



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS Capacity Management & Building Closure 2008

*Updated November 25, 2008*

### SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### What has the Superintendent recommended?

On November 25, 2008, the Superintendent released preliminary recommendations for capacity management and building closure. She recommended that:

- **Six buildings will be closed**, and an additional building will be closed temporarily and may reopen in the future, depending on enrollment;
- **Nine programs will relocate** from one building to another;
- **One new program** (a new elementary school in Northeast Seattle) **will be created** and **one K-5** (Thornton Creek) **will expand to a K-8**; and
- **Five programs will be discontinued** and their students reassigned to new schools beginning in fall 2009.

SUMMARY OF SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRELIMINARY CAPACITY RECOMMENDATIONS (11/25/08)			
BUILDING CLOSURES	RELOCATED PROGRAMS	NEW PROGRAMS	DISCONTINUED PROGRAMS
Genesee Hill Lowell Mann TT Minor Pinehurst Van Asselt (Old Hay – may be temporary, depending on enrollment)	Lowell APP to Hawthorne and Thurgood Marshall NOVA to Meany Pathfinder K-8 to Arbor Heights SBOC to Meany Summit K-12 to Rainier Beach Thornton Creek to Addams TT Minor K-3 Montessori to Leschi Thurgood Marshall EBOC to Bailey Gatzert Van Asselt to AAA	New K-5 at Decatur  Thornton Creek K-5 expands to K-8	African American Academy AS #1 Arbor Heights Meany TT Minor

These recommendations will be considered during December and January. The School Board is expected to vote on the recommendations on January 29, 2009.

## DETAILED SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

### How will those recommendations be carried out?

<b>SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRELIMINARY CAPACITY RECOMMENDATIONS (11/25/08)</b>		
NAME	BUILDING	PROGRAM
Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center (SBOC) at Old Hay building	CLOSE Old Hay building (may be a temporary closure depending on enrollment growth)	RELOCATE SBOC program to Meany building and co-locate with NOVA
AS #1 at Pinehurst building	CLOSE Pinehurst building	DISCONTINUE AS #1 program and reassign students to Thornton Creek K-8 at Jane Addams (or schools near where they live)
Thornton Creek Elementary at Decatur building	REPURPOSE Decatur building to be used as a new cluster elementary school	RELOCATE Thornton Creek program to Jane Addams Building and expand to K-8
Meany Middle School	REPURPOSE Meany building to co-locate NOVA program and SBOC	DISCONTINUE Meany program and reassign students to other schools based on where they live
NOVA program at Mann building	CLOSE Mann building	RELOCATE NOVA program to Meany building to co-locate with SBOC
TT Minor Elementary	CLOSE TT Minor building	RELOCATE TT Minor Montessori to Leschi DISCONTINUE TT Minor Elementary program and reassign students to Madrona and Leschi Elementaries
Leschi Elementary	REPURPOSE Leschi building to add K-3 Montessori from TT Minor	ADD K-3 Montessori from TT Minor Current Leschi K-5 students remain
Lowell Elementary	CLOSE Lowell building	RELOCATE elementary Accelerated Progress Program (APP) to Thurgood Marshall and Hawthorne Elementaries REASSIGN Special Education students based on the service delivery model
Thurgood Marshall Elementary	REPURPOSE Thurgood Marshall building to add portion of elementary APP	Assign approximately half of elementary APP RELOCATE Elementary Bilingual Orientation Center (EBOC) to Bailey Gatzert Building Current Thurgood Marshall K-5 students remain
Bailey Gatzert Elementary	REPURPOSE Bailey Gatzert building to add EBOC from Thurgood Marshall	ADD EBOC program from Thurgood Marshall Current Gatzert K-5 students remain
Hawthorne Elementary	REPURPOSE Hawthorne building to add a portion of elementary APP	Assign approximately half of elementary APP Current Hawthorne K-5 students remain

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**SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRELIMINARY CAPACITY RECOMMENDATIONS (11/25/08), Continued**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>PROGRAM</b>
Van Asselt Elementary	CLOSE Van Asselt building	RELOCATE Van Asselt program to African American Academy building
African American Academy (AAA)	REPURPOSE AAA building to house Van Asselt Elementary program	DISCONTINUE AAA K-8 program. Reassign AAA K-5 students to Van Asselt or schools in their home cluster. Reassign AAA 6-8 students by where they live
Summit K-12 at Jane Addams building	REPURPOSE Jane Addams building as home to Thornton Creek K-8	RELOCATE Summit K-12 program to co-locate with Rainier Beach High School
Rainier Beach High School	REPURPOSE Rainier Beach building to co-locate Summit K-12 with Rainier Beach High	RELOCATE Summit K-12 program to Rainier Beach building to co-locate with Rainier Beach High School
Pathfinder K-8 at Genesee Hill building	CLOSE Genesee Hill building	RELOCATE Pathfinder K-8 program to Arbor Heights building
Arbor Heights Elementary	REPURPOSE Arbor Heights building to house Pathfinder K-8	DISCONTINUE Arbor Heights program. Reassign Arbor Heights students to other schools in the West Seattle South cluster

The Superintendent will release final recommendations on January 6, 2009. The final recommendations will be based on public input and additional analysis.

