

**TOWN HALL MEETING  
MEANY MIDDLE SCHOOL  
APRIL 24, 2006  
WHOLE GROUP NOTES**

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***Criteria and prioritization***

*#1 Effective instruction*

- Instruction is more important than the buildings that house it.

*#4 Family satisfaction*

- Student satisfaction should be considered.
- How comfortable students are is important, especially with respect to the lesbian, gay, and transgender communities.
- Focus on students.
- Consider student safety. Nova is safe and this makes a difference.
- Alternative programs like NOVA add educational diversity and work for families.
- Use first or second choice as indicators.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Number of Dots</i>				
	<i>NE/ Central</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SW</i>	<i>NW</i>	<i>Total</i>
#1 Effective instruction	130	11	2	32	175
#2 Opportunity to drive resources to students	10	1	2	1	14
#3 Opportunity to add missing services	8	4	1	1	14
#4 Family satisfaction	60	6	8	18	92
#5 Building condition	1	0	0	1	2
#6 Operating cost/pupil	4	0	0	5	9
#7 Building capacity	3	1	0	0	4
#8 Community connection	45	5	5	18	73

*\* Shaded rows denote the criteria with highest number of dots.*

***Outstanding questions/comments***

*Community*

- Elementary schools are the heart of the neighborhood.
- Keep things small and local.
- Are programs and principals/staff separable?
- Co-locate programs with similar philosophies.

*Data collection and measurement*

- Fairness. How do we objectively measure these criteria?

*Equity*

- Need to talk about ethnicity and class.
- Where are people of color at these meetings? Need to change methods to attract these people (i.e. better/different publicity and different format).
- Why doesn't the CAC reflect the composition of the school district? This is insulting.
- What about the programs where people aren't satisfied?

- What about the programs in communities where people can't afford to access better? We need to listen to these communities.
- There is a lack of a good middle school in the south end, and for this reason, kids leave in fourth grade if they can.
- Consider that we're comparing apples to oranges.
- The quadrant system is inequitable.
- Kids in the southeast quadrant are the ones using the system and they are the ones who most need it. They need small schools, so why would you close them?

#### *Process*

- *Really* listen to people on the ground.
- Where does negative feedback go?
- This could be a "race to the bottom." Let's make it a race to the top.
- Focus on win/win. Make all programs better.
- Broaden the scope. Why do we have to close schools?
- Create communication between parents and administration.

#### *Programs/academics*

- Why are we losing kids? Think about this.
- Small schools work (i.e. NOVA). Bill and Melinda Gates have done research on this.
- Take a special look at alternative schools and programs. These programs allow creativity.
- Replicate programs that close the achievement gap.
- Need a pre-K-8 in the south end.

