Shaping 4J's Future

Superintendent's Report and Recommendations

(Part 1)

January 14, 2008

EUGENE SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J

George Russell, Superintendent

Edited By:

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I. Introduction

In Eugene we're proud of our schools — and we have every right to be. The Eugene School District has a strong record of innovation and student achievement.

Our community's support has contributed to that success. But as we consider the future, and how to maintain our strong schools, and even move them all from "good to great," we're confronted with the question: do we wait for the world to change us or do we attempt to shape our own future?

In response to the alternative school review report, the board directed in February 2006 that the district begin developing a process for larger review of enrollment patterns, school boundaries, alternative school relocation, school closure and consolidation, and possible new school construction or renovations. Included with that direction was reassessment of the placement of learning centers, regional learning centers, and ESD programs serving special education students.

Shaping 4J's Future Process

The Shaping 4J's Future process was initiated in 2006 to address the following strategic question:

> *"What services and facilities will be needed to support the district's future instructional programs in order to increase achievement for all students and close the achievement gap?"*

The process is underpinned by the School Board's three instructional goals: (1) increasing achievement for all students; (2) closing the achievement gap; and (3) providing equal opportunities for all students to succeed. In answering the strategic question before the district, the school board will be taking into consideration declining enrollment, regional enrollment patterns, placement of special education programs, the location of alternative schools, and potential strategies such as boundary changes, grade and school configurations, and school closures and/or expansions (4J Trends and Issues Report 2006).

The Shaping 4J's Future process builds upon ongoing instructional planning and previous district plans (see Figure 1 below). It focuses on critical long-range facility and service options that arise from enrollment and student population trends and from related issues that have not been fully resolved from the Schools of the Future Report of 1999, School Closure and Consolidation Report of 2001, and the Access and Options Report of 2004.

Figure 1. Relationship to other decision making processes

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Board instructional goals
Increase achievement for all students
Close the achievement gap
Provide equal opportunities for all students to succeed</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ongoing instructional planning
District instructional initiatives, including:
literacy & math
data-driven decision making
improved testing environments
cultural competence
integration of regular & special education
high school program configuration
Curriculum planning & integration
Individualized Education Plans for students with disabilities
TAG services
Library/media center services
Physical education & nutrition education
Arts
School improvement plans & other initiatives within each school</td><td>Previous district plans
1. Schools of the Future 2000
2. School Closure & Consolidation 2001
3. Strategic Facilities Long-Range Plan 2002
4. Access & Options 2004

Many of the recommendations from these plans have already been implemented. Some recommendations are still to be addressed during Shaping 4J's Future including:
placement of special education programs
location of alternative elementary schools that are now co-located with neighborhood schools potential boundary changes</td><td>Shaping 4J's future
1. Special education
2. Title 1
3. English language learners
4. Pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergartens
5. High school sizes
6. Elementary and middle school size
7. Technology
8. Grade configurations</td></tr>
</table>

Phases of Shaping 4J's Future Process

The planning process to address these issues took place through a three-phase process over many months, and involved the valuable contributions and support of many people. It included:

1. Focus Groups: The district identified eight topics that required additional guidance because they involve "unanswered questions that will have an impact on school size, grade configurations, and the location of schools" (Trends and Issues Report, 2006). District staff were asked to develop possible options around eight topics: special education, Title 1, English language learners, kindergarten, high school size, elementary and middle school size, technology and grade configurations. To support these groups, the district collected data and compiled information about enrollment and demographic trends, building capacity, and conducted a detailed literature review of best-practice information. For each topic, the focus group reviewed the information, discussed current district programs and recommended options based on different funding scenarios.

2. Think Tank: The district contracted with the University of Oregon's Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management and the Institute for Policy Research and Innovation to convene a community "Think Tank." The team from the University convened the Think Tank to help review 4J district data, best practice research, Focus Group options, and other district concerns. They were given the broad charge of recommending options and implications to the school board for a broader public deliberation process. The charge for the Think Tank was (1) to explore the information from the district, research on best practices and options generated by the focus groups; (2) develop a set of integrated options for the School Board to use in a

public deliberation process; and (3) offer a preliminary assessment of implications and likelihood of public acceptance of different options.

In addition to the issues and options identified through this process, the Think Tank was asked to consider several other questions related to critical issues facing the district:

- Should we establish school enrollment caps, class-size caps or intra-district transfer policies?
- Should we close more schools? Build new schools? Reconfigure existing schools?
- Do we need a boundary change study?
- If we relocate alternative schools, where would we place them?
- What should go into a new capital bond measure?

During their deliberations, the Think Tank relied heavily on the best-practice research and options developed by the Focus Groups. They requested supplementary information on a number of topics, and reviewed reports and studies from several sources. In weighing the options to recommend for the public process, the Think Tank considered several different approaches to packaging and presenting the alternatives. During their discussions, they determined that several options from the Focus Group process related to ongoing instructional planning, and were better addressed through internal district processes. The Think Tank also recommended that several options not be forwarded for consideration for one or more of the following reasons: (1) they believed the change would create too much disruption; (2) there was not compelling educational evidence that the change was warranted; and/or (3) because it involved costs that the group believed would not be supported by the community.

3. Public Involvement: Based on school board direction, a team from the University of Oregon developed a broad-based, deliberative process to allow the public to learn about current trends and weigh in on the options. The primary instrument for this public involvement was through the development and use of the Survey Newsletter. The newsletter described the enrollment and demographic challenges facing the district, current efforts to address these challenges, and the various policy options that might be adopted. These options addressed three major issues: school size, managing enrollment to improve diversity, and investments in new or emerging initiatives. Staff Forums and Staff/Parent Listening Sessions: As part of the public involvement process, we also initiated several staff forums for district staff to be able to receive information and ask questions regarding the Shaping 4J's Future process. Four meetings were held, with one in each region of the district. The attendance at the meetings varied from region to region, with the highest turnout in the South and Churchill regions. Following the receipt of the survey results, we conducted three district-wide listening sessions where staff and parent representatives from all schools in the district were invited to represent their school. One session each was conducted for elementary staff, middle and high school staff, and for parents. The dialogue and conversations that occurred in those sessions, and the feedback received, were extremely helpful.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank all those who over the past couple years have participated in and contributed to this process. Particularly, I want to recognize the staff and community members who participated in the Focus Groups; the community members who gave generously of their time and wisdom as part of the Think Tank; all those staff, parents and community members who participated in the survey; and, finally, those staff and parents who participated in the focused listening sessions. Additionally, the Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee and the professionals from the University of Oregon, especially Rich Margerum, Bob Parker and Ed Weeks, who contributed so much to making this process a fruitful one. Special thanks to Marilyn Clotz and David Piercy for their work with the Focus Groups and assistance throughout this process. Without all of their contributions and

dedicated efforts on behalf of this community's children, this would not have come to pass. Notwithstanding the many outstanding contributions to this work, and the great staff work and support that has gone into it, particularly that of Barbara Bellamy and Tom Henry, I caution that this the report and the thoughts expressed herein represent my views and are those for which I take full responsibility.

What follows in this report is a review of the data and work that has occurred during this process, and previous district planning processes, a case-study look at other districts facing similar challenges, and a set of proposed goals and principles on which I plan to base a more specific set of recommendations.

II. BACKGROUND

Setting the Context—Key Enrollment and Demographic Trends

The report *Shaping 4J's Future: Enrollment and Demographic Trends* summarizes some of the key enrollment and student trends facing the district. A summary of these trends is listed below.

Student Enrollment

In the 2006-07 school year student enrollment was at a 20-year low of 17,357. Over the last decade 4J's enrollment has declined by 1, 289 students. If current trends continue, enrollment in 4J schools is expected to decline by another 1,000 students and stabilize at 16,375 students in 2015.

- Enrollment at the elementary level will remain stable with 7,345 students in 2006 and 7,333 students in 2015.
- Enrollment at the middle school level will decline by about 150 students from 3,915 in 2006 to 3,778 in 2015.
- Enrollment at the high school level will decline by about 830 students from 6,097 this school year to 5,264 in 2015.

Enrollment projections vary by region (Table 1). Assuming the same pattern of student transfers as in 2006:

- Enrollment in the Sheldon region is expected to grow by about 240 students.
- Enrollment in the Churchill region will decline slightly by about 80 students.
- Enrollment in the North region will decline by about 500 students.
- Enrollment in the South region will decline by about 660 students.

Table 1. Enrollment Patterns

	Actual Enrollment 2006	Projected Enrollment 2015	Difference
District	17,357	16,375	-982
Churchill Region	3,896	3,817	-79
North Region	4,177	3,697	-480
Sheldon Region	4,865	5,101	236
South Region	4,419	3,760	-659

Student Demographics

Student demographics are changing while enrollment declines. If current trends continue, minority student population will grow from 21.5% in 2006 to 30.9% in 2015. A higher concentration of these students will be in the North and Churchill regions. The largest increase in the number of minority students has been Latinos in the North region, followed by Asians in the Sheldon region. The number of students eligible for free and reduced lunches, a common indicator of socio-economic status, will increase from 29.8% in 2006 to 39.7% in 2015. Concentration of these students will be in the North and Churchill regions. The number of

students who qualify as English Language Learners will increase by more than 100 students from 406 in 2006 to 517 in 2015.[1] The number of students who receive special education services will increase by nearly 500 students from 2,602 in 2006 to 3,079 in 2015.

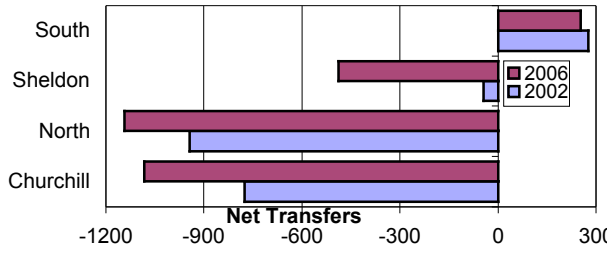
Transfers from Neighborhood Schools

A large number of students (approximately 32%) do not attend their neighborhood schools. Rather, they use the district's open enrollment policy to transfer to an alternative school or another neighborhood school.

The chart in Figure 2 shows the net number of transfers to and from neighborhood schools in each region in 2006.

- Churchill region lost 1,082 students to alternative schools, charter schools and neighborhood schools in other regions;
- North region lost 1,142 students;
- Sheldon region lost 489 students; and
- South region gained 253 students.

Figure 2. Net transfers, 2002 and 2006



Focus Group Options

The focus groups, comprised primarily of district staff, reviewed district trend data and best-practice research and identified options for configuring services with achievement and equity goals in mind. Each focus group identified at least three options, based on a range of different funding assumptions. The options addressed special education, Title 1 and English Language Learner services, pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten, school size, grade configuration, and technology. These options are described in the Trends and Issues Report of January 18, 2007.

Think Tank Guiding Principles

The Think Tank met between January and August 2007 to review the information and options developed by the focus groups and to package recommendations for a broader community engagement process. During this process, some guiding principles emerged that influenced the Think Tank's deliberations and helped guide their work and final recommendations. The principles were:

1) Increase overall achievement
   - Overall achievement refers to the educational performance of all students
   - Education is important to Eugene residents
   - Concerns about district achievement trend data
   - Need to comply with federal and state laws
   - Need to ensure that current research findings demonstrate that proposed changes will increase overall achievement

2) Close the Achievement Gap

[1] The 406 students, noted here in 2006 is the actual number of students served while the full Enrollment and Demographic Trends report uses an Oregon Department of Education "full time equivalent" formula to identify the number of students.

- Achievement gap refers to the difference in achievement among groups of students with common characteristics, which increases at higher grades
- Ability of schools to address student performance varies, contributing to achievement gap
- Increasing overall student performance should coincide with closing the achievement gap

3) Address Equity
- Inequalities exist among schools in terms of their ability to address students' educational needs, particularly for schools serving low income and/or low achieving students
- Student transfers can lead to concentrations of higher and lower achieving students
- Support idea that education and services can be placed to ensure they are accessible for all students
- All schools should equally share services for students with high needs

4) Consider Feasibility:
- State funding for operations is limited, and this funding is linked to enrollment
- Greater flexibility of capital funding may be available if there is public acceptance
- Operational and capital costs need to be weighed against educational benefits

5) Minimize Community and District Transitions:
- Some options could involve significant transitions
- Transitions involve human and financial costs
- Changes must result in clear educational and financial benefits

6) Honor Community Traditions:
- The Eugene community has a deep sense of pride in Eugene School District 4J
- Traditions such as valuing children, community based decision making, parental involvement and school choice have long been honored by the district
- All schools provide unique learning environments
- Benefits of changes must be weighed against the number of students served and the ability of these programs to efficiently and equitably serve all students and close the achievement gap

Additional Recommendations from the Think Tank

In addition to the recommendations about options for a public process, the Think Tank recommended that the district consider several policy and programming changes. They believed that these issues were better handled through internal instructional planning and board budgeting processes:

- Continue to offer kindergarten services, particularly where it helps high-needs populations.
- Collaborate with pre-kindergarten providers to increase availability.
- Increase services for ELL students. In particular, develop a Spanish language dual-immersion program and consider grouping students to provide sufficient services.
- Create a technology "scope and sequence" for student instruction, require each school to have a minimum level of technology, and increase technology training for teachers.
- Consider inclusion of students with special needs in excess of state and federal guidelines, improve early screening for developmental disabilities, and enhance partnerships to provide services.
- Increase coordination of Title 1 services and maintain flexibility while increasing accountability. Ensure low-income enrollment at any one school does not exceed 50%.
- Ensure an equitable distribution of students with high needs and help under-enrolled schools increase desirability through new programs or services.
- Treat all schools as "schools" with different attendance boundaries and work to reduce the real and perceived inequalities between "neighborhood schools" and "alternative schools."

- Provide flexibility of site-based decision making while ensuring accountability and a minimum level of services at each school.
- Increase professional development for teachers and site committees, particularly in relation to students with high needs.

Survey Newsletter – Input from Parents, Staff and Community

An 8-page Shaping 4J's Future survey newsletter was the primary means of providing information about potential policy options and gathering input from parents, staff and community members. The newsletter described the enrollment and demographic challenges facing the district, current efforts to address these challenges, and the various policy options that might be considered in pursuit of the board's goals. The survey was developed and administered in conjunction with the UO Community Planning Workshop led by Dr. Ed Weeks and support of the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management (PPPM) and the Institute for Policy Research and Innovation.