## PUBLIC PROCESS

### How can I keep up-to-date with this process?

Updated information about the process and timeline will be provided via the district's Web site, [www.seattleschools.org/area/capacity](http://www.seattleschools.org/area/capacity).

In addition, information will be shared through school newsletters, PTSA newsletters, emails to staff and community leaders, School Messenger, local media, ads in daily and community newspapers announcing public hearing dates, updates at School Board meetings and work sessions, and regular updates in our SPS bi-weekly e-newsletter, "**School Beat**." All staff receive this newsletter, and community members are encouraged to subscribe. Choose the "School Beat" button on our home page at [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org).

### How can I provide feedback and opinions?

There will be many different ways to provide feedback during December and January. Public process opportunities include:

Date	Time	Type of Meeting	Location
December 3	Time	School Board meeting	John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence*
December 4	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Community workshop	John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence
December 6	9:30-11:30 a.m.	Community workshop	Filipino Community Center: 5740 MLK Jr Way
December 15	TBD	Public hearing	Locations TBD
December 16	TBD	Public hearing	Locations TBD
December 18	TBD	Public hearing	Locations TBD
January 7	6:00 p.m.	School Board meeting	John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence
January 21	6:00 p.m.	School Board meeting	John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence
January 22	6:00 p.m.	Public hearing	John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence
January 29	6:00 p.m.	School Board vote	John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence

\*John Stanford Center for Education Excellence: 2445 3rd Avenue South

In addition, comments can be emailed to [capacity@seattleschools.org](mailto:capacity@seattleschools.org) or mailed to School Board, PO Box 34165, MS 11-010, Seattle, WA, 98124-1165. The School Board office phone number is 206 252 0040.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING CAPACITY AND SCHOOL CLOSURE

### Why is Seattle Public Schools studying capacity management?

A number of recent studies have confirmed that the District has more buildings than needed for our current and projected number of students. Capacity is not equally distributed, however. There is a shortage of space for students in North Seattle, but excess space in the Central, South, Southeast, and West Seattle clusters.

A review of capacity across the district was due to begin early in 2009. However, in late October, the School Board asked the Superintendent and staff to move quickly to start the capacity review so that they could study capacity at the same time they are analyzing ways to manage a minimum \$24 million budget gap for 2009-10.

### Why is Seattle Public Schools studying school closure?

As SPS staff members studied the issue of capacity management, they investigated the need to close buildings, move programs, and/or repurpose facilities. Building closures or repurposing may be needed to ensure that all students have equal access to high quality educational programs, and will be part of a strategy to address the budget shortfall. School closures were examined in light of five guidelines (described below, in the next section), and were based on students' academic needs.

### Why is it necessary to close or repurpose buildings now?

The following realities combine to make it necessary to consider building closure this year:

- **Excess capacity and too many buildings.** Multiple recent external audits and peer reviews of SPS point to the need for us to close facilities in order to address excess capacity. SPS has operated for many years with substantially more capacity than needed for the number of students enrolled. We have more school buildings than other districts with comparable student populations. Many of these buildings are costly to maintain due to their age and amount of deferred maintenance.
- **Geographic imbalance between school capacity and where school-age children live, and a desire for quality schools close to home.** Some parts of the city have current or projected capacity shortages, while others have excess capacity available. Families have told us that they want quality schools available close to home, and a greater degree of predictability about where their children will attend school. Matching the number of seats with the school-aged population in each area of our city is a key component in meeting that desire. Ensuring that available resources are targeted wisely and are not spread over too many schools will enable us to better support high quality in every school.
- **SPS budget gap projections for 2009-10.** We must address the stark reality of an estimated minimum \$24 million funding gap for 2009-10. This figure is an early estimate of the anticipated gap between the costs to maintain current levels of services and our expected revenues. This estimate may be too low; it will depend on the state of the overall national and statewide economy. The financial analysis SPS is now conducting will identify a variety of strategies to eliminate this known funding gap while protecting classroom funding to the maximum extent

possible. We know we will have to make additional cuts if that gap worsens.