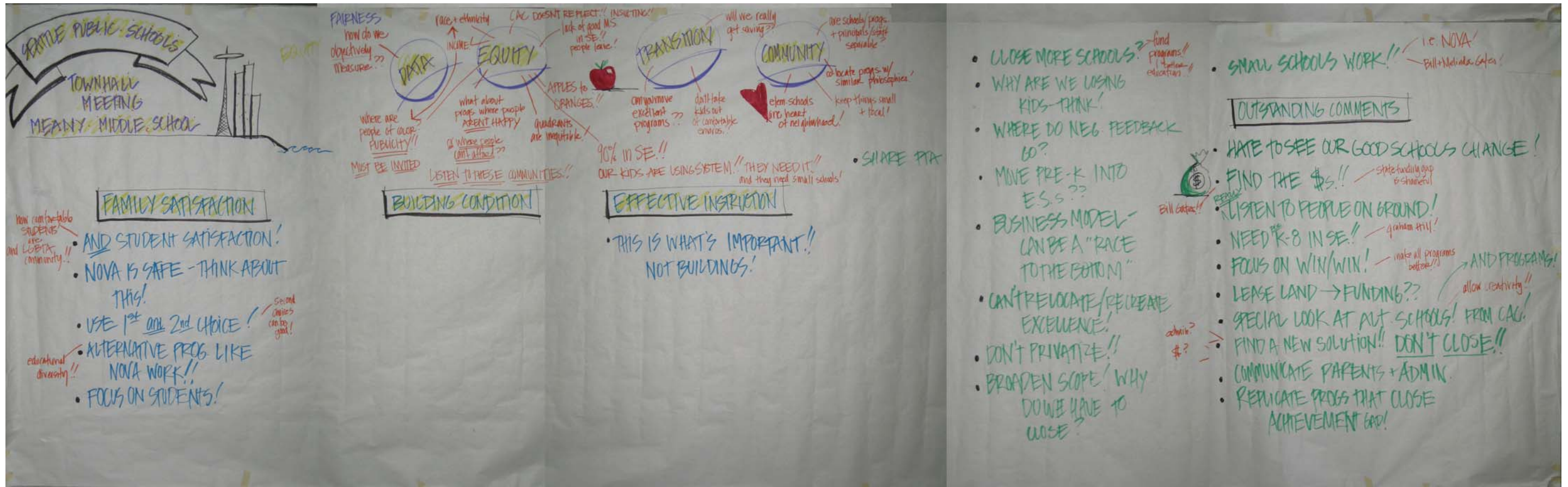
#### *Transition/outcomes*

- Can you move excellent programs?
- Can't relocate/recreate excellence.
- We would hate to see our good schools change.
- Don't take kids out of comfortable environments. It has serious implications.
- Will we really get the savings we think we're going to get?
- Don't privatize public education.

#### *Other solutions*

- Pool PTA funds and disburse equally.
- Can we move pre-K into elementary schools to fill the gap/boost efficiency?
- Find the money (e.g. state money, the Gates Foundation).
- Could we lease public land to generate funding?

***Total participants signing in: 136***



Wall graphic from Town Hall Meeting at Meany Middle School, 4/24/06

**TOWN HALL MEETING  
MEANY MIDDLE SCHOOL  
APRIL 24, 2006  
BREAKOUT GROUP NOTES**

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**GROUP 1**

***Criteria and prioritization***

*#1 Effective instruction*

- What is the definition of “academic effectiveness?” Concern about use of “effective” v. “successful.”
- This is not just test scores.

*#3 Opportunity to add missing services*

- Where do additional resources come from to fund programs and services?

*#4 Family satisfaction*

- Family satisfaction is important.
- How does satisfaction get measured?
- Indicators of “desirable schools” (i.e. wait list) are important.
- A weak middle school drives away 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders from good elementary schools. How does this affect satisfaction?

*#5 Building condition*

- Building condition is not the most important.

*#8 Community connection*

- Effective connection with the community will lessen transportation and increase business involvement.

*Other*

- Add student satisfaction to the criteria.
- Consider peer support/bullying and violence issues.
- Consider gay, lesbian, transgender support in schools.

***Outstanding questions/comments***

*Community*

- Neighborhood schools (within walking distance) are valued.
- Ethnic diversity is important.

*Equity*

- Need K-8 and Montessori in southeast quadrant.
- Consider availability of alternative programs (e.g. Montessori and language immersion).

*Process*

- Is closing schools the best way to save money?
- If we had lots of money, would we still close schools?

*Programs/academics*

- Middle schools are too big.
- After school care is important.

*Transition/outcomes*

- Will closing/consolidation improve education?
- Don't over-consolidate or make numbers of students in buildings too large.

- How do we assure that a program stays successful if it's merged with another?
- Don't close too many schools in case population increases.
- If transportation costs go up, closures won't be effective.

*Other solutions*

- Share principals between buildings to keep small schools.
- Middle schools are too big. Put 6<sup>th</sup> graders in elementary buildings. This will make middle schools less crowded.

**GROUP 2**

***Criteria and prioritization***

*#3 Opportunity to add missing services*

- What is the difference between this criterion and #2?

