

To: Geneva CUSD 304 Board of Education
Re: Boundary Adjustment Task Force Report, 19 April 2013
Fr: Dr. Kent Mutchler & Boundary Adjustment Task Force Members

Recommendation:

The recommendation from the Superintendent’s Boundary Adjustment Task Force is to move the school attendance center for students residing in Neighborhood 20 from Williamsburg Elementary School to Western Avenue Elementary School beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. The intent of the Task Force is to keep these students at Western Avenue for the future in order to provide them with a stable attendance center. The rationale for moving these students is that Western Avenue Elementary is closer to their neighborhood and that they will overall be provided smaller class sizes in a school with a smaller enrollment and that such a move will help to balance the overall enrollment numbers between Western Avenue Elementary and Williamsburg Elementary. We further recommend that any current fourth grade student residing in neighborhood 20 attending Williamsburg Elementary could attend his/her fifth grade year in 2013/14 at Williamsburg if parents request this and agree to provide transportation at their own expense to and from Williamsburg Elementary School. Our records indicate that this involves a total of 24 students in Neighborhood 20 with K=3, 1st=5, 2nd=4, 3rd=4, 4th=4, 5th=4. We further recommend that the staff at Western Avenue and Williamsburg Schools put into place a transitional plan to aid in a smooth transition for these students and their families from Williamsburg to Western Avenue.

Data:

***Current Classroom Sections at Williamsburg = 22 Projected for 2013-14 = 20**
***Current Classroom Sections at Western Ave. = 13 Projected for 2013-14 = 12**

2013-2014 Projected Enrollment/Sections/Classroom Numbers

(Please note that section numbers could fluctuate with enrollment changes.)

Williamsburg:

Western Avenue:

Gr	#	Sections	# Per Section	Gr	#	Sections	#Per Section
K	48	2	24/24	K	30	2	15/15
1	86	4	21/21/22/22	1	42	2	21/21
2	77	3	25/26/26	2	48	2	24/24
3	72	3	24/24/24	3	41	2	20/21
4	96	4	24/24/24/24	4	53	2	26/27
5	91	4	22/23/23/23	5	56	2	28/28

History:

At the School Board Fall Retreat in September of 2012, the Board of Education requested that Supt. Mutchler establish a Task Force to explore our elementary school boundaries and building enrollments. This was in response to increasing enrollment bubbles at grade levels at Mill Creek School, Heartland Elementary School, and Williamsburg Elementary School, necessitating additional staff. The Board also indicated an interest in determining capacity for the future, as well as future programming plans. These concerns also included planning for the future possible addition of all-day-everyday kindergarten, which is both one of the longer term goals of the Board and could be part of implementing the Common Core Standards Curriculum. The Board also sought to determine if neighborhoods as previously identified for the District remained appropriate since last studied. The concept of neighborhood schools was also identified as important for study and discussion.

At the retreat, an early decision was emphasized (March) in order to allow schools, parents, staff, and students adequate transition time should an adjustment to boundaries be approved. Mary Stith and Matt Henry were appointed the board representatives to work with Dr. Mutchler and the administrative staff on the task force. The task force also consulted with local agencies regarding potential areas of future growth, and in seeking input as to current and possible adjusted boundaries and identifiable neighborhoods.

Process:

The Task Force initially identified those schools that would be considered based on enrollment, neighborhood proximity, and future needs. These were Fabyan Elementary School, Mill Creek Elementary School, Western Avenue School, and Williamsburg Elementary School. Harrison Street School and Heartland Elementary School were removed from consideration based on their relatively stable enrollment, defined neighborhoods, and availability of classrooms for future needs.

Four public forums were held at each of the identified schools during the month of February. Parents were notified through various means about these forums. Feedback and suggestions were recorded and presented to the task force for consideration. The Board also received input from residents via emails, phone communications, and during public input at meetings of the Board of Education.

At the completion of the public forums, the task force considered all feedback and suggestions, and examined enrollment numbers in a variety of scenarios, with previously established neighborhoods, as well as possible new areas with altered boundaries. The task force determined that changes to boundaries at MCS and FES would not achieve any of the desired goals at this time. Enrollment numbers and classroom sizes would essentially just be flipped, and the task force members felt that current market and development conditions did not allow for accurate predictions about which school would see the most growth in the future. Therefore, the task force removed these neighborhoods from consideration for the present time. Parents in these neighborhoods were informed of these decisions throughout the process.

The task force next considered the enrollments, neighborhoods, and growth predictions at WES and WAS. Unlike FES and MCS, these schools have vastly different enrollments. Different scenarios were again generated to see if there were any adjustments that would balance the enrollment more appropriately and address the goals initially brought forward by the Board of Education, as well as address concerns of parents. Neighborhood 25, in part and as a whole, was considered along with neighborhood 20, as they were the areas that required busing and were furthest from WES and yet in close proximity to WAS.

