

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 709
Duluth Public Schools**

**In the Matter of the Proposed Closing
Of Central High School**

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS,

A hearing on the proposed closing of the Central High School (“Central”) by Independent School District No. 709, Duluth Public Schools (“School District”) was held on May 3, 2011, at 7:00 P.M. at Central.

The hearing was conducted pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.51, subdivision 5. The hearing was recorded by a court reporter. A transcript of the hearing has been provided to the members of the School Board. Exhibits were offered, received, and kept as part of the record of the hearing. All individuals wishing to speak and offer evidence in favor of, or in opposition to, the proposed closing were given the opportunity to testify during the hearing.

FINDINGS

1. The Central High School, located at 800 East Central Entrance in Duluth, sits on an approximate 77 acre site. Central is a two and three story (including the Secondary Technical Center), 299,980 square foot building. The first 228,826 square feet of the building was constructed in 1971. An additional 16,000 square feet was constructed in 1994; 52,775 square feet in 1995; 2,379 square feet miscellaneous construction in 2002, 2003.
2. Central is currently configured as a 9-12 program.
3. Central has an enrollment capacity of 1751 students (including STC). This number is based on a classroom size of 29 students.
4. Central is one of two high schools currently operated by the School District.
5. In accordance with its long range facilities plan, the School District is completing construction of new, more modern and expanded East and Denfeld High Schools (for purposes of this document, hereafter referred to as “Updated Denfeld and East”) within Central’s enrollment area. Updated Denfeld and East will open in September of 2011.
6. The enrollment of Central in the 2010-2011 school year was 1,400 students. The enrollment of the current East was 1,439.

7. The Central and Updated Denfeld and East schools have a combined enrollment capacity of 4,851 students – more space than necessary.
8. In 2006, the School District commissioned a report from Dr. Hazel Reinhardt. Her demographics report predicted a 10 year decline in the School District's enrollment of approximately 25%. The demographics report attributed this decline to shifting age demographics in the area served by the School District.
9. Since 2006, the School District's enrollment has been, on average, less than what the demographics report predicted.
10. Considering the enrollment capacity of Updated Denfeld and East and the current enrollment of Central, the enrollment figures predicted in the demographics report, and the enrollment trend, it is not necessary to keep the Central High School open to provide enrollment capacity for students. Closing Central would eliminate the excess use of a separate building.
11. During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the total building operations cost (including utilities, supplies, and custodial labor) for Central was \$866,120. Denfeld was \$614,815 and East was \$582,553. Total combined was \$2,009,488
12. The projected building operations cost for Updated Denfeld and East for the 2011-2012 fiscal year is \$1,435,298.
13. Utilizing the Updated Denfeld and East buildings is expected to save the School District \$574,190 building operations costs.
14. During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the total cost of employing administrators and school support personnel (such as nurses, nutritionists, media specialists, etc.) at Central was \$1,057,954. Denfeld was \$991,341. East was \$1,081,220. Total combined was \$3,130,515.
15. The projected cost of employing administrators and school support personnel at Updated Denfeld and East for the 2011-2012 fiscal year is expected to be \$1,077,492 and \$1,026,511 respectively, for an estimated savings of \$1,026,511.
16. During the 2010-2011 school year, operating fewer school buildings has already saved the School District's general fund approximately \$4,400,000. These savings have primarily been used to offset potential deficits.

17. In order to utilize Updated Denfeld and East and realize the financial savings and benefits described in paragraphs 13 and 15, the School District must first close the Central High School.
18. The Central building and surrounding land has been valued at approximately \$13,700,000 (including STC).
19. If the School District closes Central, it will be able to sell the Central building and surrounding land to reduce the School District's bonded debt by the sale value.
20. If the School District does not close the Central building and/or surrounding land, it will not be able to use the proceeds from such sale to pay down the School District's bonded debt. Instead, the anticipated value of that sale will be drawn from either or both of: (1) an additional tax levy; or (2) a reduction from the School District's general fund.
21. Closing Central will not necessitate the non-renewal, termination, or layoff of any classroom teacher. Teachers currently assigned to Central will be reassigned to other teaching positions in based on enrollment and in accordance with applicable provisions of the collective bargaining agreement and/or School District policies.
22. All classes and services, including special education classes and services, currently available at Central will be available at Updated Denfeld and East.
23. If Central is closed, students currently attending Central will attend Updated Denfeld and East starting in the 2011-2012 school year.
24. The educational benefits of closing Central include high schools with enough enrollment to increase academic opportunities.
25. The School District has published notice of the school closing hearing in the official newspaper for two weeks before the hearing.
26. At the hearing, the School District administration presented documentary evidence regarding the proposed closure of Central. Specifically, the following documents were entered as exhibits:
 - a. An Educational Adequacy Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;
 - b. A Facility Assessment Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;

- c. A Property Value Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;
- d. A Solutions Options Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;
- e. The Review and Comment Documents that the School District submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education in connection with its Long Range Facilities Plan; and
- f. The Demographic Report from former State Demographer, Dr. Hazel Reinhart.

The School Board has fully considered this evidence prior to reaching any conclusion or adopting any resolution regarding the closure of Central.

- 27. At the hearing, members of the public were allowed to present testimony for and against the proposed closure of Central. The School Board has considered all comments by members of the public prior to reaching any conclusion or adopting any resolution regarding the closure of Central.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The closure of the Central High School is necessary and practicable.
- 2. The School District has complied with the procedural requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.51, subdivision 5, for the purpose of closing the Central High School.