*#4 Family satisfaction*

- NOVA has high climate survey results/family satisfaction.
- APP has great family satisfaction.

*#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Operating costs are not inclusive.

*#8 Community connection*

- There is a large contingent of NOVA parents and students here.

*Other*

- P-I article today on independence/literacy. This should be reflected within criteria.

***Outstanding questions/comments***

*Community*

- A community exists within a school.

*Equity*

- Are the criteria useful for checking racial diversity?

*Programs/academics*

- Are after school activities for extended day programs included?
- What about mentoring for students (especially those at risk)?
- We need nontraditional programs to help kids stay in the system.
- Sizes of two-three sections/grades not good or useful for nontraditional schools.
- APP is special needs, not alternative.

*Transition/outcomes*

- Will closure of school mean the end of school programs?
- Resources may be missed, not gained, if schools close/consolidate (i.e. libraries, bus, other).

**GROUP 3**

***Criteria and prioritization***

*#1 Effective instruction*

- What does WASL have to do with facilities?
- Discipline is not a good measure of effective instruction.
- Discipline is a measure of success, but kids not in school are not being measured.
- Look at which schools are hitting standards and showing improvement.

- Look at leadership/staff turnover numbers as a factor in instruction.

*#3 Opportunity to add missing services*

- Programs and teachers should be spread around the District.

*#4 Family satisfaction*

- Look at parent/teacher conference attendance to get at parent involvement.
- Administration has a role in this.
- Don't look just at first choice. Sometimes there is a demand for special programs but not hope to get in.
- Look at 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade climate survey.

*#5 Building condition*

- Make sure to compare to nearby schools.
- This has lower importance.
- Programs are more important than building condition.

*#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Differentiate between capital and operating budgets.
- Special ed. should not be considered in operating cost/pupil.
- Consider core services size (cafeteria, halls, etc.)

*#8 Community connection*

- Look at number of events with community and how many attend.
- Look at whether outside agencies show involvement.
- Look at flexibility with opportunities in the community.

***Outstanding questions/comments***

*Equity*

- Small class size is valued, but it must be across District.
- Provide equal services based on need in community.
- Keep choice.

*Programs/academics*

- Look at the costs and benefits of smaller class size v. increasing program size.

**GROUP 4**

***Criteria and prioritization***

*#1 Effective instruction*

- WASL is not a valid measure for academic success.

*#2 Opportunity to drive resources to students*

- This doesn't seem like a real criterion.
- Needs to be reworded. Maybe use something like "strengthen program by..."

*#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Worry about financial statistics. Depends on what statistic you choose to look at.

*#8 Community connection*

- What is community involvement? Volunteer hours? Financial outreach? Help to vulnerable families?
- There is an equity issue here. Is this a class issue? Do upper middle classes have an advantage (i.e. stay-at-home moms have more time to devote to school involvement).

*Other*

- Missing question of whether there is a good place to put kids leaving the closed school.

***Outstanding questions/comments***

*Community*

- Look at ability to continue after school activities and childcare.

*Process*

- Criteria limit creativity and fail to look at the bigger picture and the subtleties of individual schools.

*Programs/ academics*

- Worry that there is an assumption that smaller schools are not providing services. They may be finding creative solutions.
- Even if small schools are providing services, is this sustainable?
- Alternative schools don't fit in this model.
- Question target sizes of schools. Are larger schools a net gain?

*Transition/ outcomes*

- What community involvement exists and how will it change if the program is moved?
- Consolidation may reduce space and need will overwhelm capacity.

*Other solutions*

- Are there opportunities for voluntary consolidations not being allowed/considered?

**GROUP 5**

***Criteria and prioritization***

*#1 Effective instruction*

- This is the most important criterion.
- Concern about using WASL scores. These scores are skewed by dropouts (i.e. if you drop out, you get a 0).
- WASL is not a good measure of what kids are getting.
- Could we use happy students as the measure? Or a portfolio for average kid from a certain grade?
- There is a concern about the definition of "effective."