- **State and federal budget challenges.** We also know that the state and federal governments, on which we depend for the bulk of our funding, are facing intense budget challenges. It is prudent for us to prepare for a scenario in which government funding for education would be reduced.

### **What is the District doing to balance the 2009-10 budget, in addition to considering building closures?**

Like many school districts across this state, Seattle Public Schools is facing a budget shortfall for the coming 2009-10 school year. The district by law must present a balanced budget in June 2009 and is moving forward with a variety of plans so that is possible. Specifically, the district is exploring five primary paths to a balanced budget that keeps students' needs at its core:

- **Budget prioritization process:** All central departments are prioritizing the functions and activities they currently perform in light of the strategic goals. This process provides the data necessary for budgetary reductions in central services.
- **Efficiency analysis:** Stakeholders are evaluating process changes to gain both greater efficiencies and reduce costs. The Budget Development Team, which is cross-departmental and includes school-based and central-based staff, is vetting the ideas and assigning them to appropriate staff for further analysis.
- **Review of the Weighted Staffing Standards model:** A team of central and school staff has identified overall cost savings by evaluating school-based budget allocations and identifying and prioritizing the most critical services for student achievement.
- **Revenue generation strategies:** Stakeholders have identified a set of short- and long-term ideas designed to generate new revenue which could be used to balance the impact of the known budget shortfall. Some ideas can be put in place to generate revenue for the coming school year.
- **Reduction of facilities and programs:** Longstanding imbalances in classroom capacity are not financially sustainable nor do they meet the needs of students and families. Closure of unneeded buildings and thoughtful relocation of some programs will result in significant savings in both operating and capital funds.

### **I've heard there's a shortage of space for students in some schools. If that's the case, why would you close buildings?**

There are two aspects to our work on capacity. First, we must bring the overall number of seats into balance with our student population. Second, we must address the geographic imbalance so that we have enough school capacity in the parts of the city where children live.

Demographics and enrollment change over time. The number of families with school-aged children has increased in North Seattle, and many neighborhoods in that part of the city are currently experiencing shortages in classroom capacity. In other neighborhoods, however, there is too much classroom capacity. We currently have too much classroom space for the number of students in the Central, South, Southeast, and West Seattle clusters.

In the preliminary recommendations released November 25<sup>th</sup>, achieving balance and responding to changing demographics means that a new elementary school is proposed for Northeast Seattle for fall 2009; an existing K-5 (Thornton Creek) is proposed to expand to a K-8; and a second new elementary school may be opened in Queen Anne/Magnolia in fall 2010 if demand continues to increase.

These new and expanded schools will be made possible by closing or repurposing a number of school buildings in areas with significantly less demand. It would simply not be a responsible use of resources – particularly in these difficult economic times – to continue to operate buildings that are not meeting our students' and families' needs.

### **Why would you plan to close buildings even as you are building new ones?**

There are two reasons we may find ourselves in the position of closing some buildings at the same time we are renovating others.

First, the District's capacity problem is not evenly distributed throughout the city. Some neighborhoods have a shortage of classroom space, while other neighborhoods have more space than is needed. We will need to work citywide to ensure that every child has access to a high quality educational facility. In some cases, that may mean closing or repurposing a building that is not needed, even as capacity is added in another neighborhood.

Second, the District works continuously to maintain and upgrades its facilities. Currently, more than a third of the 100 buildings in our inventory are more than 50 years old, and the average school building is more than 40 years old. A number of these buildings have been renovated by our Building Excellence and Buildings, Technology & Academics programs, but we must continue to work to ensure that all our facilities meet modern standards.

Seattle voters approved Building Excellence I in 1995 and Building Excellence II in 2001. Together these levies replaced or renovated 35 schools. The current construction program, Building Excellence III, approved by voters in 2007, will renovate or replace an additional six schools.

### **But what if the demographers got it wrong? Shouldn't we wait?**

We have commissioned a number of demographic studies to study where growth will occur and what we can expect in the future. The most recent of these was prepared by DeJONG, Inc. and released in February 2008. These studies have proved to be correct in their estimates of where we will need capacity. In some cases, though, the District has not been able to act fully to implement the recommendations in these studies. That is why we are facing capacity problems today.

The [DeJONG study](#) concluded that demand is expected to continue to grow in North Seattle neighborhoods over the next decade, while demand in South end neighborhoods will continue to decline. These projections are consistent with what we are experiencing now in these neighborhoods. We must respond so that all students have high quality programs available to them.

## METHOD FOR STUDYING CAPACITY AND SCHOOL CLOSURES

### **SPS adopted a strategic plan in June 2008. How will capacity management and building closures fit with that plan?**

Excellence for All, our District's strategic plan, provides the framework for us to work together to raise academic achievement for all students and improve the operations throughout the district that support student success.

