall is greater than \$22 million next year?**
- b. We fail to negotiate the target amount for compensation adjustments?**

The alternative is to make greater reductions in staff and supplies and to spend down more reserves and one-time funds as follows:

Strategy	Amount		
	Low	High	
Supplies/Services Reduction of 20%	400,000	400,000	Rather than 15% reduction
Admin/Classified reduction of 10%	1,200,000	1,200,000	Rather than 7% reduction
Increase staffing ratio by 3,4,4 (75 fte) or 4,5,5 (93 fte)	1,500,000	2,600,000	Rather than 2,3,3 or 3,4,4 ratio increase
<i>Spend Reserves and One-Time Funds:</i>			
District Retirement		500,000	General fund contribution would need to increase in 2013-14 to meet projected obligations
Sale of surplus property		2,000,000	Only if bond is passed
General Fund UEFB to 4%		1,300,000	Rather than 5% GF reserve
Total	\$3,100,000	\$8,000,000	

c. What if the bond measure and the new local tax for schools aren't approved?

These items are not included in the \$22 million strategy for the 2011-12 budget. Longer-term, the district would need to make additional staff reductions and look for other ways to reduce costs. Closing Twin Oaks, without an addition at McCornack, would require significant boundary adjustments for McCornack and other Churchill elementaries to accommodate students.

Additional Questions

21. We will have fewer students at the secondary level as enrollment declines. How does the plan address this?

- This revised recommendations do not address this, but the Stakeholder Task Force probably will as it considers grade configuration.
- Enrollment projections indicate that high school enrollment will stay relatively stable over the next 5 years.

22. Superintendent transition: Is there funding for new superintendent transition, such as team-building work?

No funding is designated for this purpose. Funds would likely need to come from contingency.

23. Stakeholder Task Force: What is the timeline for the task force work? How does it fit with the timeline for hiring of a new superintendent?

The task force would be appointed in late spring (after the selection of a new superintendent which is scheduled to occur by March 16), so that the new superintendent can have input into the charge and membership of the group. Task force recommendations would be probably be needed by November 2011 so the superintendent and board could have time to consider them.

24. Staffing ratio: What is the timeline for deciding the staffing ratio increase for 2011-12?

A decision is needed by early February. We plan to prepare two scenarios for both the school staffing ratio and central office reductions.

25. What is the board's definition of excellence, equity and choice?

The board has not formally adopted a definition. The superintendent using the following definitions as in Shaping 4J's Future core values:

EXCELLENCE:

- Educational excellence exists when all students are achieving at high levels and have engaging, rigorous and enriching learning experiences.
- Excellence is about increasing achievement for all students and closing the achievement gap.
- Excellent schools meet the diverse needs of all students and offer a multi-cultural and inclusive learning environment.

EQUITY:

- Educational equity exists when all students have equal opportunity to achieve at high levels.
- Equity may require an unequal distribution of resources and services in recognition of, and in addressing, the diversity of student needs.

CHOICE:

- School choice provides all students with equal access to educational options that are appropriate to their needs and interests, and involves, in concept, the educational purposes that promote innovation and academic achievement.
- School choice should support excellence and equity, promote diversity within our schools, and support district efforts to close the achievement gap.
- School choice should not result in a system of segregated schools or negatively impact the education of lower-income students.

26. How many students live in the North region?

The number of students living in the North region AND school enrollment figures for 2010-11 are:

ELEMENTARY:

2,596 elementary students reside in the North region.

1,983 elementary students are currently enrolled in North region schools — 1,467 in the region's four neighborhood schools, and 516 in its two alternative school programs.

Awbrey Park: 670 neighborhood residents, 451 enrollment
Howard: 499 neighborhood residents, 271 enrollment
River Road: 465 neighborhood residents, 393 enrollment
Spring Creek: 446 neighborhood residents, 352 enrollment
Corridor: 248 enrollment (alternative school)
Yujin Gakuen: 268 enrollment (alternative school)

MIDDLE:

990 middle school students reside in the North region.
910 students are enrolled in North region middle schools.

Kelly boundary is 438, enrollment is 458
Madison boundary is 552, enrollment is 452

HIGH:

1,342 high school students reside in the North region.
1,054 students are enrolled at North Eugene High School small schools.

All figures are from September 22, 2010.
Kindergarten students are counted as 1.