*#3 Opportunity to add missing services*

- Add mental health to this criterion (and other things that impact the school day).

*§6 Operating cost/pupil*

- What is this capturing?

*#8 Community connection*

- Community involvement can be the source of academic success. Don't disburse community.

*Other*

- Safety in schools is missing (i.e. students feeling safe).
- Look at school community.

***Outstanding questions/comments***

*Data collection and measurement*

- What are utilization numbers (e.g. kids/class)?

### *Equity*

- Quadrant delineations?

### *Process*

- There is an assumption that large, comprehensive high schools are good.
- Are the optimum numbers of students applicable across programs?
- Lacking consistency of vision because of variety of visions (e.g. what is academic excellence?)

### *Transition/outcomes*

- What's happening to the buildings?
- There is a concern about school size and kids getting lost.
- Bigger, fewer schools won't attract families who've left.
- Closing schools is short-sighted relative to demography.
- Will teachers know the names of students in larger schools?
- Concern that in consolidating cultures, the small ones will get "eaten up."
- Financial efficiency doesn't necessarily lead to good education.
- Are the savings real? If real, this still doesn't solve the financial problems of the District.
- Is it possible to "relocated" cultures of excellence? Bring other kids *into* existing cultures of excellence.

### *Other solutions*

- Put more energy into making existing schools better. This will bring students in and solve financial problems.

## **GROUP 6**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- This should be the first criterion.

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- This is a very important criterion.
- This may mean the building.
- This should not be measured only by first choice.
- Parent surveys don't capture everything.

#### *#7 Building capacity*

- Site size shouldn't be a criterion. Some schools use a park if they don't have a playground.
- This criterion penalizes those schools that haven't been rebuilt.

#### *#8 Community connection*

- Partnership between schools and families and community organizations is critical.
- Identify strategies around barriers to this.

### *Other*

- How do the criteria address alternative schools? They don't apply.
- The criteria don't allow kids to report how they feel. If kids don't see a question that captures what they know they just don't bubble it in (i.e. on climate survey?)
- Parking income from playground sites is an asset of the school.

## ***Outstanding questions/comments***

### *Data collection and measurement*

- Measure how kids would have to walk to school?

### *Process*

- Not everyone agrees schools should be closed.

### *Programs/ academics*

- The location of alternative schools is very important.
- Alternative schools will not work if co-located.
- Montlake is surrounded by alternative programs (i.e. TOPS, Lowell, John Stanford). It's the only neighborhood school in the area.
- Look at schools on boundaries to seek solutions for consolidating/pairing schools (i.e. Mountlake).
- Pay close attention to special ed. programs (i.e. inclusion).
- Research shows that small schools are more effective. They nurture relationships.

### *Transition/ outcomes*

- Can you transplant a "successful" school?
- If the District is faced with a \$14 million hole, how does closing schools (which will generate \$4 million) do anything to improve instruction? The deficit will still be huge.
- Larger schools can provide more resources, but will these resources offset the lost benefits of small schools? Not simply class size issue.

### *Other solutions*

- SPS has real estate. Co-locate housing and schools or lease sites to raise income.

## **GROUP 7**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- Lacking data to prioritize this.
- Not just WASL.
- Look at developmental progress, 8<sup>th</sup> grade project, District-wide math assessment.
- Don't look at discipline. It changes.

#### *#2 Opportunity to drive resources to students*

- Cost of consolidating is complicated. More than dollars, quality needs to be assessed.

#### *#3 Opportunity to add missing services*

- This means assessing students' achievement at school

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- There should not be one criteria or model for judging family involvement.
- For some parent groups, wait lists are not relevant.

#### *#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Concern that costs are different for different student needs.

## ***Outstanding questions/comments***

### *Process*

- There is too much covered and not enough time to do it. These important issues deserve thoughtful input.
- Should not lose learning objectives for budget concerns.