Capacity planning is one of the priority strategies included in Excellence for All. It is important that we have enough space in schools where students live and that all students have equal access to high quality educational programs. As SPS staffers have engaged with community members and stakeholders over the last several months, we have worked to develop options that will address our immediate capacity challenges in specific neighborhoods for the 2009-10 academic year.

We had planned to begin the needed, longer term District-wide capacity management work in January 2009. However, because of the projected budget shortfall for next year, we must take significant steps immediately to protect the District's financial health. Capacity management and the potential closure or repurposing of buildings will be studied within the framework of the budget shortfall. However, student academic achievement and the goals of Excellence for All will drive the process. We must ensure that all decisions enhance students' academic success.

### **How were decisions made about which buildings should be recommended for closure?**

Staff used three foundational questions to evaluate buildings to ensure that all students will have access to a high quality education. First, do programs need to **move to other areas** of the district to improve access to these programs? Second, do programs **need to be added in areas** of the district to improve access to these programs? And third, how do closures or program moves relate to our students' **academic needs** and strengthen our **fiscal health**?

Staff used these three foundational questions to set a context for five specific guidelines they used to gather data for building closure evaluation:

- **Geographic Need:** How to balance capacity across the district to ensure the appropriate number of seats in each geographic area.
- **Building Condition:** Recent surveys and analyses will be used to evaluate the quality and condition of each building, using factors such as cost of maintenance, lot size, etc.
- **Cost per Pupil:** How non-instructional costs per student, including both core staffing and administrative mitigation, compare with District averages.
- **Proximity:** Whether other nearby schools serve the same grade levels.
- **Academic Performance:** Whether the school has made the expected annual academic progress under the federal No Child Left Behind law.



## **What does it mean to “repurpose” a building?**

Repurposing means that a building would remain open, but with a different mix of grades or programs than is currently there. For example, a K-5 could expand to a K-8; or a program could be eliminated and students reassigned to other schools; or an existing program could be moved from one building to another.

## **What will happen to buildings that are closed?**

If a building is closed, we will conduct a facilities review to determine whether to retain it, lease it or sell it. Community members will be included in this process, and then the School Board will make a final decision. In recent years, a number of former school buildings have been sold to community organizations or made available to the community through long-term leases. These arrangements – at Phinney Ridge, University Heights, Fauntleroy, and Cooper, among others – have benefited programs throughout Seattle, by providing space for affordable housing, performing arts, child care and community meeting space.

## **LOCATIONS FOR CLOSURES OR REPURPOSING**

### **What is being done to address the immediate needs in Queen Anne and Magnolia?**

Over the past several years, an increasing number of kindergarten and elementary age students have enrolled in schools in the Queen Anne and Magnolia areas. A review of projected enrollment indicates that there is an estimated shortfall in Queen Anne/Magnolia of 4 to 6 classrooms in 2009-10 and 2 to 4 classrooms in 2010-11. Over the past several months, we have analyzed options and received feedback and suggestions from staff, families and community members.

On November 12, 2008, the School Board adopted a motion to make a number of changes to the student assignment plan to address these capacity challenges in Queen Anne and Magnolia. Interim actions for the Queen Anne/Magnolia clusters include:

- Catharine Blaine K-8 – renovate existing space to add four additional classrooms.
- BF Day – change student assignment plan to allow dual-cluster choice and transportation to BF Day elementary from the Queen Anne/Magnolia clusters.
- BF Day – complete four spaces at BF Day for general education classrooms.
- Cluster-generated solution – accept additional capacity into the four elementary schools in the Queen Anne/Magnolia cluster (Catharine Blaine K-8, Coe, John Hay and Lawton).

In addition, the Superintendent’s preliminary recommendations open the possibility that a new neighborhood elementary school could be opened in the Old Hay Building in fall 2010 if demand continues.

### **What is being done to address the immediate needs in North Seattle?**

Over the past several years, an increasing number of kindergarten and elementary age students have enrolled in schools in North Seattle. A review of projected enrollment indicates that there is an estimated shortfall in the north of 12 to 17 classrooms in 2009-10 and 12 to 15 classrooms for 2010-11.

Over the past several months, we have analyzed options and received feedback and suggestions from staff, families and community members.

