

**Capacity Management:
Rationale for Not Closing a High School at This Time**
December 9, 2008

- A. **Recommendation.** The overarching goal of our district is that all students will meet or exceed grade-level expectations and graduate from high school prepared for college, career and life. With that goal at the forefront, we do not believe that it is wise to close a comprehensive high school at this time. Our recommendation is to close a high school in 2010 and use this year to balance and create equity in our schools while completing a more effective student assignment plan. Additionally, this will allow more time for supports such as those within the SE Educational Initiative to produce positive results. This is the first year of the implementation of the SE Educational Initiative. The SE Educational Initiative was implemented with a three year goal of improvement in students' academic achievement and increased student enrollment. One year is not sufficient time to see the growth in academic achievement and enrollment anticipated through the implementation of the SE Educational Initiative strategies.
1. It is anticipated that the continuation of the various components of the SE Educational Initiative will result in increased enrollment and attendance at Rainier Beach and Cleveland High Schools. This can be attributed to increased opportunities for students at these schools to participate in rigorous and relevant course work and professional development focused on improved instructional strategies.

We acknowledge that, we have 3000 excess high school seats in the district with an excess functional capacity of about 1500.

We believe that we need to collectively solve the problem of high school capacity not solely based on seats but with regard to the students we are asking to make the most sacrifices, the poor and underachieving. We also believe that we should not implement a solution that impacts two of our most significantly impacted student populations. Poor and underachieving students across the system in all high schools are in need of additional supports. We must take this opportunity to address the instructional support needs of our current students and fiscal challenges.

I believe that the high school principals and a large majority of all other principals would agree that we need to better utilize our current high school capacity vs. closing a comprehensive high school, thus our current recommendation.

Closing a comprehensive high school raises many issues for consideration that may likely position the district to find itself in a reactive situation for students. Factors that will need to be carefully reviewed and evaluated include:

2. **Safety and security.** The issue of violence and gang violence is real in our communities. Putting together two comprehensive high schools that integrates neighborhoods, communities, gangs and rivalries is not recommended. There is a mutual respect for students and with each other as well as a safe school environment. Schools operate within a broader community where there are other safety and security issues. Taking all these factors into consideration, we conclude that the merger of two high school programs within the existing timeframe is problematic. If the SE initiative does not achieve the goals implemented, then we would need to take a year of planning to address the following areas well:
 - Transportation to Cleveland

- Impact to Assignment Plan
- Capital Costs
- Impact to CTE Programs
- Deferred maintenance
- Athletics
- Excess capacity impacts
- Consideration of implementation of a ninth grade academy
- Access to quality programs for acceleration and remediation
- All aspects of school culture and climate must be considered
- Building a strong comprehensive program takes time.
- What role does alternative schools play within the high school choice system
- Choice has only worked for some students, is it time to consider a mandatory high school assignment that offers the same choice of rigor and programs?

- B. **“Planning Capacity” versus “Functional Capacity”.** The current excess planning capacity for high schools is currently estimated at 3000 seats. This is based on a 100% utilization factor with 30 students in each classroom. However, the excess “functional” capacity has been calculated to be between 1500-1600 seats. The removal of a 1000 – 1200 seat high school from use, would reduce excess capacity to a dangerously low point, and ultimately create a potential student assignment problem of its own. We have physically visited every high school to determine the functional capacity.
- C. **Safety Net Restructuring Effort.** The goal of safety net restructuring is ultimately to reduce the number of students using safety net programs and to move them back into the comprehensive high schools. This would potentially increase comprehensive high school enrollment across the district by more than 1000 students. Phase 2 of the Safety Net project calls for full implementation of a comprehensive Response to Interventions (RTI) program in all comprehensive high schools. This proactive approach will reduce the need for safety net programs and schools, as well as education center contracts.
- D. **Steering Committee for High School Reform.** The focus of this committee has been on aligning high school procedures and practices, and ensuring compliance with school board policies and state laws. Additionally, we are focused this year on aligning core curriculum across the district. The current accreditation process that all high schools are involved in has generated the schools’ C-SIPs, which serve as a guide for individual school reform.
- E. **Cleveland and Rainier Beach High Schools’ Merger Taskforce.** On Thursday, December 4, 2008, a feasibility taskforce was convened to evaluate the merger of Cleveland and Rainier Beach High Schools on one of the two campuses. This initial session focused on the ability of each school’s campus to accommodate a student population of 1,100 students.
- F. **FINDINGS.** It was determined that both campuses are capable of accommodating the instructional needs of 1,100 students. However, there are significant differences between the two campuses. *Due to the reasons stated above and the required improvements listed below, I cannot support the closure of high school at this time.*

CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL

Advantages:

- New and newly renovated facility (one year old)
- Eight modern science laboratories
- All classrooms equipped with modern instructional technology.

Disadvantages:

- Transportation to this campus requires the use of yellow buses.
- Requires extensive use of teacher office spaces (these rooms are available).
- Small lunchroom area will require two lunch periods.
- Athletic fields are in need of renovation and are not as readily available as on the Rainier Beach campus.
- Smaller than normal classrooms.

Financial Impact:

- Increased transportation cost
- Renovation to athletic fields.

(The increase in Transportation cost may negate any cost savings anticipated through the closing of a high school program).

RAINIER BEACH

Advantages:

- Large classrooms
- Performing Arts facility
- Transportation (Metro Hub)
- Sports complex
- Parking
- Facilities available for expansion of CTE programs.

Disadvantages:

- Significant upgrade and general improvements needed to campus.
- Only one modern science laboratory available.
- Instructional Technology upgrades needed.
- Vocational Education facilities need to be completely renovated.

Financial Impact:

- Renovation of existing science laboratories and the addition of two science laboratories.
- General facility upgrades
- Instructional Technology upgrades

(The anticipated cost for all upgrades to include science laboratories, instructional technology and general improvements are estimated at over \$5 million. This may negate any cost savings anticipated through the closing of the high school programs).