## **GROUP 8**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- Quality of education matters.
- Closing high-achieving schools is the worst thing to do.
- Are failing schools' failures justifiable? There are these schools and they are the ones that should be closed.

#### *#3 Opportunity to add missing services*

- Look at service gaps and consolidate to fill them. Consider that PTAs fill these gaps in some places.

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- Satisfaction matters.
- Parents who are most involved are the ones that make choices.

#### *#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Efficiency is irrelevant.

#### *#7 Building capacity*

- Not a good criteria.

### ***Outstanding questions/comments***

#### *Equity*

- Look at how criteria apply to different groups differently. Can we control for socioeconomic?
- Need to preserve genuine choice, even though it has a cost. Need to balance the costs and benefits.
- There are funding inequities. Could PTA money be pooled and redistributed?

#### *Programs/academics*

- Program success is informed by school and program size (e.g. ESL or alternative schools).
- Alternatives are important. They give kids options and keep kids in school (e.g. NOVA and Summit).
- Programs inform the quality of the school environment, community, and learning.

#### *Transition/outcomes*

- Changes in size affect schools (e.g. student to teacher ratio).
- Does an increase in size mean more administrators?
- Where do the dispersed go?
- How does this affect school performance?
- Can different programs really share administrators, music teachers, librarians?
- Programs are unique. Can you put two unique programs together?

#### *Other solutions*

- Gates Foundation.
- Can schools share staff without moving?
- What is SPS doing to make schools attractive to everyone?
- Could we consolidate to equalize socioeconomic distributions? How would this look? Would this lead to busing? What would this do to the community?

## **GROUP 9**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- This is most important.
- The progress of students should not be measured by a narrow set of criteria (e.g. WASL or standardized test). This is limiting.

#### *#3 Opportunity to drive resources to students*

- There needs to be an equitable distribution of resources by need and population (i.e. bilingual, free and reduced lunch).

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- Student satisfaction should be part of this.
- First choice and wait list should be used as indicators.
- Is first choice indicator fair to schools that have not been well served by the District historically?
- Is there a relationship between the number of first choice picks and number of seats? Are smaller schools penalized? This should be done proportionately.

#### *#7 Building capacity*

- The measurement of site size is a problem. Inner city schools will have smaller pieces of land and should not be penalized. Urban and smaller schools may be more space efficient.

### ***Outstanding questions/comments***

#### *Equity*

- Academic excellence and demographics are historically related. Don't use "excellence" as code word for race/poverty.
- Diversity of choice within a geographic area is beneficial.

#### *Process*

- School visits by CAC members are very important.

#### *Programs/academics*

- Don't mess with successful programs.
- Don't split programs (e.g. APP, special ed.)
- Education is about relationships (staff and students). School culture leads to results.

## **GROUP 10**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- This criteria is most important.

#### *#3 Opportunity to drive resources to students*

- Clarify the difference between this and #2.

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- Measure this by family participation, not just first choice.
- Consider student satisfaction as well.
- Parental involvement may not be a reasonable measure as it is confounded by socio-economic factors.
- Parental hours before, during, and after school should be counted.

- Look at student waiting lists.
- 4 out of 8 criteria measure community involvement. This can be measured simply by parental volunteer hours, business involvement, and community involvement.

#### *#8 Community connection*

- This should be the top priority and include parental involvement and business relationships.
- Look at faith-based and philanthropic involvement.

### ***Outstanding questions/comments***

#### *Community*

- Diversity improves the entire District.

#### *Data collection and measurement*

- Need information from finance department.

#### *Process*

- Poll to find out if schools are willing to be closed.

#### *Programs/academics*

- SAT scores at Summit and NOVA are #1.
- Put money into programs that work. There are schools that have been failing and saved.

#### *Transition/outcomes*

- Don't eliminate program principals.
- Consider the impact of closures on neighborhood vitality and chemistry of school.
- Look at which programs will be impacted most by closure.