The survey questionnaire asked respondents to use a 10-point scale to rate their degree of support for 19 policy options. These options addressed three major issues: school size, managing enrollment to improve diversity, and investment in new or emerging initiatives. The policy options and general results are briefly discussed below:

Summary of Survey Newsletter Results

The survey newsletter provided information about the impact of declining enrollment and school choice on enrollment and shared some of the research on school size. It then asked survey participants to consider school size options related to a number of options for neighborhood and alternative elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. Below are the options included in the survey and a brief synopsis of the survey results related to each of the options. (See charts in Appendix 1)

Neighborhood Elementary School Size

1. Option #1: Continue current policy of allowing each neighborhood elementary school to accept all students who choose to attend, subject to capacity of school building. Consider closure or consolidation for schools below 200 students. Smaller schools will offer fewer programs and have less capacity to serve students with special needs.
2. Options #2: Create neighborhood elementary schools of 300-500 students. This will allow all schools to offer a full-range of programs and more effectively serve students of all abilities and backgrounds.

Survey Results: There is about equal support for maintaining current district policies as for policy changes that would create neighborhood elementary schools of 300-500 and alternative elementary school sites of 300-500 students. Parents, especially elementary parents, tend to prefer current policies for both neighborhood elementary schools and for alternative elementary schools, while elementary staff are about equal in their support for current policy or the 300-500 student school size policy.

Alternative Elementary School Size

1. Option #1: Continue current policies regarding alternative schools enrollment, including using a lottery process that accepts students up to enrollment cap.
2. Option #2: Require that alternative school sites have an enrollment of between 300 and 500 students. The enrollment may be from a single alternative school or multiple alternative schools sharing the same site.

Survey Results: Both options received moderate support, with parents preferring to continue with current enrollment policies for alternative schools while staff generally prefer setting enrollment requirements.

Middle School Size

1. Option #1: continue current policies, with only minor limits, that allow each middle school to accept all students who choose to attend. Some middle schools will be significantly larger and be able to offer a broader range of courses.
2. Option #2: Create middle schools of 400-600 students to help balance programs and courses offered. This may limit number of students allowed to transfer outside their neighborhood.

Survey Results: There is slightly stronger support for middle schools of 400-600 students than for continuing current policy, however, both options received moderate support. Middle school parents support both options about equally, while 4J staff, including middle school staff, prefer the 400-600 student school size.

High School Size

1. Option #1: Continue current policies, with only minor limits, that allow each high school to accept all students who choose to attend subject to capacity limitations. Some high schools will be significantly larger and therefore able to offer broader range of programs and courses.
2. Options #3: Ensure that smaller high schools have comparable academic programs to larger high schools. Smaller schools would receive more money per student than larger schools.
3. Option #3: Balance high school enrollment to between 1200 and 1500. Create four high schools of nearly equal size, with comparable academic programs and similar resources, and limit transfers.

Survey Results: There is slightly stronger support for policy changes that would result in comparable academic programs at all four high schools than for continuing current policy. All three policy options, however, receive moderate support. High school parents are about equal in their support for current policy as for changes that would balance enrollment and/or provide comparable programs. 4J staff, especially high school staff, strongly support an approach of balancing enrollment among high schools.

Managing Enrollment to Improve Diversity

1. Option #1: Continue current enrollment and school choice policies that will result in some schools having an increasing concentration of students from low-income households, and disproportionately higher educational needs. Schools will be economically stratified.
2. Option #2: Adopt attendance boundaries to improve the economic and cultural diversity of district schools.
3. Options #3: Change school boundaries with the goals of ensuring that no school has more than 50% of its students from low-income households.
4. Option #4: Provide transportation for students from lower income households to attend other neighborhood schools and alternative schools.
5. Option #5: Develop unique academic programs (e.g., second language, arts, music, and technology) at schools with high concentration of lower-income students to attract the enrollment of high achieving students. This would require more resources to be shifted to these schools.

Survey Results: There is stronger support for policy changes to balance the diversity of students among schools than to continue current enrollment management policies. Approaches that are most strongly supported are to develop unique academic programs at schools with a high concentration of lower-income students and to provide transportation for students from low-income households to attend schools outside their neighborhood. Parents support these two approaches over other options. Making boundary changes to

better balance cultural and economic diversity among schools has moderate support. 4J staff support boundary change options more strongly than parents. Parents are least supportive of boundary changes that would set a goal of ensuring that no school has more than 50% of its students from lower-income households. Continuing current enrollment management policies has the least support, with 50% in opposition, 37% in support and 13% neutral.

Expanding New Initiatives

1. Option #1: Technology
2. Option #2: Kindergarten
3. Option #3: Pre-kindergarten
4. Option #4: Career academies
5. Option #5: Small learning environments

Survey Results: There is a strong support to increase technology investments in schools and to provide space for all-day kindergarten. Nearly 90% of all respondents support increased investments in technology hardware, with about 50% expressing strong support and only 6% opposed. Providing all-day kindergarten also has strong support. Remodeling and building improvements to expand career academies at high schools and to create smaller learning environments within schools are also supported at a fairly high level. Providing additional space for pre-kindergarten programs within district buildings receives less support than other initiatives, however, it too receives support from slightly more than half of survey respondents.

Staff and Parent Conversations

Following the report of survey results, three listening/conversation sessions were organized to generate further discussion. Participants at each meeting were asked to develop some ideas, actions or strategies to test with the larger group using "clickers." Each table then proposed 1 or 2 strategies that were tested with the larger group using the "clickers." The following ideas had the most support, generating about 70% or more support from the other participants.

Middle and High School staff proposals:

- The district will value and financially support ongoing evaluation of the success of the (Shaping 4J's Future) changes and individual schools will play a key role in this evaluation.
- Develop a quality educational model for each level and support, staff and fund the number of schools the model determines.
- Create four enrollment-balanced high schools, each supported by two middle schools offering comprehensive curriculum and services.
- Develop and fund a core program for all schools that provides a basic minimum standard. Each school's delivery model may vary.
- Establish an optimal level of program and instructional services at each level and every building.

Elementary staff proposals:

- Commit to long-term program equity among regions with comparable choice within each region. Provide caps to maintain high schools at 1500. Fund schools for retention of staff and programs for 2-3 years.
- The district should provide a minimum and maximum number of students for each elementary school and provide a specified level of services for each building. Staffing is based on program rather than enrollment.

- Every school is dedicated to eliminating the achievement gap while maintaining its commitment to innovation and advanced academic programs.
- Provide pre-kindergarten and full day kindergarten at all schools.
- Every building deserves a true core program of instruction including music and the arts.
- We need more responses from lower SES population representation before making decisions

Parent proposals:

- 4J needs to adapt sustainability within its mission/curriculum.
- 4J should work to reduce class size.
- Create greater equality by allocating more resources to those schools with greater challenges such as large class size, higher poverty, high population of ELL and special education students.
- Develop a formal, systematic review process for principals to create/support excellent leadership.
- No longer base school funding allocations on the number of students but instead base on holistic assessment of what is needed to make each individual school excellent.
- Equity in enrichment programs across the district regardless of school size.

Other Surveys

Some have expressed concerns about the survey. Their concerns have ranged from the size and composition of the response, the efficacy of the questions asked, and whether it was biased toward generating a desired, and predetermined, result. After reviewing the survey results, I had the occasion to review a similar kind of survey that was conducted on a national scale and to go back and review the survey conducted as part of the Access and Options process. While the focus was not specifically the same, it was interesting in terms of both the information provided and the structural design, but also the parent and teacher perspectives on some of the key issues queried.

The national survey of U.S. adults was conducted under the auspices of *Education Next* and the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) at Harvard University. The **"***What Americans Think About Their Schools: 2007 Education Next-PEPG Survey***"** was conducted by the polling firm Knowledge Networks between February 16 and March 15, 2007. The main findings are based on a nationally representative stratified sample of 2,000 adults (age 18 years and older). The sample consists of 1,482 non-Hispanic whites, 233 non-Hispanic blacks, and 171 Hispanics. Within the sample, 309 individuals either currently work or previously worked for the public schools. The survey oversampled parents of school-age children, who constitute 811 of the total sample. Because differences in the responses of parents and nonparents were negligible, they did not present the findings for these two subgroups separately. With 2,000 respondents, the margin of error for responses given by the full sample in the Education Next-PEPG survey is roughly 2 percentage points. (See charts in Appendix 2)

In the survey they found that Americans both care about their schools and want them to improve. Americans generally are willing to invest more money in public education and they are reasonably confident that doing so will improve student learning. They are also open to a host of school reforms ranging from high-stakes student accountability to school vouchers and tax credits that would give low-income families greater access to private schools. By sizable margins, they back reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the federal law that mandates school accountability. The public, however, also appears to be selective in its desire for change.

The survey distinguishes also the views of those who have worked for the public schools from those who have not. Except for opinions on school choice issues, differences across ethnic groups are generally smaller than those between public school employees and those who have never been employed by the schools. With regard to school choice, the survey found that despite the controversy, a plurality of the general public supports choice

initiatives. African Americans and Hispanics, in particular, express more support for school choice than do white Americans. And, a clear plurality of the public at large supports revisions to NCLB to increase the number of choice options available to parents whose children attend low-performing schools.

The point is that our Shaping 4J's Future survey in terms of size and response is not substantially different in structure or the nature of the public perceptions of what is important and cared about. More so, is the clear pattern of difference in views that seem to occur between those who work or worked in schools versus those parents or respondents who've not worked in schools, and the difference in minority versus non-minority views regarding public school choice as an option that should be available. (See Appendix for Data from the PEPG survey)

Reflecting Back on Access & Options

The report of the Access & Options Committee a few years ago reiterated many of the concerns initially identified through the Schools of the Future process. The Access & Options Report's recommendations touched upon many of the same issues that we're looking at today.

As part of the Access & Options (A&O) process, we also obtained the opinions and viewpoints of elementary school parents and staff. The district engaged the services of Northwest Survey & Data Services (NSDS) to plan and implement both the parent and staff surveys. Parent surveys were sent to 5668 parents of elementary school children and we received 4123 responses. Respondents mirrored the demographics of the district, with the exception of free and reduced lunch (FRL) program. And while there were some differences among respondent groups, the survey resulted in the following general conclusions with respect to the district's choice program:

- Most parents of elementary students were very satisfied with the school their child attends, the 4J school choice program, and educational issues in general. Many parents wanted to see the educational system improved and supported improvements to the choice program.
- There were subtle differences in opinion among the different ethnic groups and between those parents whose children attended alternative schools and those whose did not. There were also some cases where parents with lower incomes would make different choices.
- There was almost no support for drastic change in the school choice program, although almost all parents would support improvements in and expansion of the program.

A&O Staff Survey: Staff surveys were responded to by 349 respondents with most (82%) working in neighborhood schools and most having worked for the district for five or more years. The staff survey found some differences of opinion between staff at alternative schools and staff at neighborhood schools. The differences were generally in the direction of supporting the type of school where they work and in wanting to see education improved for all children. The survey concluded that independent of where staff works, or what type job they have, there remains relatively weak support for drastic change in the school choice program. Importantly, this was true even among neighborhood schools.

A&O Community Forums**:** As part of the A&O process, we held nine community forums throughout the school district. Some were better attended than others. Generally, the forums were more populated by alternative school parents than they were with neighborhood schools parents. The most support from the forums came for strengthening neighborhood schools and addressing the impacts of concentrated poverty by differentiating resource allocation on the basis of need. Some of the themes that emerged were around the following:

- Need to encourage more diversity and still offer choice.
- Give added stability to schools that have high mobility.

- Provide better information and find ways to encourage different enrollment patterns.
- Need more mechanisms to let parents know about alternative schools.
- Increase information about schools and choices. Educate parents so more people know about choices.
- Consider placement of alternative schools — more central location in each region and more convenient.
- Transportation needs to be addressed so that it is not a barrier to parents who can't afford it.

III. DISCUSSION

In this section, I review some of the key principles and concepts addressed by the Think Tank that were vetted through the survey and public process and look at them through the lenses of excellence, equity and choice, and in consideration of all the feedback and information gleaned from the entire process, including my additional research and review.

Focusing on Core Values of Excellence, Equity and Choice

Excellence, equity and choice are the core values that I believe encompass the board's goals and the sentiments expressed by staff, parents and community. These core values should guide our decisions for the future.

> Excellence exists when all students are achieving at high levels. Excellence is about increasing achievement for all students and closing the achievement gap. Excellent schools meet the diverse needs of all students and offer a multi-cultural and inclusive learning environment.
>
> Equity means providing equal opportunity and access to all students to achieve at high levels. Equity may require an unequal distribution of resources and services in recognition of and addressing the diversity of student needs.
>
> School choice is about all students having equal access to educational options that are appropriate to their needs and interests and involves, in concept, the educational purposes of promoting innovation and academic achievement. Through choice all children would have equal opportunity to achieve and grow. At the same time, school choice should support excellence and equity, promote diversity within our schools, and support district efforts to close the achievement gap. School choice should not result in a system of highly segregated schools or negatively impact the education of lower income students.

The Challenges of Declining Enrollment and Diverse Learning Needs

Declining enrollment challenges schools. Fewer students mean that a school also has fewer teachers and staff, and therefore is not able to provide the same instructional programs and services as a larger school. To adjust for declining enrollment, the district has:

- Closed and consolidated several elementary schools, including neighborhood schools and alternative schools, and now has five fewer elementary school sites than in 2001
- Converted one middle school into a small K-8 school, serving students from kindergarten through grade 8
- Limited some transfers to schools with larger enrollments

With fewer school-aged children than in the past, student enrollment has been declining since the 1970s. In addition, today's students have far more diverse learning needs. A greater proportion of our students now qualify

for special education services or English Language Learner instruction. And, we expect that more students will need these services in the future.

While there are advantages to small learning communities, if a school becomes too small, it is more difficult to offer classes and programs that interest and serve a wide range of students. We think our schools need to deliver a rigorous and challenging academic experience for all students, from those who need intensive instruction or special services to those who need advanced learning opportunities.

