

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOR THE SHOREWOOD SCHOOL BOARD

Topic: Grade Reorganization/Space Utilization

Date: August 10, 2010

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Recommended action:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Information only
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Presentation/discussion
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion/action by committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion/action by board of education
<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation/action next meeting

Recommendation(s):

After careful consideration and analysis, I am proposing a multi-part recommendation:

1. Make no formal change at this time - keep all school district buildings open in their current configuration through at least the 2011-2012 school year.
2. Revisit the topic after a thorough analysis of the 2010 Census data and housing trends. This will enable the District to better understand our future enrollment projections and space requirements.
 - a. If projections show a status quo or increase in projected resident enrollment/change in housing trends, I recommend that the School Board continues to keep the current configuration.
 - b. If projections indicate a continued decline in resident enrollment, I would recommend that the School Board close Shorewood Intermediate School at the conclusion of 2011-2012 school year and re-organize the district as follows: Atwater grades JK-4, Lake Bluff grades 5-8, and SHS grades 9-12. I feel that District facilities are best utilized by this configuration. Given that implementation of a new configuration will take careful planning, I recommend that the District starts to plan in case this is the course of action.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to begin a discussion with the School Board and the community about the creation and implementation of a plan should the district condense space used for educational purposes. The opportunity to plan will assure the continuation of a strong educational experience for our students.

Background:

Since I was appointed Superintendent in 2003, the concept of closing space has been discussed as a way to offset the financial impacts caused by both the decline in enrollment and revenue. Due to this discussion, the District employed the Applied Population Laboratory (APL) to complete an enrollment study coupled with a housing trends analysis. In 2006, a space utilization study was completed to determine whether space was available if a major school closing occurred. Following the space utilization study, eppstein-uhlen architectural firm provided conceptual plans for major remodeling of locker rooms, music rooms, and science laboratories for an approximate \$3 million dollars.

In 2007, a committee, led by the then Director of Instruction Dr. Deb Taylor, was charged to both assess school space and then to determine the best approach to providing educational services in the event of a school closing/grade reorganization. Dr. Taylor's committee found that excess space did exist and recommended that the Intermediate School not be closed due to remodeling costs that did not make the closing a cost effective option. It was decided to revisit the topic in a few years.

Due to the continued gap between the expenses of the School District, the revenue generated and the decreased resident student enrollment, it became necessary and prudent to examine the use of space and how we organize the educational services of the School District prior to this school year.

Dean Schultz, Interim Director of Instruction, was charged with convening a group of stakeholders comprised of faculty, staff, parents, and other community members to re-visit the possibility of closing space in the School District due to declining enrollment. The focus of the committee was to assess current information (facilities study, projections, actual counts, etc.) and provide possible grade reconfigurations that were educationally and financially sound yet maintained the rigorous curriculum and instructional experiences for our students.

The committee recommended three options to the Superintendent for his consideration. The options are described in the attached report. The Superintendent's recommendation provided in this report is a hybrid of option 2 because the Lake Bluff school would transform into a better middle school facility than Atwater.

Recommended Next Steps:

I make my multi-pronged recommendation realizing that we have several issues to further assess and understand in order to determine the best long-term solution. In the short term, I recommend that the District follows two paths:

- 1) Thorough review of the 2010 Census and other relevant data. This would include hiring APL to fully assess the impact of the 2010 Census and analyze housing trends.
- 2) Begin the process of developing a detailed plan to reconfigure the District.

While I hope that our resident enrollment begins to trend upward or at least stabilize, it would be prudent for the District to begin a detailed discussion and assessment of what would be needed to transition to a new configuration. Therefore I am recommending planning and preparation on the part of the following departments:

Instructional Services - It is recommended that instructional staff, during the 2011-2012 school year, begin to plan for a possible reconfiguration including studying the creation of a 5-8 middle school. The group would review the program of study/scheduling, teaching approaches for this age

group, intramurals/athletics, guidance services, and other pertinent aspects of a middle level education. It is my belief that with a larger middle school student body we can create a stronger middle school based on the best practices for students ages 10-13. Again, teaching to a broader range of students would be different and a more relationship-based approach to delivering the approved curriculum would be needed. It will take time for staff to collaborate to develop the necessary structure to teach middle school students. Additionally, the elementary program would be reviewed to ensure that best practices for grades K4-4 would be implemented at Atwater School.

Business Services - The office of Business Services has estimated the savings based on utility costs and staffing costs to be \$396,986. This figure includes a .5 reduction in the position of principal and a .5 shift of the dean of students to Lake Bluff. This would leave the District with a .5 Director of Special Education. It does not include reduction in teaching staff or any remodeling cost.

If and when the School Board makes a decision to close space, administration can then make staffing decisions based student needs. Being able to place actual numbers into the budget forecast is extremely important to determine accurate budget impact. I do need to say at this point that with the dual capacity all administrators in the District current have, it will be difficult to reduce administrative staff with the closing of space.

Two years ago, the Business Office explored the possibility of renting SIS. At that time, we found that we could rent the space for \$450/month or an average sized classroom. While the District would be interested in renting the property and increasing revenue there is at least one drawback. Due to building code regulations the District must be aware that by renting the facility we change the occupancy code and therefore would be required to meet all current building, fire, and ADA codes. We believe that we are fine with building and ADA codes, updating the fire codes to include a sprinkler system may result in a \$1.4 million renovation.

Additionally should we follow this path, I would recommend moving the District's New Horizon Charter School and possibly the Community Services and Recreation Department to the SIS property. This maintains the occupancy as a school and use with current district activities. In this case, the District would not have to adjust to different building, fire, and ADA codes but would be able to reduce utilities and cleaning needs at the building.

I do not recommend selling the property. In the event enrollment does increase the District will need the facility.

Facility Services – Lake Bluff would require minor remodeling primarily in the bathrooms and to the drinking fountains. Additionally, I would advocate for the purchase of carts to teach science at Lake Bluff rather than remodel classrooms. Next, Mr. Al Thien would need to plan for minor remodeling, moving of equipment and educational materials from SIS to Lake Bluff. The rough estimate for this expense is:

- Science carts 10@\$2,000 = \$24,000
- Bathroom renovations \$40,000
- Fountain replacement \$3,000
- Moving expenses \$75,000
- Total one-time cost \$142,000

Should the District move forward with a reconfiguration, Mr. Thien would provide a more detailed cost estimate.

Summary

This is a difficult discussion for the District, the School Board and the community. Since I do not believe we have enough details to make a long term decision today, I have recommended a multi-pronged approach that includes further assessment while at the same time planning for the possibility of reorganization.

The community will continue to be invited to join the discussion as the District and School Board works to make a long-term fiscally and educationally sound decision.

Attachment:

- 1. Grade Reorganization Committee Recommendation**
- 2. APL Enrollment/Housing Trends Report**
- 3. Space Utilization Report**