#### *Other solutions*

- Look at how central funding is distributed and not accounted for in cost/student.
- Limit principals to 1 per school.

## **GROUP 11**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- What is a disaggregated academic outcome?
- Define "value-added?"
- This criterion unfairly targets schools neglected by years by the District. It is unfair to disperse students as a result of this neglect.

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- What is the Epstein model? Is this designed to confuse the public?
- Use more than first choice as an indicator.
- Consider that enrollments of "black list" schools have decreased because of unsound District decisions.

#### *#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Does cost/student vary dependent on student needs (i.e. will this hurt populations that need more resources?)
- Does cost/student vary by whether school is suited for particular programs?

#### *Other*

- Where is criterion to close achievement gap with programs currently working?

## ***Outstanding questions/comments***

### *Equity*

- The quadrants are inequitable.
- Size of quadrants is a question. They should be smaller and reflect the population within (e.g. in the central area kids are busing an hour to get to school).

### *Process*

- The criteria document should be reviewed by a focus group so it's understandable by the general population (e.g. Epstein model?).
- Reject closures. We need a better plan.

### *Other solutions*

- Revisit new, current, and pending leases before moving ahead with closures.

## **GROUP 12**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- How do you measure academic achievement and excellence?
- Consider whether the program helps to keep kids in the District (as part of being “effective”).
- Talk with middle school faculty about academic evaluations.

#### *#3 Opportunity to drive resources to students*

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- Can't use first choice as a measure.

#### *#5 Building condition*

- This should not be a criterion.
- Don't close schools based on building.

#### *#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Small schools are more cost effective than large schools.

#### *#7 Building capacity*

- How are capacity numbers arrived at? Is this based on floor area?
- Space requirements vary according to style of teaching.

#### *#8 Community connection*

- Sense of community must be given some weight.

### *Other*

- Keep criteria simple: is school full?
- Absolute performance should be a criterion.

## ***Outstanding questions/comments***

### *Data collection and measurement*

- Make sure you understand how the finance data you receive was arrived at. Consider whether the data is accurate.

### *Equity*

- Are weighting and trends skewed toward lower-achieving?

### *Process*

- People/leaders at the schools should be involved in consolidation discussion.

### *Programs/academics*

- Unique curricula should be given weight.
- Alternative schools are threatened by closure/consolidation. Choice should be a priority.

### *Transition/outcomes*

- Is there a plan for children in closed schools?
- Where does the program go without displacing another program? Buildings aren't big enough to handle the target size of elementary schools (e.g. 400).
- Must be careful when you combine programs.
- Can't simply replicate programs with money.
- Is the plan to increase 325-child schools and create 400-child schools? This destroys programs and will help to continue population loss.
- Combining small schools into large doesn't necessarily save money.

## **GROUP 13 (representing City, Montlake, McGilvra, John Rodgers, Sacajawea, State, Bagley, Blaine, NOVA, AEZ)**

### ***Criteria and prioritization***

#### *#1 Effective instruction*

- What else will you look at besides WASL? Maybe use portfolios, activities, extracurriculars.

#### *#3 Opportunity to drive resources to students*

- How do you measure this? This seems more like a target (along with #2).

#### *#4 Family satisfaction*

- PTA engagement should be a measurement.

#### *#5 Building condition*

- Don't associate age with value.

#### *#6 Operating cost/pupil*

- Should this be operating cost/pupil or /building?

#### *#8 Community connection*

- How do you measure community engagement?

### ***Outstanding questions/comments***

#### *Community*

- School District has many all-city draws but not enough neighborhood schools.

#### *Process*

- How is information being distributed to immigrant and refugee communities?
- How will criteria be prioritized?
- Are there state criteria for identifying "failing" schools?
- Is teacher turnover being measured or considered?
- How do we break assumptions about characteristics of schools (i.e. public image)?

#### *Transition/outcomes*

- Don't drive "clients" to private schools (i.e. tipping point).