Schools that are close to the same size are more likely to provide the children who attend them with similar educational opportunities. According to a recent publication, *Best Practices: Enhancing School Environment – John Hopkins Univ. 2005,* research shows that schools can be a stabilizing force for young people, both emotionally and academically, particularly when they are experiencing transition or crisis. A national survey revealed that, in comparison with their more affluent peers, low-income students felt a more pronounced lack of community and a weaker connection with their school. School environment and school connectedness can be the determining factors in a young person's educational experience. They concluded that small schools create more opportunities for student-student and student-teacher interaction through small learning communities, as lower student-teacher ratios promote interaction.

Choice/Open Enrollment

In Eugene, students can attend their neighborhood school or apply to attend another school in the district. The district's choice and open enrollment policies allow parents to enroll their children in any 4J school if it has room, or get in the lottery to compete for slots in alternative schools. With declining enrollment, one school's growth can negatively impact other schools, because transfers result in some schools losing enrollment and growing smaller. The school choice and open enrollment policies impact how many students attend a school. They also result in a wide range of school sizes within the district.

Schools also vary in size because of the demographics of their neighborhoods, the size of their buildings, and number of transfers in and out of each school. Adams Elementary is an example of a school whose overall level of stratification (at 56% FRL) shows a significant difference when looked at from a pre- and post-choice/open enrollment standpoint. Adams loses the largest percentage of its neighborhood population to choice/open enrollment of any school in the district — 72% (353 out of 496) of its neighborhood population transfers to other district schools (including charter schools). The largest recipient of the choice/open enrollment out of Adams is Hillside (40), with Charlemagne (35), Edison (34), Ridgeline (33), Crest Drive (31) and Village School (27) all taking the equivalent of more than one classroom each out of the school. While data on the socioeconomic makeup of students transferring out of a school are not readily available, since Adams's FRL student population is 55.5% versus the 32% it would be without the effects of choice, it is fair to say that transfers out of Adams and into other schools with lower SES consists primarily of middle-class students.

Open enrollment, alternative/focus schools and charter schools are strategies used to expand public school choice in many school districts. Some school districts have used them to try to achieve both racial and socioeconomic integration. Open enrollment policies provide a mechanism for parents to seek an alternative public school to their residentially zoned neighborhood school. Intra-district transfers like those in Portland and Eugene provide additional mechanisms for parents seeking alternatives to their neighborhood schools.

Poverty, Race and Student Achievement

Among the many calls for education reform we hear is the story about how poorly our American public school students perform when compared to students from the other industrialized nations of the world. The story goes something like this: Americans are losing their competitive advantage because our public schools are doing such a poor job as evidenced by our mediocre or worse showing on international measurements. Studies like the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment are cited as clear evidence that our students are not holding their own when compared to countries like Korea, China and some of the Scandinavian countries. It is these myths that perpetuate not only the NCLB agenda but also contribute to the perception, particularly among middle-class parents, that most public schools are failing and that it's important to be able to choose the "right" school for your child.

David C. Berliner in a 2005 study, *Our Impoverished View of Educational Reform*, suggests that the most powerful policy for improving our nation's school achievement may be a reduction in family and youth poverty. Berliner has studied the international studies such as TIMSS and PISA, and he comes away with a little different take on how America's students do compared to those from other nations when factoring in poverty. In looking at the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) he concludes that:

- *Data on mathematics and science scores for American 4th and 8th grade youth when disaggregated by degree of poverty correlate perfectly with the percent of poor students who attend a school. Schools with wealthier students had the highest average scores and the schools with the poorest students had the students who scored the lowest.*

- *The average scores for the schools with less than 50 percent of their students in poverty exceeded the US average score, while the average scores for the schools with greater than 50 percent FRL fell below the US average score.*

In general, Berliner's data informs us that our poor students are not competitive internationally while our middle class and wealthy public school children are doing very well in comparison to the pool of countries that made up TIMSS 2003. (See Berliner, Appendix 4)

Socioeconomic Stratification

The demographics in Eugene reflect trends throughout Oregon and the nation. 4J students come from a wider array of cultures, family experiences and economic circumstances than ever before. More 4J students now come from lower-income families. Currently about one-third of 4J students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and close to a quarter of our students are ethnic or racial minorities.

One of the important issues to address in shaping 4J's future is how the district will respond to the growing diversity of our student population, particularly the increase in students from lower-income families. More of our schools are now serving large populations of disadvantaged students. Some key questions are:

- What strategies are most likely to help schools increase achievement for lower income students and close the achievement gap?
- Should the district adopt strategies to create greater economic balance among our schools? What are the potential consequences of such strategies?
- Is school choice creating greater economic stratification within our district?
- How should the district support students from families with limited resources in accessing the educational programs and opportunities provided within the district?

Some research suggests that lower-income students do better in schools with a majority of middle-class students. There appears to be an *academic tipping point*, according to research by the Piton Foundation, that found *when more than 50 percent of students at a school qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, it becomes more difficult for low-income students to excel*. Meanwhile, economic school segregation is increasing. According to research conducted by David Rusk for the Century Foundation, economic school segregation increased in the 1990s in 55 of the largest 100 metropolitan areas. These trends are consistent with former Harvard professor Gary Orfield's research for the Civil Rights Project that finds *American schools are more segregated by race and class today than they were before the Brown decision*. With the most recent Supreme Court decision, limiting school integration efforts in Seattle and Louisville, even more districts will see neighborhood schools reflect the economic and racial segregation of their communities. A number of districts, like those identified in the case studies, are taking steps to try to balance the economic mix of students within each school as a way to increase student achievement. Other examples are Raleigh, North Carolina; LaCrosse, WI; San Francisco, CA; and, Cambridge, MA.

These districts also are experiencing increases in middle-class flight, as more economically able families of all races opt for private and parochial schools, or schools in the suburbs. Nora Carr in "Courting the Middle Class" reports that an increasing number of middle-class families worry that public education is so focused on "teaching to the test" and meeting the needs of at-risk learners that their children will be left behind. She reports that with reading, writing, and mathematics dominating state testing programs and district curricular, parents are concerned that art, music, foreign languages, social studies, and other college prep subjects are getting short shrift. She expresses concern that school leaders inadvertently fuel middle-class parents' fears that their children's needs are somehow being sacrificed, yet she says most polls such as Public Agenda show they'd rather fix public schools than abandon them. (Carr, 2006)

The district is already using a number of strategies to increase student achievement and improve economic balance among schools, such as:

- Providing additional resources to neighborhood schools with the highest percentage of students living in poverty in order to create excellent learning environments that will attract a wide variety of students.
- Increasing outreach to parents so that more low-income families are aware of school choice opportunities.

District Case Studies

Other districts across the country have struggled with these very same issues. For me, it is instructive to consider the findings of some of those districts and to look at the practices and polices they initiated to address many of the same issues we face. There are a number of districts that were reviewed, but a handful seemed particularly worthwhile because of their similarities or proximity to Eugene. These case studies can yield valuable information about what seemed to work and not work, what were important drivers in their deliberations, and what they've learned as a result. Below I recite several case studies that may be particularly useful and informative in thinking about some of the next steps for Eugene. (More complete analysis can be found in Appendix 3)

Seattle, Washington

In the late 1960s, the Seattle Public Schools enrolled nearly 100,000 students. Today enrollment is stabilized at approximately 46,000, yet the school district expends a great deal of its resources maintaining nearly the same physical capacity that it has had since 1960. Current and projected enrollments indicate a need to restructure to create a stronger, smaller district which better serves the needs of all students. Seattle undertook its process to determine how best to align its facilities and programs to ensure educational excellence. In 2006, the district created a Community Advisory Committee for Investing in Educational Excellence to review the issues and provide recommendations. School consolidation is a strategy being considered to support this goal. They determined that although the research is mixed, in many cases low class size has dramatically impacted future academic achievement, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They recommended that the district consider reducing student-teacher ratios for core subjects in the early grades and for struggling students to 20:1 in grades K-3 and 15:1 for very low-income and/or academically challenged K-3 classrooms.
Alternative schools have existed and evolved over the past 45 years in Seattle, and like in Eugene they have a dedicated constituency within the community. Among their choice or magnet-type alternative programs, most are at capacity and show no significantly higher operating costs per student than their regular schools. The committee recommended that alternative programs should be considered exactly that — *programs* — as opposed to places or buildings. As such, there can be more flexibility to preserve these strong programs while bringing their operation into alignment with board values and goals. They also recommended that Seattle pilot and implement K-8 models at alternative schools where appropriate, and that they explore co-location strategies with compatible learning programs or non-district programs.

Boulder, Colorado

Concerned that socioeconomic stratification in the Boulder Valley School District was increasing, the School Board chartered the Stratification Task Force. The charge to the Task Force was to study the patterns and causes of stratification, including any unintended consequences of open enrollment, and recommend strategies to reduce and reverse stratification.

The Stratification Task Force concluded there was evidence that socioeconomic stratification is increasing, there is a very high correlation (over 95%) between socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and ELL status, (i.e. the low SES students also tended to be the Latino and ELL students), and that patterns of stratification on each of these dimensions overlapped quite closely with stratification on the others. They concluded that the present situation of stratification in Boulder has created systematic and persistent inequities among district schools. Their analysis suggested that stratification is the result of the interplay of several main causes:

- *Housing Patterns and Attendance Area Boundaries: Underlying patterns of housing stratification combined with the way attendance boundaries are defined can create stratified schools regardless of the impact of other causal factors.*
- *Unintended Consequences of Open Enrollment: Generally, it is the higher–SES (and white) students that are choosing to utilize open enrollment, and they appear to be leaving lower-SES (and higher minority) schools for those higher-SES schools. Proximity to certain focus (alternative) schools and charter opportunities also has a strong impact on how a school's demographics will be affected by choice/open enrollment, they concluded*
- *Lack of Accurate Information on School Quality: parents need better information than aggregate test scores and a school's informal reputation in order to assess school quality.*

The task force recommended the district implement a weighted funding formula for all students from low-income families, based on an analysis of educational, financial, and stratification impacts such a formula would have. Additional funds would follow FRL students with respect to FTE allocations, without reducing Title I funds. Allocations would be based on a sliding scale based on the average percentage of FRL students for the district—schools with lower-than-average proportion of such students would receive less funding for FTE, down to a specified minimum below-average funding level (a funding floor). Schools with higher percentages of such students would receive proportionately more funding up to a maximum above-average funding level (a funding ceiling). They reasoned that a weighted funding formula would provide a financial incentive for schools to attract and retain low SES students, and give additional support to schools with disproportionately needy student populations. Without this incentive, they felt it is unlikely that high SES schools would focus much attention on attracting low-SES students. Without the additional support, it was unlikely that low-SES schools would be able to attract high-SES families.

Other strategies suggested by Boulder's Stratification Task Force included:

- *Establish a desired range of diversity within all schools using federal guidelines for FRL as the benchmark for diversity level. Under such an approach, if the FRL student population of an individual school were outside a range of plus/minus a specified percentage of district average, then preferences for admission would be adjusted to give low-SES greater weight until the FRL percentage reached the acceptable range.*
- *Consider capping enrollment at selected schools that are experiencing high inbound open enrollment and that presently use portable classrooms to expand capacity beyond their building's actual program capacity.*

<u>Madison, Wisconsin</u>

The Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) has had a long history of trying to address the achievement gap and in promoting equity in access to schools and programs of the district. They developed the following definition of equity for the Madison Metropolitan School District:

- *Equity assures full access to opportunities for each MMSD student to achieve educational excellence and social responsibility.*

The following guiding principles were adopted and committed to by the Madison board, as a part of its strategic plan:

- Schools will be excellent only when students of all demographic groups are achieving at high levels.
- Achieving equity often requires an unequal distribution of resources and services.
- The district will eliminate gaps in access and achievement by recognizing and addressing historic and contemporary inequalities in the district, the community and society.

Like Eugene, the Madison district is divided into four high school attendance regions. The student enrollment is a little more than 25,000 students. As with Eugene, the MMSD is projecting relatively stable enrollment at the elementary level, but expects to decline by about 800 students at the high school level by 2010-11. The district's range of free and reduced lunch percentages in schools ranges from 16% to 100%. Enrollment and SES varies between regions, with the East High School Attendance area experiencing declining enrollment and excess capacity and the West High School attendance area experiencing growth and space issues.

The elementary school size in the East Madison attendance area ranges from 219 to 319 students, whereas it ranges from 299 to 678 students in the West region. The East region FRL ranges from 24% to 73% and it has a high percentage of English Language Learners, while the West region FRL ranges from 21% to 55% with fewer ELL students. The middle school size ranges from 355 to 538 students in the East region (they have three middle schools in the region) and 230 to 700 students in the West region (five of their total eleven middle schools in the district are below 400 students, while middle school capacities range from 306 to 936). For high schools, the enrollment range is from 1748 at La Follette to 2197 at Memorial, while capacity ranges from 2173 to 2584. Choice is pretty much limited to alternative schools at the secondary level except for a Spanish language magnet at elementary level. They also provide an ESL Center in the East attendance area.

In Madison, they determined that the East attendance area, while having some of the smallest-capacity schools in the district also had the highest concentrations of children in poverty. They concluded, however, that smaller schools and class sizes in the East area were contributing to the decrease in the achievement gap among students and across schools in the region, and therefore closing the schools should not be considered.

Portland, Oregon

A recent audit reported that Portland's schools have become, over time, more segregated than their neighborhoods. The school district's "school choice" policy, whose roots stretch back to Portland's 1980 school "desegregation" plan was a large part of the problem, they concluded. Until 1980, Portland had employed what amounted to mandatory busing to improve the racial balance of its schools. According to Ron Herndon, the lack of good schools in black neighborhoods and the desegregation policies put the burden of integration on black students and their families, resulted in the scattering of black students to schools across the city. The voluntary plan to desegregate Portland's schools ended forced busing, infused the "black" schools with extra money and teachers, created additional "magnet" schools in black neighborhoods and let black and white students transfer out of their neighborhoods to different schools—if they wanted to. Portland's plan allowed all students, regardless of race, to attend their neighborhood school or go elsewhere. The idea was to boost the quality of the black schools (to make those schools better and to attract white students) and give black students the choice to move voluntarily to white schools. Out of this blender of options, equality was expected to flow. A look at the numbers today led to the following conclusion: "Despite tens of millions of dollars spent on programs to support the policies, voluntary desegregation and school choice have heightened neighborhood school segregation by race and class."

