

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

**In the Matter of the Proposed Closing FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS,
Of Laura MacArthur Elementary School**

A hearing on the proposed closing of the Laura MacArthur Elementary School ("Laura MacArthur") by Independent School District No. 709, Duluth Public Schools ("School District") was held on May 2, 2011, at 6:00 P.M. at Laura MacArthur.

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 Laura MacArthur Elementary School, located at 727 north Central Avenue in Duluth, sits on an approximate 3.07 acre site. Laura MacArthur is a three story, 155,406 square foot building. The first 113,320 square feet of the building was constructed in 1914. In 1957 the District constructed a 38,040 square foot addition. In 1990 and 1994, the District constructed 4,046 square foot of miscellaneous space.
2. Laura MacArthur is currently configured as a K-5 program.
3. Laura MacArthur has an enrollment capacity of 644 students. This number is based on a classroom size of 23 students.
4. Laura MacArthur is one of ten elementary schools currently operated by the School District.
5. In accordance with its long range facilities plan, the School District is completing construction of a new school building (for purposes of this document, hereafter referred to as "New Laura MacArthur") within Laura MacArthur's enrollment area. New Laura MacArthur will open in September of 2011.
6. The enrollment of Laura MacArthur in the 2010-2011 school year was 453 students.

7. The Laura MacArthur and New Laura MacArthur schools have a combined enrollment capacity of 1,126 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 New Laura MacArthur and the current enrollment of Laura MacArthur, the enrollment figures predicted in the demographics report, and the enrollment trend, it is not necessary to keep the Laura MacArthur Elementary School open to provide enrollment capacity for students. Closing Laura MacArthur 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 Laura MacArthur was \$430,458.
12. The projected building operations cost for New Laura MacArthur for the 2011-2012 fiscal year is \$249,885.
13. Utilizing the New Laura MacArthur building is expected to save the School District \$180,573 in 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 Laura MacArthur was \$344,561.
15. The projected cost of employing administrators and school support personnel at New Laura MacArthur for the 2011-2012 fiscal year is expected to be roughly the same as 2009-10.
16. Closing the Laura MacArthur building allows it to be demolished, avoids the need to pay near \$90,000 in WLSSD sewer capacity charges relating to the addition at Denfeld and the New Laura MacArthur, and allows for construction of additional green space for community recreation, high school athletics, and possible expanded parking.

17. In order to utilize New Laura MacArthur and realize the financial savings and benefits described in paragraphs 13 and 16, the School District must first close the Laura MacArthur Elementary School.
17. 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.
18. Closing Laura MacArthur will not necessitate the non-renewal, termination, or layoff of any classroom teacher. Teachers currently assigned to Laura MacArthur will be reassigned to other teaching positions based on enrollment and in accordance with applicable provisions of the collective bargaining agreement and/or School District policies.
19. All classes and services, including special education classes and services, currently available at Laura MacArthur will be available at New Laura MacArthur.
20. If Laura MacArthur is closed, all students currently attending Laura MacArthur will attend New Laura MacArthur starting in the 2011-2012 school year.
21. The educational benefits of closing Laura MacArthur include a reduction in split classes and travel time for specialists (art, media, physical education, and music) who travel between buildings.
22. The School District has published notice of the school closing hearing in the official newspaper for two weeks before the hearing.
23. At the hearing, the School District administration presented documentary evidence regarding the proposed closure of Laura MacArthur. 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 Laura MacArthur.

- 24. At the hearing, members of the public were allowed to present testimony for and against the proposed closure of Laura MacArthur. 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 Laura MacArthur.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The closure of the Laura MacArthur Elementary 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 Laura MacArthur Elementary School.