While the Board had initially indicated that they would like to have the recommendation brought forward by March, this end point was delayed in order to consider the student numbers from Kindergarten Registration which had to be rescheduled due to weather concerns. The presentation of the recommendation to the Board of Education was rescheduled for the April 22, 2013 regular meeting.

Upon review, the task force determined that kindergarten enrollment numbers did not point to the need to move or not move students. Additionally, at this time the goal of balancing enrollment sufficient to create greater equity between buildings, in either staffing, program delivery, or administration was determined to not be attainable. Members of the task force then applied the other planning goals as set by the Board of Education as well as parental concerns with relation to the identified neighborhoods.

Analysis of Possible Boundary Adjustments:

Neighborhood 25

The task force identified two streets that could potentially subdivide the neighborhood; 7th street and South Street. It was found that the scenarios of considering the entire area or parts of this neighborhood based on these divisions **did not address**

- balancing building enrollment
- creating efficiencies in transportation or staffing
- improving issues of safety in transportation
- keeping current neighborhoods intact

It did address:

- the concern for future growth at WES, as this change would remove one neighborhood and its future students from the school boundaries as WES nears capacity
- meeting the prescribed 3-5 year time frame for students to remain at WAS

However, these two met goals in isolation from the greater goals/concerns not met did not point to the necessity of a change at this time.

Neighborhood 20

Neighborhood 20 is a neighborhood where all students need to be bussed to school, and that is practically geographically closest to Western Avenue Elementary School. Due to this and the smaller number of students residing there, the task force considered it as a distinct neighborhood without the need or possibility of changing it's overall boundaries.

In terms of considering Neighborhood 20 for a possible relocation, the task force found that it **did not address:**

- the goal of balancing building enrollment in a large way.
- creating efficiencies in number of staff.

It did address:

- keeping the neighborhood intact
- creating efficiencies in busing (distance)
- bussing to the nearest school (not passing a neighborhood school to get to another)
- reducing the number of hazardous routes in transportation such as major roads, railroad tracks, traffic signals (this was a frequently identified parental concern)
- the educational benefit of having less students per principal, as well as some of the support services within the building
- making the move last within the 3- 5 year time frame and given the reality of the capacity available at WAS, exceed this time frame.
- planning for future growth as it would remove a neighborhood and its future children from the near capacity WES.

Based on the increase in attainable goals as charged to the task force, it is recommended that Neighborhood 20 be considered for inclusion within the WAS school boundary.

Further Consideration and History:

Historically, Neighborhood 20 was a part of the WAS family. Prior to 1988, there were 3 elementary schools in District 304: 4th Street School, Harrison Street School, and Western Avenue School. In 1988, students in this area were moved to Harrison Street School due to overcapacity at WAS. The Board at that time determined HSS was a suitable alternative due to its location east of the Fox River, being only slightly further than WAS, and the ability of HSS to house the students for 3 plus years. In

1994, the Board of Education approved the transfer of neighborhood 20 to Coultrap Elementary School, which was converted from a middle school with the completion of GMSS. The movement of this neighborhood to three schools was frequently cited as the reason in future boundary adjustments to remove them from consideration. In 2008, Williamsburg Elementary School opened. Randall Square was determined to remain with that school family since they had last been moved 3 years prior. Due to available capacity at WAS and meeting the criteria of closest proximity to the school (neighborhood definition), the Superintendent made a recommendation to the Board of Education to return neighborhood 20 to WAS, along with other boundary adjustments at other schools. The Board of Education at that time decided to remove neighborhood 20 from consideration and they have continued at WES to this date.

Other discussion:

The Geneva School District determines capacity at schools based on programming. While seat capacity is a parameter that we measure and record, we plan for growth by how many classrooms are needed in order to deliver our current education. Students do not arrive in buildings equally divided per class, nor does the district fill classrooms to the seat capacity determination of a certain number per room. Programming capacity refers to how rooms are utilized based on student numbers per grade and supportive services requiring classrooms, i.e. special education, A/E, reading tutors, Mid Valley classrooms, music, art, etc.

The task force has received feedback from the community, parents, students, and staff in this process and the overwhelming majority have stated the importance of the neighborhood school concept continuing. In light of the boundary adjustment study this year, the Task Force emphasized that possible boundary adjustments be examined each year and that the boundary map on the District 304 website be made to be more accurate and usable. As a District, we greatly appreciate the work of the Task Force and the comments that the Board has received throughout this process.