- *This pattern is no more evident than at Jefferson High School. In 1990, one-third of the students at Jefferson High School were white. By 2006, it was less than 13 percent. Both white and black families have abandoned Jefferson for other schools, sending overall enrollment at Jefferson into a tailspin. But the gap between the number of white and black students has doubled in just 10 years. Today, young white families who have moved to gentrifying neighborhoods in northeast Portland have exercised school choice to send their children to schools outside their neighborhoods. Meanwhile more black, and poor, parents who have stayed in those neighborhoods have stayed in their neighborhood schools. Call it school choice or white flight, the bottom line is that the shift has drained some schools of students—and with those students, money, other resources and, some would say, the schools' chance for recovery. (The Jefferson High School cluster, including elementary- and middle-school programs, lost about $15 million in the 2006-07 school year because children who lived in the neighborhood decided to attend schools far from their home.) On the other hand, others have said that school choice plays a fundamental role in keeping Portland Public Schools from following the path of other urban districts such as Boston, which has lost many of its middle-class parents to the suburbs and private schools.* (Oregonian 2007)

The audit of Portland's school choice policy revealed students who transferred from "failing" schools did not show improved academic performance at their new schools. The district's analysis of standardized test scores also indicates that students who transfer from smaller to larger schools might make slightly less progress on standardized tests than those who remain at their smaller neighborhood schools.

Corvallis, Oregon

Corvallis recently studied its school boundaries, enrollment and enrollment history to consider boundary change adjustments that would allow for some students to attend from within a revised boundary area and the remainder through open enrollment transfer requests. Like Eugene, the Corvallis School District provides for transfers, which allow students to attend schools outside their attendance boundary if there is space available. About 31% of students in Corvallis transfer to schools outside their attendance area. An important issue in Corvallis is how to provide an adequate attendance area for each school to assure that there will be enough students in each boundary area to support a program at that neighborhood school. Another key issue is the shifting community demographics that are placing more families with elementary school aged children in neighborhoods in the north and south ends of the Corvallis community.

Earlier reviews in Corvallis found that the larger number of students attending Linus Pauling Middle School and Corvallis High School were due to approved transfers, not boundary inequities. They determined that changes to the future enrollment at secondary schools could therefore be managed through the transfer policy process rather than through a boundary change.

IV. PROPOSED GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

After considering the research, case studies, district data and input from parents, staff and community, I am presenting a set of proposed principles and goals to guide development of a more specific recommendation. I look forward to discussing these in more detail with the board at the January 16 meeting and at the board work session on January 30. Based upon that input, I may choose to revise or expand on these proposed principles and goals.

The next step in the process will then be to develop a specific set of recommendations with a timeline for implementation. This superintendent's recommendation will be presented at the February 13 board meeting, with a public hearing scheduled on February 20.

My recommendation will likely include school consolidations, program relocations, alternative school relocations, and changes in policies or practices that are in keeping with the following proposed principles and goals.

Goals and Principles

These goals and principles should be considered together as a whole. None should be considered independently or in isolation of the others. Together they will guide the direction of my recommendations for future actions grounded in our core values of excellence, equity and choice.

Goals:

1. To ensure that elementary buildings have sufficient resources to offer high-quality core programs, the targeted elementary school size should range from 300 to 450 students.
2. To ensure that middle schools have sufficient resources and program offerings to provide high-quality core programs, the targeted middle school size should range from 400 to 600 students.
3. To ensure that high schools have sufficient resources and program offerings to provide high-quality core programs, high school campus size should range from 1200 to 1500 students.
4. Some smaller neighborhood schools and alternative schools may be determined to be a viable option to:
    - provide for the diverse needs and interests of students, particularly low income and English language learners,
    - reflect district approved enrollment caps for alternative schools,
    - meet enrollment capacity and facility needs, or
    - serve demographically diverse neighborhoods.
5. The district will be a district of small and medium-sized elementary and middle schools, with four moderately-sized high schools and with highest priority in terms of resources, programs, and staff support directed to neighborhood schools.
6. Ensure that school choice and open enrollment do not leave neighborhood schools with limited resources or diminish ongoing efforts to integrate schools economically, racially or culturally.
7. Relocate elementary alternative schools to standalone sites or sites with another alternative school.

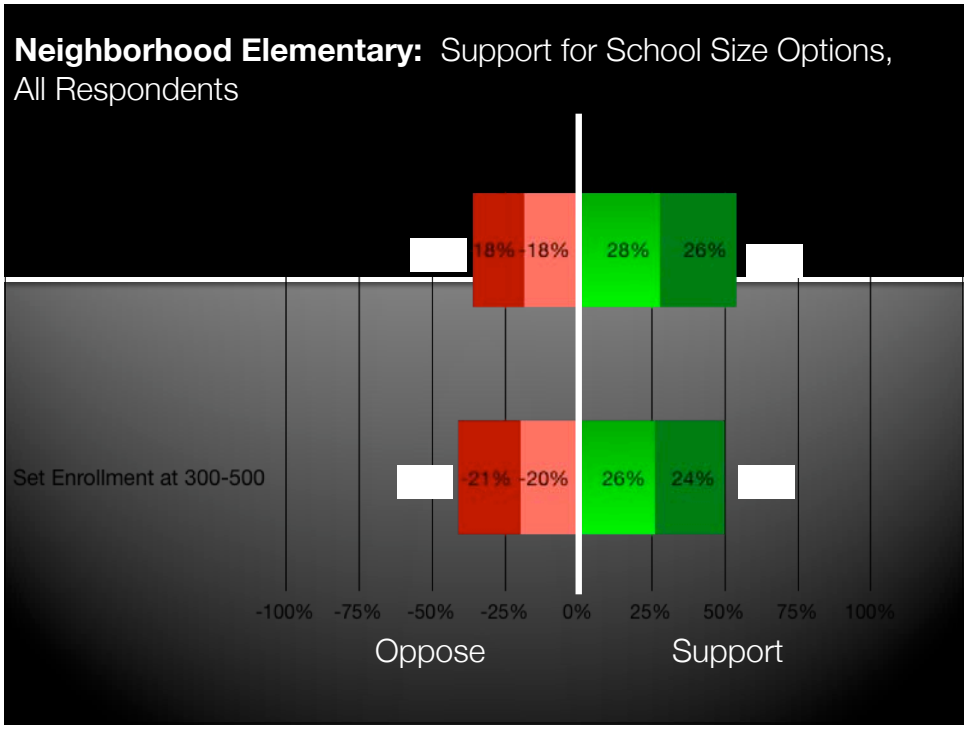
8. Achieve greater special education service, program and enrollment balance across the district.
9. When planning for the future, provide space for all-day kindergarten.

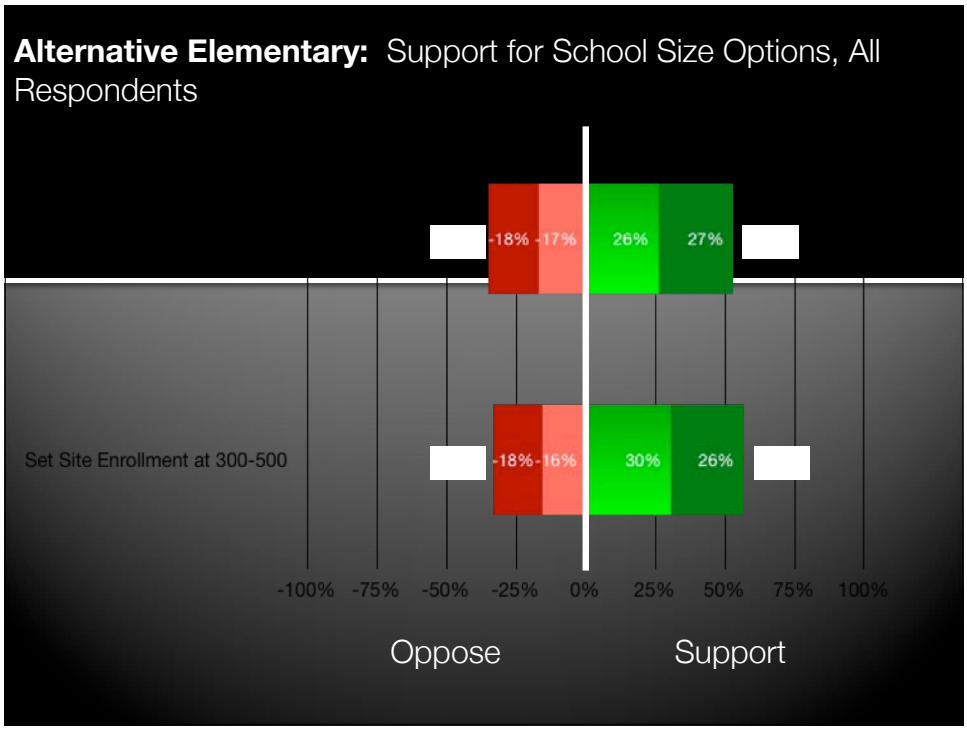
Principles:

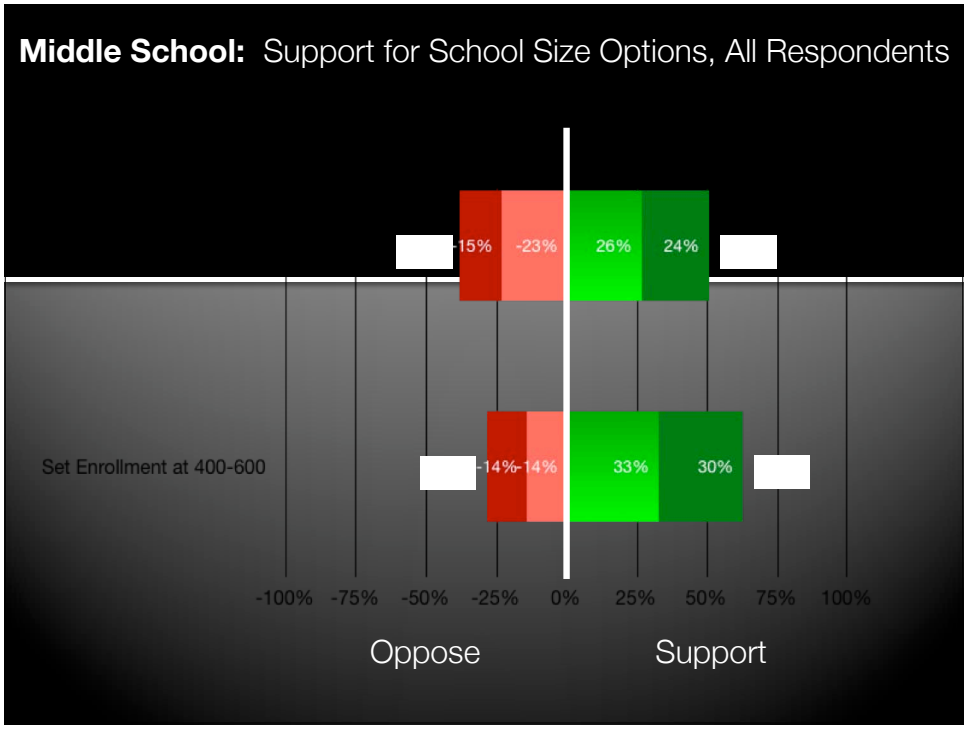
- "*What is best for students*" will be the paradigm through which all options are considered.
- Equity and equality, though closely related, are not the same. Achieving equity will require an unequal distribution of resources and services. Equity involves opportunity, access, elimination of barriers, distribution of resources based on student needs, socioeconomic factors, availability of funds for academic and other programs and more.
- Strategies designed to increase equity should not negatively impact disadvantaged students.
- Neighborhood schools should have the resources to provide a strong, well-rounded program that includes art, music, physical education and use of technology.
- When small neighborhood and alternative schools are determined to be viable options, there will be some tradeoffs. Some program and service amenities that would otherwise be available in larger neighborhood schools may not be available.
- Strategies and decisions should avoid increasing, and instead have the goal of decreasing, the range between highs and lows of student demographics among schools.
- The student population of alternative schools should reflect the diversity of students in the region. Alternative school student demographics should be within a reasonable range of the region average for each demographic group.
- Communities benefit from having neighborhood schools where families and children are more likely to connect with one another at school and as a result are more likely to be connected to their neighbors and neighborhoods. The neighborhood school is a critical resource in more economically and socially diverse communities.
- Neighborhood schools should be geographically dispersed, with reasonable walk/bike distances and commute times available to students and families.
- Boundary changes should be adopted only as necessary to address the goals. Efforts will be made to keep geographically and historically defined neighborhoods together and to consider the proximity of students to school when redrawing boundaries, closing or consolidating schools.
- Efforts to balance enrollment at secondary schools should be managed through the transfer policy process whenever possible, rather than through boundary changes.
- Environmental sustainability should be taken into consideration when developing strategies and initiatives related to school buildings, service delivery and transportation, including parent and student provided transportation.

