



News Release

From Seattle Public Schools

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Contact: David Tucker, Media Relations, (206) 252-0203

Advancing Excellence for All:

School Board Votes Unanimously to Accelerate Work to Balance Capacity and Considers Solutions for Capacity Needs in North Seattle & Queen Anne/Magnolia

On October 29 the School Board took important steps toward improving academic achievement of students throughout the District by balancing capacity and focusing resources in more fully enrolled schools. Excellence for All, the District's strategic plan, creates the context for Seattle Public Schools to improve educational outcomes for all children and strengthen the infrastructure to support schools throughout the city. Facing a known funding gap for next year's budget and acknowledging the current national economic situation, the School Board directed the Superintendent to accelerate work to address the longstanding capacity imbalance across the district, both in terms of overall capacity and where capacity exists relative to where students live.

"We must reduce the number of buildings we maintain in order to use our available resources more effectively," said Cheryl Chow, School Board President. "We all understand that building closure is a difficult process for students, families and staff. However, we also know that this creates the opportunity to focus funding and offer a wider range of quality programs in more fully enrolled schools. We are committed to investing our resources so that all of our students have access to quality programs."

The board's [resolution](#) directs the Superintendent to expand current capacity management work underway to identify solutions for immediate capacity shortages in specific areas of the city. Originally planned for early 2009, the Board directed the Superintendent to accelerate the district-wide capacity management work and include the possibility of evaluating building closure to address the District's capacity challenges.

- more -

While the District has an excess in overall capacity, it also has an imbalance between where capacity exists and where families with school aged children live. Preceding a special board meeting, board members held a work session dedicated to [Excellence for All priority projects on creating a new student assignment plan and managing capacity shortages in North Seattle and Queen Anne/Magnolia](#). Recommendations developed by staff and community members working together over the past several months were presented and discussed prior to a board meeting to address building closure.

Balancing Capacity Across the District – Building Closure

At its special meeting on October 29, the School Board unanimously approved a [resolution](#) that directs the Superintendent to evaluate balancing the geographic capacity needs across the district. The goal is to correct a longstanding imbalance in classroom capacity, both in terms of overall capacity compared to total enrollment and where capacity exists relative to where students live. Numerous recent external audits and peer reviews underscore the need to bring the number of facilities into balance with current enrollment. A review of existing enrollment, projected student population, and current school capacity indicates that there is a shortage of capacity in the North, Northwest, Northeast and Queen Anne/Magnolia clusters; and excess capacity (more space than needed) in the Central, South, Southeast, West Seattle North and West Seattle South clusters.

Staff will immediately start work to bring proposed draft criteria, a timeline, and an engagement plan to the School Board for consideration. Information about opportunities for community members to be engaged, regular updates, and a set of frequently asked questions will be posted on the District's Web site at www.seattleschools.org/area/strategicplan/capacity_management.html. Numerous opportunities and methods for community engagement will be provided. At this time comments can be emailed to schoolboard@seattleschools.org or mailed to School Board, PO Box 34165, MS 11-010, Seattle, WA, 98124-1165. The School Board office phone number is 206 252 0040.

Recommendations to Address Elementary Capacity Shortages in the North and Queen Anne/Magnolia

[A motion to resolve short-term capacity shortages in north Seattle and Queen Anne/Magnolia](#) was also introduced to the board. Over the past several years, an increasing number of kindergarten and elementary age students have enrolled in schools in the north and Queen Anne/Magnolia areas. A review of projected enrollment indicates that there is an estimated shortfall in the north of 12 to 17 classrooms in 2009-10 and 12 to 15 classrooms for 2010-11. In Queen Anne/Magnolia the estimated shortfall is 4 to 6 classrooms in 2009-10 and 2 to 4 classrooms in 2010-11. Over the past several months, Seattle Public Schools has analyzed options and received feedback and suggestions from staff, families and the community.

Recommendations were presented to the School Board at its special October 29 meeting, and a vote is scheduled for November 12.

Recommendations for the Queen Anne/Magnolia clusters include:

- Catharine Blaine K-8 – renovate existing space to add four additional classrooms.
- BF Day – change student assignment plan to allow dual-cluster choice and transportation to BF Day elementary from the Queen Anne/Magnolia clusters.
- BF Day – complete four spaces at BF Day for general education classrooms.
- Cluster-generated solution – accept additional capacity into the four elementary schools in the Queen Anne/Magnolia cluster (Catharine Blaine K-8, Coe, John Hay and Lawton).

Recommendations for the North, Northwest and Northeast clusters include:

- Repurpose the Jane Addams building (which currently houses the Summit K-12 program) for a new K-8 school. Decisions regarding the future of the Summit K-12 program will be included in the building closure process.
- Olympic Hills - Amend the student assignment plan to allow for dual-cluster choice and transportation for the Northeast cluster to Olympic Hills elementary.
- Northgate – one classroom can be used for additional capacity
- Olympic Hills - work with staff at Olympic Hills to increase capacity through improved utilization of existing spaces.

Feedback on these recommendations is welcome. Email schoolboard@seattleschools.org or mail to School Board, PO Box 34165, MS 11-010, Seattle, WA, 98124-1165. The School Board office phone number is 206 252 0040.

The board motion and background materials are posted at www.seattleschools.org/area/board and www.seattleschools.org/area/strategicplan/capacity_management.html.

#####