On November 12, 2008, the School Board adopted a motion to make a number of changes to the student assignment plan to address these capacity challenges in North Seattle. Interim actions for the North, Northwest and Northeast clusters include:

- Repurpose the Jane Addams building (which currently houses the Summit K-12 program) for a new K-8 school (the Superintendent recommends that Thornton Creek K-8 relocate to the Jane Addams building and expand to a K-8).
- Olympic Hills - Amend the student assignment plan to allow for dual-cluster choice and transportation for the Northeast cluster to Olympic Hills elementary.
- Northgate – one classroom can be used for additional capacity.
- Olympic Hills - work with staff at Olympic Hills to increase capacity through improved utilization of existing spaces.

In addition, the Superintendent's preliminary recommendations propose a new neighborhood elementary school in the Decatur Building and an expansion of Thornton Creek from a K-5 to a K-8. (The new elementary school would be created in the Decatur Building; Thornton Creek would relocate to the Jane Addams Building and Summit K-12 would relocate to co-locate with Rainier Beach High School.)

### **How will students and families benefit from these recommendations?**

The preliminary recommendations for building closures and program moves will benefit students and families by focusing available resources on fewer buildings and balancing capacity based on neighborhood demand.

In particular, the recommendations will provide a number of academic benefits for students and families, including:

- More Advanced Learning Opportunities for students, with the location of elementary APP in two schools;
- More integration of special education programs with school communities;
- A new neighborhood elementary school in Northeast Seattle and an expansion of Thornton Creek K-5 to a K-8 to respond to increased demand;
- The possibility of a new neighborhood elementary school in Queen Anne/Magnolia in fall 2010 if demand continues;
- An arts-focused campus with the co-location of Summit K-12 and Rainier Beach High School; and
- Enrichment opportunities with the co-location of NOVA and the Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center.

## TIMING OF RECOMMENDATIONS, PUBLIC PROCESS, CLOSURES

### **When and how will a District-wide list of building closures or building repurposing be developed?**

The Superintendent issued a preliminary recommendation on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

Final recommendations will be released on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

A public process during December and January will allow community members to share their input on these recommendations.

### **When would schools close or be repurposed?**

In her preliminary recommendations, the Superintendent has proposed that in all cases (except for the potential reopening of the Old Hay Building as a new elementary school in 2010), the changes would happen in June 2009, at the end of this school year. The ultimate decision about the effective date for closures, repurposing or program moves will be made by the School Board. The Board is expected to vote on January 29, 2009.

### **Would closure or repurposing decisions be effective beginning with September 2009?**

Because of the urgency of our budget and capacity needs, most of the changes would be made in time for the start of the 2009-10 school year.

### **How will the building closure process affect student enrollment for 2009-10?**

We can't ask families to enroll their students for the 2009-10 school year until we have completed the building closure process. As a result, the enrollment calendar for this year has been adjusted to ensure that families have time to consider options and to prepare registration and application materials prior to the rescheduled Open Enrollment period. Seattle Public Schools welcomes new and returning families for 2009-10. Please call on us to answer any questions you may have about the enrollment process or timeline.

- Open Enrollment for 2009-10 has been rescheduled from February to **March 2-31, 2009**.
- The School Fair that was originally scheduled for January 10, 2009 has been cancelled.
- Information on School Tours and Open Houses will be posted at [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org) by December 5.
- Assignment letters will go out by the end of May.

Families may visit or contact Enrollment Services at the John Stanford Center, located at 2445 Third Avenue South (3rd and Lander). Tel: 206.252.0760. Fax: 206.252.0761. Web site: [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org). Chose "Enrollment" from the menu. Registration and application materials may be submitted in person, by fax, or by mail.

The Bilingual Family Center at Aki Kurose Middle School is open for families needing assistance in a

language other than English. Aki Kurose is located at: 3928 South Graham Street (Room 104). Tel: 206.252.7750. Fax: 206.252.7751.

Both locations are open 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## **STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND STAFF**

### **What will happen to staff, including teachers and principals, who work at schools that are closed or repurposed?**

This is an issue that is very important to students and families, and it is one that we take very seriously. We know that school closures and program changes are very difficult for everyone and we will work with building staff to make the transition as smooth as possible. A respectful process will be followed, based on Seattle Public Schools' contractual agreements with our labor associations. More details will be provided in the future.

### **Can you guarantee that students whose schools close will be reassigned to quality schools?**

The fundamental goal of our new strategic plan, Excellence for All, is to ensure that every student has access to a high quality program, that every student has the resources to succeed academically.

That is one of the key reasons we have been studying the possibility of closing or repurposing schools: to devote more resources to the classroom so that every school can become a high quality school. Achieving this goal will take time, but we are working vigorously, in partnership with community members, to move forward as quickly as possible and ensure that we truly provide excellence for all.

This FAQ will be updated as new information is available and questions arise.

***Prepared by Office of Communications, Seattle Public Schools  
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