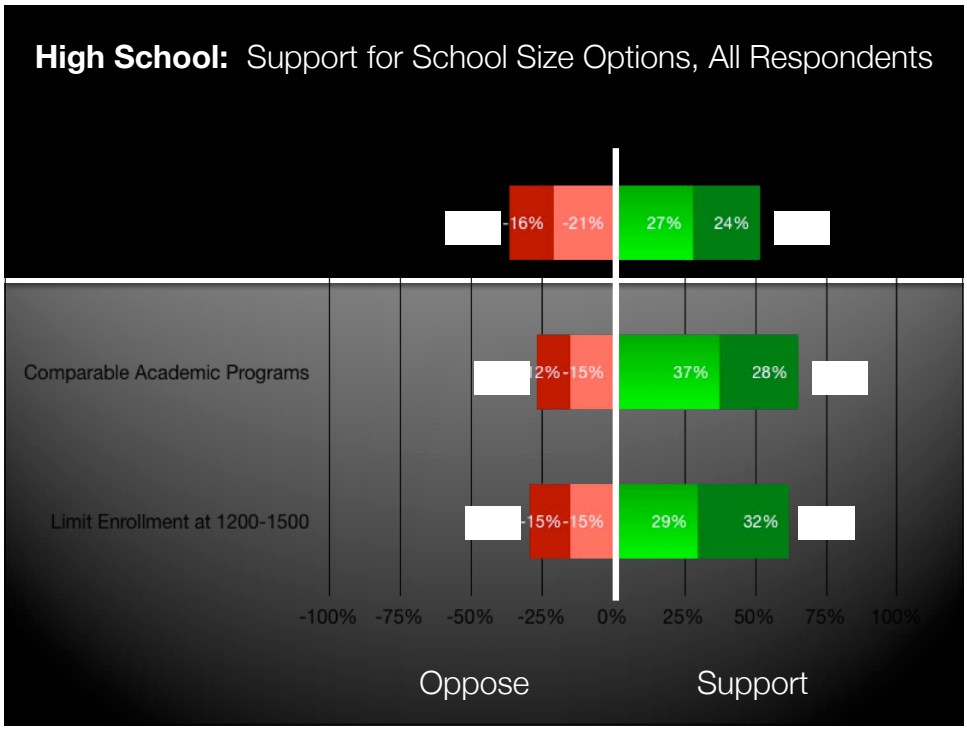
Final Thoughts

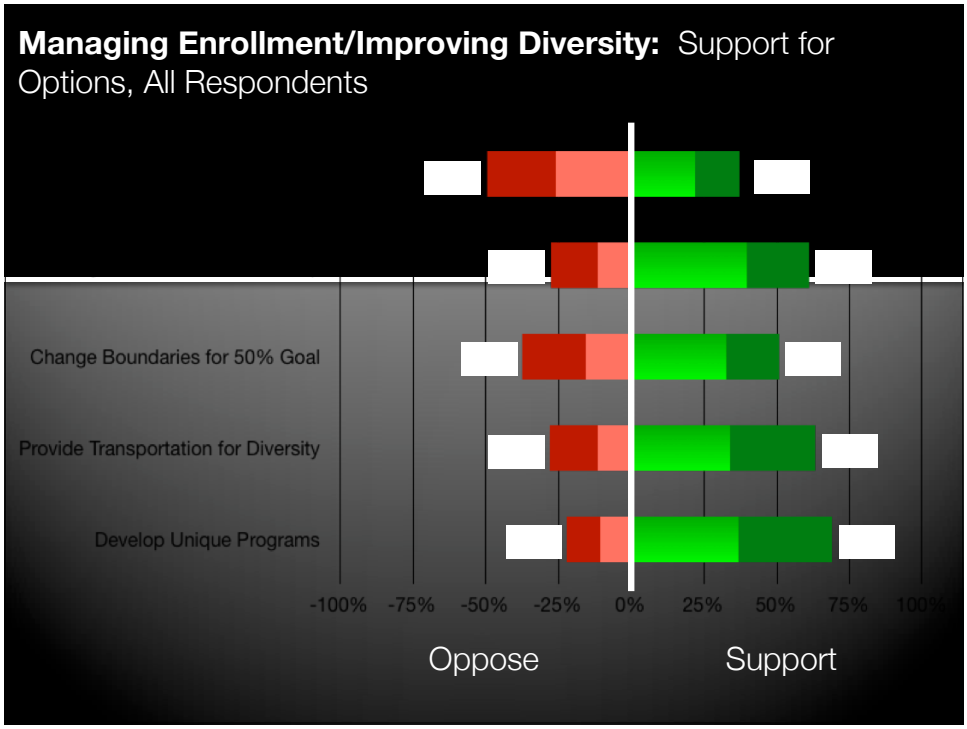
In developing this report I tried to remain aware that whatever final recommendations are developed will impact children and their families. As we've gone through the Shaping 4J's Future process, we've spent considerable time and resources on developing and reviewing the data and the numbers related to the many issues and challenges we face, but we must always try to remember that behind each dot on a map or each number or statistic from the research or literature, there are real people with very real needs and interests. As we move forward with our very difficult decisions it will be important that we continue to keep that in mind. What I do know is that everyone sees these issues through their own lenses, and that with all the differing viewpoints that exist, it will be very difficult to craft strategies that are acceptable to or even make sense to everyone. My only hope is that in the end we can truly say we tried to do what's best for students.

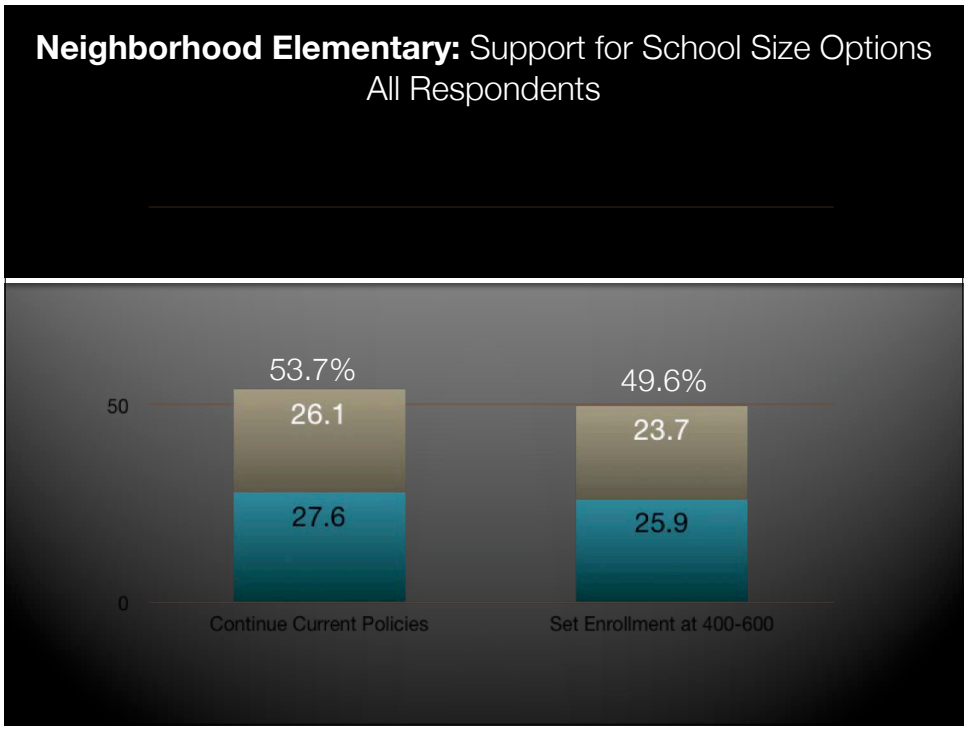

Neighborhood Elementary: Support for School Size Options, All Respondents
18%
18%
28%
26%
Set Enrollment at 300-500
21%
20%
26%
24%
-100%
-75%
-50%
-25%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
Oppose
Support

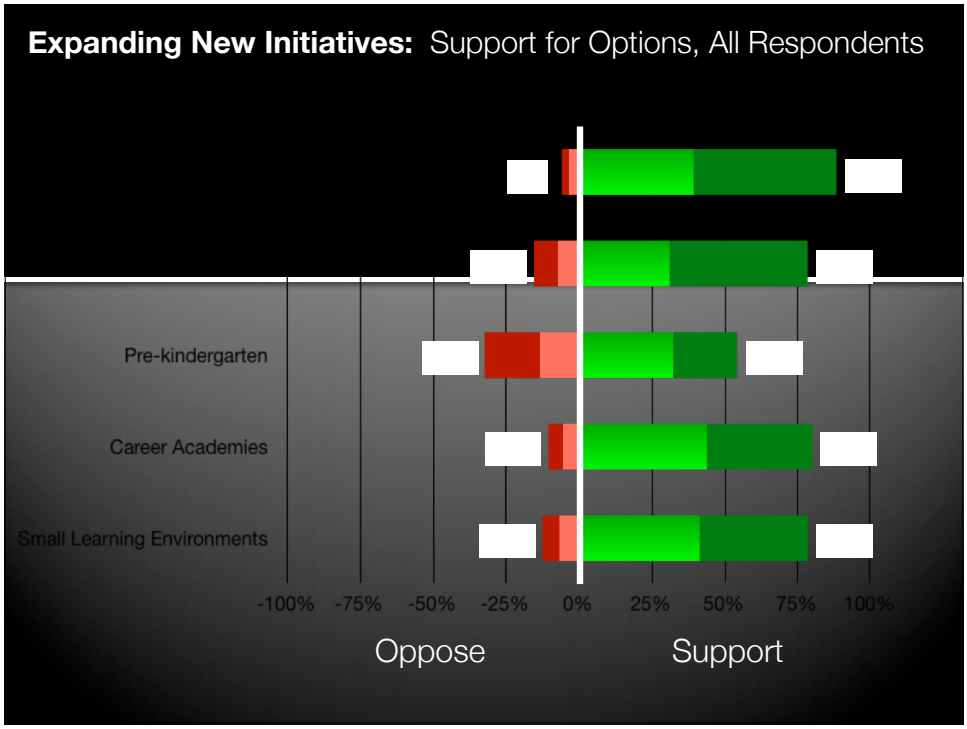

Alternative Elementary: Support for School Size Options, All Respondents
18%
17%
26%
27%
Set Site Enrollment at 300-500
18%
16%
30%
26%
-100%
-75%
-50%
-25%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
Oppose
Support


Middle School: Support for School Size Options, All Respondents
-15%
-23%
26%
24%
Set Enrollment at 400-600
-14%
-14%
33%
30%
-100%
-75%
-50%
-25%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
Oppose
Support

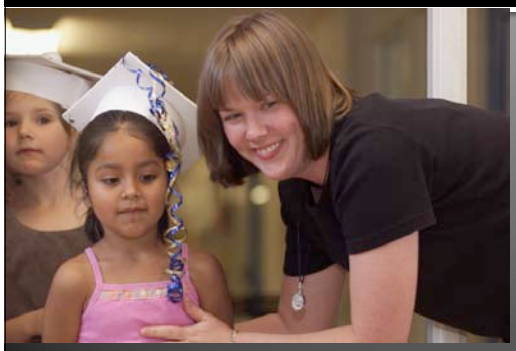

High School: Support for School Size Options, All Respondents
-16%
-21%
27%
24%
Comparable Academic Programs
-12%
-15%
37%
28%
Limit Enrollment at 1200-1500
-15%
-15%
29%
32%
-100%
-75%
-50%
-25%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
Oppose
Support


Managing Enrollment/Improving Diversity: Support for Options, All Respondents
Change Boundaries for 50% Goal
Provide Transportation for Diversity
Develop Unique Programs
-100% -75% -50% -25% 0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
Oppose
Support


Neighborhood Elementary: Support for School Size Options All Respondents
53.7%
26.1
27.6
49.6%
23.7
25.9
50
0
Continue Current Policies
Set Enrollment at 400-600


Expanding New Initiatives: Support for Options, All Respondents
Pre-kindergarten
Career Academies
Small Learning Environments
-100%
-75%
-50%
-25%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
Oppose
Support

PEPG Survey

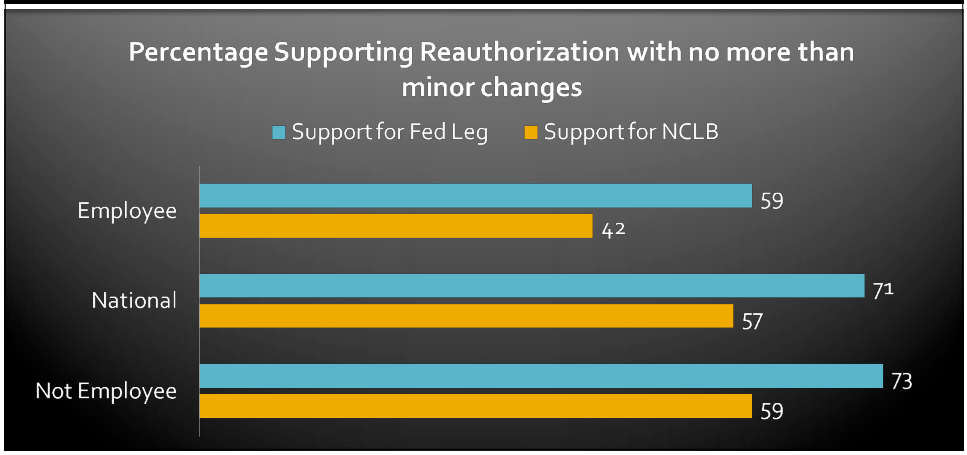


Knowledge Now & Harvard University

PEPG Survey

NCLB

Fifty -seven percent of American adults support the renewal of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) with only minor changes, but only 42 percent of current or former public school employees do. Support for reauthorization is markedly higher when the law is described as federal legislation.



PEPG Survey

No Child Left Behind.

1a. As you may know, the No Child Left Behind Act requires states to set standards in math and reading and to test students each year to determine whether the standards are being met. This year, Congress is deciding whether to renew the NCLB. What do you think Congress should do?
Should they…

	National	Not Employee	Employee	White	AfrAm	Hisp
Renew NCLB as is	31%	33%	20%	28%	43%	42%
Renew with Minimal Change	26	26	22	29	19	18
Renew with Major Changes	25	23	32	23	31	23
Not Renew at all	18	17	17	20	6	17

PEPG Survey

Student Accountability.

3. In some states, students in certain grades must pass an exam before they are eligible to move on to the next grade. Do you support or oppose the requirement?

	National	Not Employee	Employee	White	AfrAm	Hisp
Completely support	52%	52%	53%	54%	49%	43%
Somewhat support	29	30	26	28	33	36
Neither support nor oppose	9	9	7	9	5	9
Somewhat oppose	6	6	9	6	8	5

PEPG Survey

School Choice Under NCLB.

14. 1 Students attending a public school that fails to meet state-determined standards for two years in a row currently have the option of using government funds to attend another public school in their district , provided that school meets state-determined standards for student learning. Do you support or oppose these students to **attend public schools in another district?**

	National	Not Employee	Employee	White	AfrAm	Hisp
Completely support	31%	31%	35%	30%	32%	33%
Somewhat support	29	29	26	28	35	30
Neither support nor oppose	26	27	16	27	20	23
Somewhat oppose	8	7	13	8	7	10

PEPG Survey

School Choice Under NCLB.

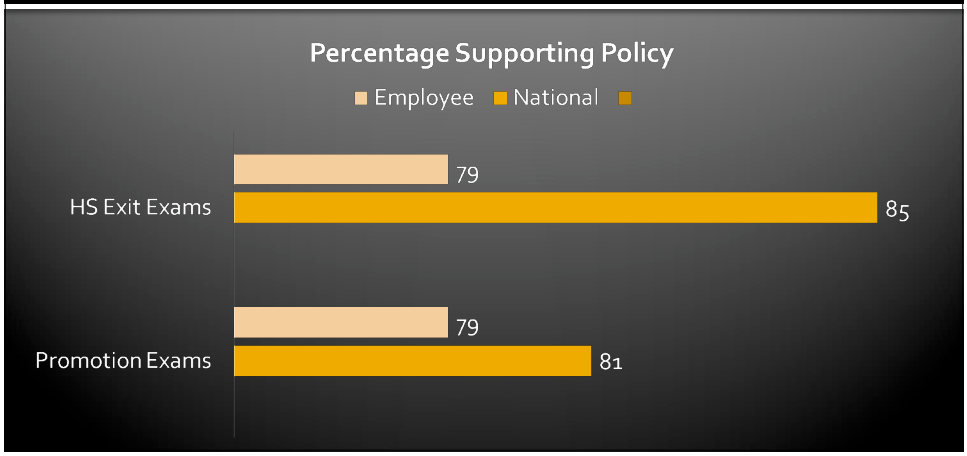
14. 2 Students attending a public school that fails to meet state-determined standards for two years in a row currently have the option of using government funds to attend another public school in their district , provided that school meets state-determined standards for student learning. Do you support or oppose these students to **attend a private school?**

	National	Not Employee	Employee	White	AfrAm	Hisp
Completely support	22%	22%	25%	22%	23%	24%
Somewhat support	25	25	26	24	29	30
Neither support nor oppose	29	31	20	29	31	30
Somewhat oppose	10	10	11	11	9	7

PEPG Survey

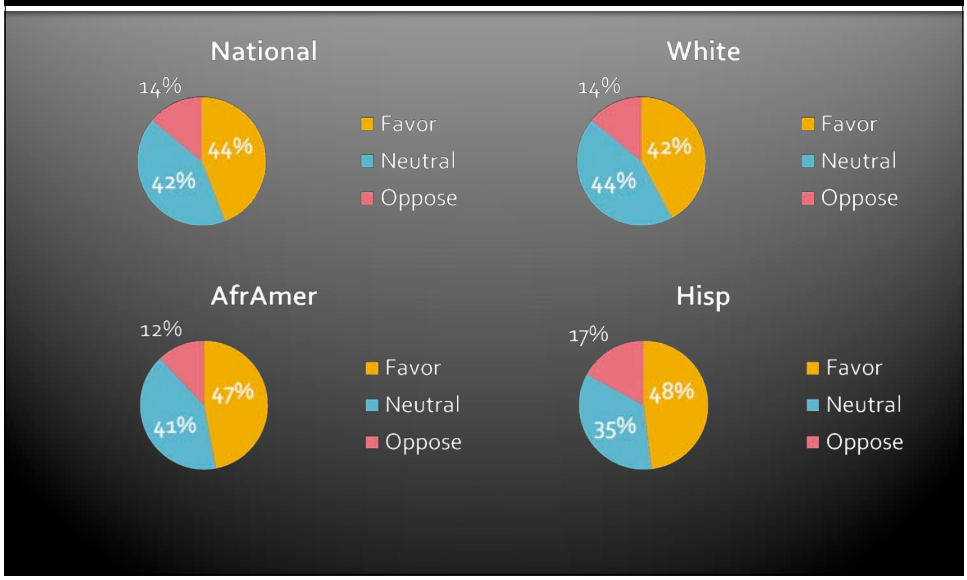
High Stakes Testing

Both the public at large and public school employees support student accountability measures ending social promotion and establishing high school graduation exams.



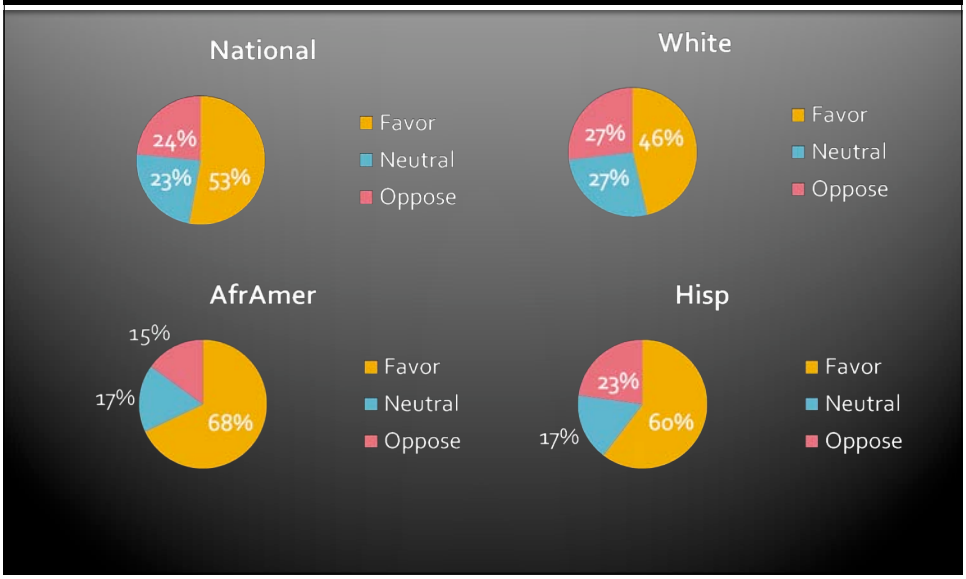
PEPG Survey – Charter Schools

Few Americans have strong opinions about charter schools. Only a small minority of Americans oppose them, but nearly half take no stance at all.



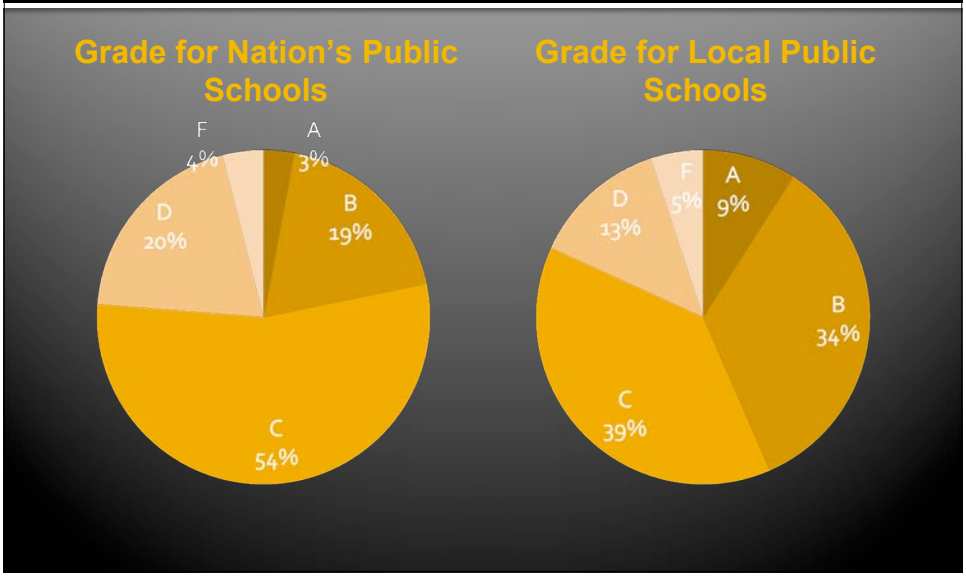
PEPG Survey – School Vouchers

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL VOUCHERS IS STRONGEST AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS AND HISPANICS. YET ONLY A LITTLE MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF ALL AMERICANS OPPOSE ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL REFORM PROPOSALS.



Grading America's Public Schools

ONLY 22 PERCENT OF THOSE SURVEYED GAVE AMERICAN SCHOOLS AN A OR B, BUT 43% GAVE ONE OF THOSE GRADES TO SCHOOLS IN THEIR COMMUNITY



District Case Studies

Seattle, Washington

In the late 1960's, the Seattle Public Schools enrolled nearly 100,000 students. Today enrollment is stabilized at approximately 46,000, yet the school district expends a great deal of its resources maintaining nearly the same physical capacity that it has had since 1960. Current and projected enrollments indicate a need to restructure to create a stronger, smaller district which better serves the needs of all students. Seattle undertook its process to determine how best to align its facilities and programs to ensure educational excellence. School consolidation is a strategy being considered to support this goal.

Continuing to subsidize a larger number of elementary schools than is actually needed has created inequities in the Seattle district between schools. They believe that consolidation of resources will help ensure that every elementary and alternative school has sufficient resources to offer comparable programs. The driving force behind their process is the urgent need to redirect resources to improve academics and create quality schools and programs in every neighborhood.

In 2006, the district created a Community Advisory Committee for Investing in Educational Excellence to review the issues and provide recommendations. They determined that it will take resourcefulness to increase investment in academic outcomes and a strategy driven by student achievement goals and aimed at improved outcomes for all. The committee determined this needed to include an honest assessment of demographic realities and opportunities for improved operational and program efficiencies across the board. They recommended a budgeting process that would require programs to be justified relative to the District's core mission and goals, and from the ground up (as opposed to merely using prior funding levels with an inflation factor as the basis for further adjustments to more effectively ensure that academic priorities drive spending). Additionally, they recommended modifications that will establish a process for comparing the merits of new programs with existing programs and for assessing the long-term financial consequences of policy and program decisions. Included in their recommendations were the following:

- The existing Weighted Student Formula should be carefully evaluated to determine if it is indeed meeting its strategic objectives and is benchmarked against other districts to determine where opportunities exist to significantly simplify the administration process and reduce costs.
- Schools that meet or exceed expectations can – and should be encouraged to – operate with a high degree of autonomy, having earned that right. However, low performing schools need to follow more prescriptive improvement protocols to ensure that every school is indeed a quality school and that every student has access to a quality education.
- They determined that although the research is mixed, in many cases low class size has dramatically impacted future academic achievement, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They recommended that the district consider reducing student-teacher ratios for core subjects in the early grades and for struggling students to 20:1 in grades K-3 and 15:1 for very low-income and/or academically challenged K-3 classrooms.
- Strengthen high schools and better prepare students for college and work through ensuring all students have access to a college-prep curriculum including enacting a higher course-load requirement for graduation; and expanding offerings of and access to Advanced Placement, honors and International Baccalaureate classes.
- The excess capacity should be reviewed by region to align with the number of students in that region, assure geographic dispersion of schools (e.g., promote reasonable walk zones and

commute times for students), assess the location and distribution of alternative and charter schools.

- Every region of the district must offer outstanding academic programs and instructional excellence to ensure success for every student. Key elements to consider include whether the program is successful, popular with families, an alternative program is unique or distinctive, and the program benefits from strong community support, partnerships and parent involvement.
- The condition and location of every building must be evaluated for its ability to provide a facility conducive to educational excellence, and to position the district to serve the students and community for the next 10 to 15 years. Key elements to consider:
  - Condition of the physical structure and grounds at the site and proximity to community resources.
  - Current student capacity or potential for increasing capacity through capital investment. Appropriate accommodation must be made to ensure the capacity to deliver Special Education and ELL services across the district.
  - Operating cost of building and ability to minimize student transportation costs
  - Building safety and security
  - Historical significance of the building
  - Use of building would be in alignment with core mission of the district

<u>Alternative Schools in Seattle</u>

Alternative schools have existed and evolved over the past 45 years in Seattle and like in Eugene they have a dedicated constituency within the community. They generally exemplify many of the values we'd like to see in all schools – smaller schools and/or class sizes, quality and dedicated teachers, strong family involvement, coherent education philosophy, and a broad base of support among parents. Some of their alternative schools consistently rank in the top tier among first choice schools and have significant wait lists. In Seattle, they too struggle with the perception that alternative schools cost more to operate. Among their choice or magnet-type alternative programs, most are at capacity and show no significantly higher operating costs per student than their regular schools. The committee recommended that alternative programs should be considered exactly that—programs—as opposed to places or buildings. As such, there can be more flexibility to preserve these strong programs while bringing their operation into alignment with board values and goals. They also recommended that Seattle pilot and implement K-8 models at alternative schools where appropriate, and that they explore co-location strategies with compatible learning programs or non-district programs.

The Community Advisory Committee identified the following implementation guidelines that should be considered by the Seattle School District:

- The outcomes should provide students with better academic opportunities than are currently available, and should position neighborhood schools for strength over the long term.
- Academic outcomes and the success of every neighborhood school would be the primary consideration in the final decision. School buildings should be considered separate from school programs and the people who run those programs.
- "What is best for students?" will be the paradigm through which all options are reviewed.

Boulder, Colorado

Concerned that socioeconomic stratification in the Boulder Valley School District was increasing, the School Board chartered the Stratification Task Force. The charge to the Task Force was to study the patterns and causes of stratification, including any unintended consequences of open enrollment, and recommend strategies to reduce and reverse stratification. The Task Force reviewed, analyzed and discussed:

- Background materials and national studies on stratification, choice and achievement
- Enrollment statistics and data concerning movement of students throughout the district and the impact on stratification, achievement, and equity
- Research specific on stratification, choice, achievement, equity, and assessment of academic quality
- Approaches to addressing stratification by school districts in California, Oregon (one of the districts looked at by BVSD was Eugene), North and South Carolina, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin.

The Stratification Task Force concluded there was evidence that socioeconomic stratification is increasing, there is a very high correlation (over 95%) between socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and ELL status, (i.e. the low SES students also tended to be the Latino and ELL students), and that patterns of stratification on each of these dimensions overlapped quite closely with stratification on the others. Their analysis suggested that stratification is the result of the interplay of several main causes:

- *Housing Patterns and Attendance Area Boundaries: Underlying patterns of housing stratification combined with the way attendance boundaries are defined can create stratified schools regardless of the impact of other causal factors.*
- *Unintended Consequences of Open Enrollment: Generally, it is the higher–SES (and white) students that are choosing to utilize open enrollment, and they appear to be leaving lower-SES (and higher minority) schools for those higher-SES schools.*
    - *Proximity to certain focus (alternative) schools and charter opportunities also has a strong impact on how a school's demographics will be affected by choice/open enrollment.*
- *Lack of Accurate Information on School Quality: parents need better information than aggregate test scores and a school's informal reputation in order to assess school quality.*

The Boulder Task Force identified a set of factors that could serve as "levers" for change. They recognized that no single strategy would solve the problem, but reasoned that by using these levers in combination, the district could generate momentum toward the desired state of quality, diversity, equity and choice. The intention was to define strategies that would directly address key causes, attract support, be cost-effective, and reinforce each other to reduce stratification, while aligning with district values and commitments (goals). They recommended that in order to improve program placement and remove barriers to integration, the Boulder district should conduct a study of school boundaries to determine a logical placement that would then be phased in over time to lessen the impact of racial and economic stratification.

Criteria for redrawing boundaries would include addressing stratification due to location of affordable housing, population patterns, issues of walking distance and transportation, and school feeder systems. (Like in Eugene, it has been decades since attendance areas were last examined in a comprehensive fashion. Numerous changes – from new housing developments and demographic shifts in population, to school closures and consolidations— have occurred during that time, all of which may have had profound effects on neighborhood school populations). They found that some schools have a disproportionate amount of low-income housing within their attendance boundaries and that when a school and its attendance area have a high proportion of low-SES families, various factors make it difficult to shift back toward a more balanced school population. While boundary change is an imperfect tool for reducing stratification in a system with choice/open enrollment, they reasoned that when used in combination with other recommendations (especially transportation) it could provide a means of directly countering the effects of stratified housing patterns.

They also suggested that the district consider providing transportation funded at district expense for students who meet federal FRL guidelines to schools that they have selected through the open enrollment process outside of their neighborhood school. The district, they said, would need to determine whether to provide transportation comprehensively or more selectively (only for certain routes, certain schools, or certain sub-sets of low-SES students).

The Stratification Task Force felt that it was important to improve information to influence the choices that families make by strengthening communication and outreach. Boulder should implement a district-wide communications campaign to provide accurate information and to influence parental perceptions and choices in the direction of greater integration, including outreach to low-SES families who have not participated in open enrollment previously and to high-SES families who might choose to stay in or return to more diverse neighborhood schools. Without choice/open enrollment, they determined, the socioeconomic composition of many schools would be significantly different. Choice/open enrollment in Boulder is used disproportionately by higher-SES families, who tend to seek out schools that score high on the state tests and are therefore seen as being of higher quality. Those tend to be the schools with higher percentages of higher-income and white families, so this type of choice/open enrollment they found tends to increase stratification. Since there is a strong correlation between a school's FRL population and performance on state mandated tests, a choice based on test scores has the effect of being a choice away from more diverse schools and toward more homogeneous higher-income schools. They also suggested the district develop and strongly publicize metrics for school quality that will provide a more accurate alternative to aggregate test scores. The expected result of more accurate assessments of school quality is that, over time, fewer high-SES families would open enroll out of neighborhood schools, and stratification would therefore be reduced.

They also recommended that the district include the requirement that all families who participate in the open enrollment process must first visit and review their neighborhood school as a precondition of participating in open enrollment. In addition, the Task Force considered that it would be helpful to require parents to visit the school into which they seek to transfer their child.

The stratification Task Force looked at how the district could create conditions that would support integration. They stated that the status quo is a trend toward increased stratification, and that unless changes are made that shift multiple factors toward integration, the force of current arrangements, systems, socioeconomic factors and attitudes will continue to "tilt" the field of choice (for the district and for families) toward stratified schools. To assist in that regard, they recommended the district implement a weighted funding formula for all students from low-income families, based on an analysis of educational, financial, and stratification impacts such a formula would have. Additional funds would follow FRL students with respect to FTE allocations, without reducing Title I funds. Allocations would be based on a sliding scale based on the average percentage of FRL students for the district—schools with lower-than-average proportion of such students would receive less funding for FTE, down to a specified minimum below-average funding level (a funding floor). Schools with higher percentages of such students would receive proportionately more funding up to a maximum above-average funding level (a funding ceiling). A weighted funding formula would provide both a financial incentive for schools to attract and retain low SES students, and additional support for schools with disproportionately needy student populations. Without this incentive, they felt it is likely that few high SES schools will focus much attention on attracting low-SES students. Without the additional support, it is likely that few low-SES schools will be able to attract high-SES families.

The Stratification Task force concluded that the present situation of stratification in Boulder has created systematic and persistent inequities among district schools. This is evident they say from the larger numbers of parent volunteers that effectively reduce the student-teacher ratio at higher income schools to the dramatic disparities in fundraising ability between schools. Funds raised by wealthier schools create an environment flush with resources and equipment, affording these schools the ability to offer supplementary staff, elaborate field trips, and other enriching activities to their student populations. Meanwhile, at a handful of schools, there is an obvious dearth of these supplementary amenities. Add to that the fact that these less-wealthy schools are

attempting to educate students with much greater educational needs, and the full depth of the inequity begins to emerge. Other strategies they suggested included:

- Establish a desired range of diversity within all schools using federal guidelines for FRL as the benchmark for diversity level. Under such an approach, if the FRL student population of an individual school were outside a range of plus/minus a specified percentage of district average, then preferences for admission would be adjusted to give low-SES greater weight until the FRL percentage reached the acceptable range.
- Provide all teachers and administrators with training and professional development to improve schools' academic quality and effectiveness in meeting the needs of a more diverse student population. Training in cultural competency and diversity awareness should be made available not only to staff but to parents and students as well.
- Consider capping enrollment at selected schools that are experiencing high inbound open enrollment and that presently use portable classrooms to expand capacity beyond their building's actual program capacity.

Madison, Wisconsin

The Madison School District initiated a study in 2005 to consider the impact of changing demographics and shifting enrollment patterns in its schools and the ability of the district to meets its equity goals. Specific issues they were seeking to address were under-enrollment at certain elementary schools, high enrollment at other elementary schools, income disparity among schools, and projected growth in some regions of the district. The district also appointed an Equity Task Force to make recommendations for an equity policy including: 1) a definition of equity, 2) a statement of the District's commitment to equity, and 3) guidelines for implementation. Task force members reviewed a variety of materials and topics including equity polices from other school districts, and equity-related papers and polices. Additionally, they reviewed the district's current allocation formulas and the process used to distribute resources to schools, and they had in-depth discussions regarding beliefs, values and attitudes that support, or don't support, equity in the Madison schools.

The Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) has had a long history of trying to address the achievement gap and in promoting equity in access to schools and programs of the district. Madison is one of the founding districts of the Minority Student Achievement Network, and its superintendent currently serves as the president of the MSAN board. The Equity Task Force determined that equity and equality, though closely related, are not the same. Equity involves opportunity; access; elimination of barriers; distribution of resources; protection of specific groups; recognition and acceptance of differences; English proficiency; addressing average, below average and above average readiness for education and educational performance; socioeconomic factors; relationships with teachers and other school personnel; academic and administrative staff interest; availability of funds for academic and other programs and more. They developed the following definition of equity for the Madison Metropolitan School District:

Equity assures full access to opportunities for each MMSD student to achieve educational excellence and social responsibility.

The Equity Task Force developed the following guiding principles, which were adopted and committed to by the board, as a part of its strategic plan:

- *Schools will be excellent only when students of all demographic groups are achieving at high levels.*
- *Achieving equity often requires an unequal distribution of resources and services.*
- *The district will eliminate gaps in access and achievement by recognizing and addressing historic and contemporary inequalities in the district, the community and society.*
- *The district will recognize and eliminate inequitable policies and practices*
- *District and building leadership are critical factors to achieving equity.*
- *All schools will be desirable because they are equally equitable.*

To achieve equity, the board directed that the Madison district continually examine institutional beliefs and effect systematic change in policies, practices, and structures that perpetuate inequities.

The Demographic and Facility Needs Task Forces of the Board of Education's Long Range Planning Committee reviewed numerous documents, tables, maps, and other data related to current and future student enrollment, school building capacity and space utilization, financial and personnel costs of closing a school, busing, pairing of schools, district budget impact, the benefits of small class size, and schools without large concentrations of low-income students.

Like Eugene, the Madison district is divided into four high school attendance regions. The student enrollment is a little over 25,000 students. As with Eugene, the MMSD is projecting relatively stable enrollment at the elementary level, but expects to decline by about 800 students at the high school level by 2010-11. The district's range of free and reduced lunch percentages in schools ranges from 16% to 100%. Enrollment and SES varies between regions, with East High School Attendance area experiencing declining enrollment and excess capacity and the West High School attendance area experiencing growth and space issues.

The elementary school size in the East Madison ranges from 219 to 319students; whereas it ranges from 299 to 678 students in the West region. The East region FRL ranges from 24% to 73% and it has a high percentage of English Language Learners; the West region FRL ranges from 21% to 55% with few ELL students. The middle school size ranges from 355 to 538 students in the East region (they have three middle schools in the region) and 230 to 700 students in the West region (five of their total eleven middle schools in the district are below 400 students, while middle school capacities range from 306 to 936). For highs schools, the enrollment range is from 1748 at La Follette to 2197 at Memorial, while capacity ranges from 2173 to 2584. Choice is pretty much limited to alternative schools at the secondary level except for a Spanish language magnet at elementary level. They also provide an ESL Center in the East attendance area.

The East Attendance Area Task Force was charged with recommending to the Board up to three options regarding the use of district facilities in the region that would provide school and program stability for at least five years. Options they considered included 1) revising school boundaries, 2) closing schools, 3) restructuring schools, and 4) using buildings for a range of district or non-district purposes, including shared uses. The task force developed a final recommendation that included a rationale for removing neighborhood school closings from consideration by citing research suggesting that children in poverty may benefit from small school size, in addition to small class size. They determined that the East attendance area, t while having some of the smallest capacity schools in the district also had the highest concentrations of children in poverty. They concluded, however, that smaller schools and class sizes in the East area were contributing to the decrease in the achievement gap among students and across schools in the region. Other rationale they cited for choosing to not close any schools in the East region included:

- *Elementary school aged children in the East attendance area, while attending schools with the highest level of low income enrollment, benefit from the fewest number of children being bused and lowest distance busing rates. The advantage this presents children and their families is better access to, and opportunity to become involved in, a neighborhood school, they said.*
- *Excess space in the East area schools can be, and is being, used efficiently as numerous district-wide programs are housed in East area schools. Placing programs within East area schools is a better way to continue to meet the unique needs of students in East attendance area.*
- *The East attendance area has greater poverty because of proportionally more families who lack economic resources live in the attendance area. Communities in this area benefit from having neighborhood schools where families and children are more likely to connect with one another at school and as a result are more likely to be connected to their neighbors and neighborhood. This is a critical resource in more economically fragile communities. What benefits schools, benefits communities and what benefits communities, benefits schools.*

The financial benefits of closing a school are not worth the costs of disrupting the education of children attending that neighborhood school.

The task force concluded that they did not see the school closing option as viable, cost-effective or a real long-range solution to best meet the educational needs of children in the East attendance area.

Portland, Oregon

A recent audit reported that Portland's schools have become, over time, more segregated than their neighborhoods. The school district's "school choice" policy, whose roots stretch back to Portland's 1980 school "desegregation" plan was a large part of the problem, they concluded. Until 1980, Portland had employed what amounted to mandatory busing to improve the racial balance of its schools. According to Ron Herndon, the lack of good schools in black neighborhoods and the desegregation policies put the burden of integration on black students and their families, resulted in the scattering of black students to schools across the city. The voluntary plan to desegregate Portland's schools ended forced busing, infused the "black" schools with extra money and teachers, created additional "magnet" schools in black neighborhoods and let black and white students transfer out of their neighborhoods to different schools—if they wanted to. Portland's plan allowed all students, regardless of race, to attend their neighborhood school or go elsewhere. The idea was to boost the quality of the black schools (to make those schools better and to attract white students) and give black students the choice to move voluntarily to white schools. Out of this blender of options, equality was expected to flow. A look at the numbers today led to the following conclusion: "Despite tens of millions of dollars spent on programs to support the policies, voluntary desegregation and school choice have heightened neighborhood school segregation by race and class."

This pattern is no more evident than at Jefferson High School. In 1990, one-third of the students at Jefferson were white. By 2006, it was less than 13 percent. Both white and black families have abandoned Jefferson for other schools, sending overall enrollment at Jefferson into tailspin. But the gap between the number of white and black students has doubled in just 10 years. Today, young white families who have moved to gentrifying neighborhoods in northeast Portland have exercised school choice to send their children to schools outside their neighborhoods. Meanwhile more black, and poor, parents who have stayed in those neighborhoods have stayed in their neighborhood schools. Call it school choice or white flight, the bottom line is that the shift has drained some schools of students—and with those students, money, other resources and, some would say, the schools' chance for recovery. (The Jefferson High School cluster, including elementary- and middle-school programs, lost about $15 million in the 2006-07 school year because children who lived in the neighborhood decided to attend schools far from their home.) On the other hand, others have said that school choice plays a fundamental role in keeping Portland Public Schools from following the path of other urban districts such as Boston, which has lost many of its middle-class parents to the suburbs and private schools.

Ron Herndon, one of the authors of Portland's desegregation plan, and now chair of the National Head Start Association, says he still holds to the idea that every child should have a high-quality school in his or her neighborhood. "*I don't think the presence of middle-class white kids is going to help black kids learn*," he said. Integration as a tool for creating high –quality schools is a myth, he adds.

The audit of Portland's school choice policy revealed students who transferred from "failing" schools did not show improved academic performance at their new schools. The District's analysis of standardized test scores also indicates that students who transfer from smaller to larger schools might make slightly less progress on standardized tests than those who remain at their smaller neighborhood schools.

Ten years ago, the enrollment gap between Portland district's biggest and smallest high schools was less than 500 students. Today, it's more than 1,100, with Grant projected to enroll 1,761 students next year, and Jefferson 628. (*In Eugene, the gap between our largest high school, Sheldon at 1655 students, and our smallest, North at 1063students, is 592 students.*)

In Portland, only 63 percent of students attend their neighborhood schools. At the elementary level 33%, 32% at middle, and 42% at high school level do not attend their neighborhood school. By contrast, in Beaverton, 93 percent of students attend their neighborhood schools.

Corvallis, Oregon

Corvallis recently studied its school boundaries, enrollment and enrollment history to consider boundary change adjustments that would allow for some students to attend from within a revised boundary area and the remainder through open enrollment transfer requests. Like Eugene, the Corvallis School District provides for transfers, which allow students to attend schools outside their attendance boundary if there is space available. About 31% of students in Corvallis transfer to schools outside their attendance area. An important issue in Corvallis is how to provide an adequate attendance area for each school to assure that there will be enough students in each boundary area to support a program at that neighborhood school. Another key issue is the shifting community demographics that are placing more families with elementary school aged children now in neighborhoods in the north and south ends of the Corvallis community.

The parameters provided to the committee were to work within current school capacities without changing grade or school configurations, reopening closed schools, moving in new modular buildings, or expanding programs. The most important criteria provided to the committee in priority order were:

- *Plan to use capacity of school without transfer students or additional modular buildings*
- *Avoid widening the gap in the range between highs and lows of student demographics at each school.*
- *Stabilize boundary areas for as long in the future as possible – target 7 years*
- *Minimize busing and travel time for students by keeping neighborhood school concept.*
- *Adopt only those boundary changes that are absolutely necessary to address the problems that exist. Minimize impact to current students and families, particularly those directly impacted by recent school closure and boundary change decisions.*

Earlier reviews in Corvallis found that the larger number of students attending Linus Pauling Middle School and Corvallis High School were due to approved transfers, not boundary inequities. They determined that changes to the future enrollment at secondary schools could therefore be managed through the transfer policy process rather than through a boundary change.

> The committee concluded and recommended that the implementation of attendance boundary changes should be approached slowly over the next few years to minimize impact to current students and families. The Corvallis district's policy on boundaries and school assignment and transfer is provided below:
>
> *Attendance Boundaries/Assignment of Students to Schools (Board Policy)*
>
> 1. *Students living within the attendance boundaries of individual schools have priority for attendance at that school.*
> 2. *The superintendent will set enrollment capacities at each school.*
>   - *Once that enrollment capacity has been reached, any student moving into the attendance area may be required by the superintendent or designee to attend another school as designated by the district.*
>   - *Transportation will be provided if a student is assigned by the district to another school other than their home school.*
>
> *If enrollment falls below the enrollment capacity, students who have been moved because of overcrowding will have first choice to return to their home school based on their placement on a waiting list. Students may*

only return to a school at the end of a grading period for elementary school students or at the end of a semester for middle and high school students.

Transfer Priorities:

The district may reserve some spots for students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program to keep socioeconomic demographics within the range of other schools in the district.

Strategies Other Districts Use to Address Stratification

Eugene is not unique in experiencing increasing socioeconomic stratification in its schools. More than half of the large metropolitan school districts in the U.S. have experienced an increase in economic segregation, while only about 12% have experienced decrease. This is also true for the MSAN districts, as well as the Wallace Lead districts, of which Eugene is one. According to the U.S. Department of Education, all children, poor and middle class, perform substantially worse in schools with high concentrations of poverty. Following are some examples of other districts' strategies and the strategies they've pursued in trying to address economic stratification:

- **Boston, MA:** Ever since court-ordered desegregation busing began in 1974, issues of race, class, and equity have simmered beneath the surface of nearly every issue in the district. With Boston's changing demographics and significant enrollment decline over the years their approach has been to try to attract and retain in their schools families who might otherwise pursue other educational options. These include middle-class families who may be able to afford private or parochial schooling (or who might move to more affluent and less diverse communities), as well as low-income families who have access to an increasing number of charter schools. At the high school level, for example, students and families in Boston can choose the kind of high school they would like to attend from a portfolio of options broader than any in the country. These choices include small schools in large complexes, small learning communities within a large school, stand-alone small schools, or Pilot Schools, all with a range of thematic academic foci. At the same time, Boston has been striving to ensure that every student across the system has access to an excellent neighborhood school and that every school can organize resources effectively to educate all its students. Boston's challenges in reaching this goal can be instructive for other districts attempting similar efforts. Boston's experience offering a choice-based portfolio also illustrates that there can be unintended consequences of a school's success that need to be addressed. Perhaps the biggest challenge facing Boston regarding choice and equity is how to ensure a high-quality education for special education students and English-language learners. (A Decade of School Reform: Persistence and Progress in the Boston Public Schools – S. Paul Reville)
- **San Francisco, CA:** In 2001, the school board in San Francisco adopted a new student assignment plan that replaced a racial desegregation scheme with one that seeks socioeconomic diversity. Much like Seattle, San Francisco is losing families to the more affordable suburbs, but at a faster rate. Just 14% of San Francisco's population is school-aged children (the lowest percentage of any city in the nation), and 30 percent of its students attend parochial schools. For the past five years, the district has lost 800 to 1000 students annually, and the trend is projected to continue until the end of the decade. *As a sign that socioeconomic integration does not work everywhere, its pointed out that San Francisco's socioeconomic integration plan, which uses a race-neutral "diversity index," actually created more racial/ethnic segregation.*
- **Charlotte-Mecklenberg, NC:** In 2001, the Charlotte board implemented a controlled choice plan which allows parents to rank preferences among schools, and gives a preference to students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch whose home school FRL numbers are 30 percentage points above the district average. A priority is also given for low income students where their choice would enhance the FRL status but not create a concentration of free-reduced lunch status above 50 percent in the receiving school.
- **Greenville, SC:** In 2001, the Greenville board voted to adopt a new student assignment scheme, which eliminated race but sought to reduce the "concentration of low-income students" and the "concentration of low achieving students." The board rejected, however, a more aggressive plan to ensure that no school has more than 50% of its students eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

- **Brandywine, DE:** In 2001, the school district backed a flexible student assignment plan which would keep all schools between 16% and 47% low income, as opposed to a neighborhood assignment plan which would have increased ranges from 6% to 73% low income.
- **Cambridge, MA:** In 2001, the Cambridge school committee voted to amend its public school choice program to require that all schools fall within a plus or minus 15 percentage point range of the district wide percentage of students eligible for FRL. In the second year of the plan, the range reduced to 10 percentage points and then 5 in the third year. Like San Francisco, Cambridge has recently determined that its socioeconomic integration plan has led to more racial/ethnic segregation in its schools as more middle class families have chosen other options.
- **Montgomery County, MD:** In a study of 8th graders, Montgomery County found that lower-income students performed their worst in schools where the student population was overwhelmingly poor. But when lower-income students attended schools where most of the students were more affluent, they achieved higher score – matching or exceeding the county average.

Berliner Study – "Our Impoverished View of Educational Reform"

Among the many calls for education reform we hear is the story about how poorly our American public school students perform when compared to students from the other industrialized nations of the world. The story goes something like this: Americans are losing their competitive advantage because our public schools are doing such a poor job as evidenced by our mediocre or worse showing on international measurements. Studies like the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment are cited as clear evidence that our students are not holding their own when compared to countries like Korea, China and India. It is these myths that perpetuate not only the NCLB agenda but also contribute to the perception, particularly among middle-class parents, that most public schools are failing and its important to be able to choose the "right" school for your child.

David C. Berliner in a 2005 study, Our Impoverished View of Educational Reform, suggests that the most powerful policy for improving our nation's school achievement may be a reduction in family and youth poverty. Many scholars and teachers understand that school reform is heavily constrained by factors that are outside of America's classrooms and schools. The basic problem, he says, is that our neighborhoods are highly segregated by social class, and thus, also segregated by race and ethnicity. So all educational efforts that focus on classrooms and schools could be reversed by family circumstances, could be negated by neighborhoods, and might well be subverted or minimized by what happens to children outside of school. He believes that schools alone may be too weak an intervention for improving the lives of most children now living in poverty. In quoting Richard Rothstein, he notes that "raising the achievement of lower-class children requires the amelioration of the social and economic conditions of their lives, not just school reform."

Something else needs to be noted about the poverty we see among children, he says. It is not random. Poverty is unequally distributed across the many racial and ethnic groups that make up the American nation. Poverty is strongly correlated with race and ethnicity. New immigrants, African Americans and Hispanics, particularly those among these groups who live in urban areas, are heavily over-represented in the groups that suffer severe poverty.

Berliner points out that in the U.S. the rates of childhood poverty are high, that it is "racialized," and that those who once get trapped in poverty have a hard time getting out.

Berliner has looked at the international studies such as TIMSS and PISA, and he comes away with a little different take on how America's students do compared to those from other nations when factoring in poverty. In looking at the 2003 **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) he concludes that:**

- Data on mathematics and science scores for American 4th and 8th grade youth when disaggregated by degree of poverty correlate perfectly with the percent of poor students who attend a school. Schools with wealthier students had the highest average scores and the schools with the poorest students had the students who scored the lowest.

- The average scores for the schools with less than 50 percent of their students in poverty exceeded the US average score, while the average scores for the schools with greater than 50 percent FRL fell below the US average score. In general, Berliner's data informs us that our poor students are not competitive internationally while our middle classes and wealthy public school children are doing extremely well in comparison to the pool of countries that made up TIMSS 2003.

With respect to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000, Berliner reports that what stands out first is a commonly found pattern in international studies of achievement, namely, that U.S. average scores are very close to the international average. But, he says, in a country as heterogeneous and as socially and ethnically segregated as ours, mean scores of achievement are not useful for understanding how we are really doing in international comparisons. In disaggregating the PISA data, we see clearly that our white students (without regard for social class) were among the highest performing students in the world. But our African American and Hispanic students, also undifferentiated by social class, were among the poorest performing students in the international sample.

PISA 2000		**Mathematics**	**Literacy**	**Science**
Mean Score		500	500	500
US Avg. Score		493	499	499
US Avg./White		530	538	535
US Avg./Hisp		437	449	438
US Avg./AfrAm		423	445	435
High Avg Score (Korea)		557	552	552

Table #: PISA Scores 2000 - Berliner

Looking at all three tables reveals something very important about inequality in the U.S. If the educational opportunities available to white students in our public schools were made available to all our students, the U.S. would have been the 7th highest scoring nation in mathematics, 2nd highest scoring in reading, and the 4th highest scoring nation in science. Schooling for millions of U.S. white children is working quite well. On the other hand, were our minority students "nations," they would score almost last among the industrialized countries in the world. Latino and African Americans are as segregated by poverty, as they are by race and ethnicity, which may be the more important issue with which our schools have to deal. Poverty, race and ethnicity are inextricably entwined in the U.S.

Another study looked at by Berliner was the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). It is a Reading assessment administered to 9 and 10 year olds in 35 nations in which U.S. ranked ninth, though statistically we tied with others at third place. The mean score of U.S. white children, without any concern about social class status, was quite a bit higher than that of Swedish children who, it should be noted, are also a very

white group, and in this study the leading nation. When we take social class into consideration by looking at the scores of students who attend schools where there are few or no children of poverty, we learn that this group of public school children performed quite well. In fact, these higher social class children form the U.S. walloped the Swedes, scoring 585, an average of 24 points higher than the average score obtained by Swedish students. Public school students by the millions, from U.S. schools that do not serve many poor children, are doing fine in international competition.

- But the scores obtained by students attending schools where poverty is prevalent are shockingly low. The mean score in literacy in schools where more than 75% of the children are on FRL was 485, 100 points below the scores of our wealthy students, and well below those of many nations that are our economic competitors.
- The urban/suburban social class differences in the US result in de facto segregation by race and ethnicity. Middle- and upper-class white families in the suburbs live quite separately from the poor and ethnically diverse families of the urban areas. School and community resources differ by social class, and therefore differ also by race and ethnicity.

In sum, zip codes matter, says Berliner. Zip codes can determine school achievement as much or more than does the influence of a person's family, and they often have more power than the quality of the school a child attends. Urban segregation of the poor, along with segregation of language minorities and ethnic groups, is the reason that zip codes matter. The zip codes of the middle class have influence too. Several empirical studies have found that a middle class school exposes minority students to higher expectations and more educational and career options. Although we have no idea what the micro-elements of a middle class culture are, when such a culture is well entrenched in a neighborhood, it is the best insurance that the schools in that neighborhood will have the quality and the student norms of behavior that lead to better academic achievement. Perhaps it is because middle class and residentially stable neighborhoods often manifest a collective sense of efficacy and that, in turn, determines the ways that youth in those neighborhoods are monitored as they grow up.

On the other hand, neighborhoods that perpetuate the culture of poverty cannot help but have that culture spill over into the schools their children attend. Obviously, one way to help the American schools achieve more is to weave low-income housing throughout more middle class zip codes. This would provide more low-income people with access to communities where stability exists, efficacy is promoted and children have access to a variety of role models. But we are an economically segregated country, a condition perpetuated in various ways by the more affluent and powerful in the nation. So this is not likely to happen.

When we push for more rigorous standards in our schools we should also push for a raise in the minimum wage, or better yet for livable wages. If we do not do this, then we will ensure that the vast majority of those meeting the increasingly rigorous requirements for high school graduation will be those students fortunate enough to be born into the right families. If we really want a more egalitarian set of educational outcomes requires, our nation needs a more egalitarian wage structure. Also, we need to begin thinking about building a two-way system of accountability. The obligation that educators have accepted to be accountable to our communities must become reciprocal. Our communities must also be accountable to those of us who work in schools, and they can do this by creating social conditions that allow us to do our jobs well. It does take a whole village to raise a child, and we actually know a little bit about how to do that. What we seem not to know how to do is to raise the village, to promote communal values that insure that all our children will prosper. We need to face the fact that our community, indeed our whole society needs to be held as accountable for providing healthy children ready to learn, as our schools are for delivering quality instruction. One-way accountability, where we are always blaming the schools for the faults that we find, is neither just, nor likely to solve the problems we want to address.

Resources:

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3. Survey Report
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5. *Community Advisory Committee For Investing In Educational Excellence, Seattle Public Schools*, February 10, 2006
6. A Decade of Urban School Reform: Persistence and Progress in the Boston Public Schools, Paul S. Reville, Harvard Education Press, 2007
7. *Progress and Promise: A Report on the Boston Pilot Schools*, Center for Collaborative Education, January 2006
8. *Corvallis School District 509J Boundary Review 2007, Superintendent's Recommendation*, October 8, 2007
9. *Best Practices: Building Blocks for Enhancing School Environment*, Robert Blum, John Hopkins University, 2005
10. *Courting the Middle Class*, Nora Carr, ASBJ Urban Special Report, American School board Journal, December 2006
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12. *Our Impoverished View of Educational Reform*, David C. Berliner, TCRecord, August 2, 2005
13. *Public Choices,* Mike Kennedy, American School and University, April 2007
14. The Path Forward for Portland Public schools – Update for the Board, Portland Public Schools, March 20, 2006
15. Long Range Facilities Plan, Madison Metropolitan School District, March 2007
16. Report of the Equity Task Force, Madison Metropolitan School District, March 2006
17. Various Newspaper articles (Oregonian, Willamette Week, Seattle Times), emails and phone calls, personal conversations.