



News Release

From Seattle Public Schools

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Proposed Attendance Area Maps Shared; Extensive Community Engagement Begins

Seattle - During extensive community engagement on the new student assignment plan, families told Seattle Public Schools that they wanted a student assignment plan that is predictable, equitable, and easy to understand. The next step in that process was taken today as staff shared proposed attendance area boundary maps at a work session of the Seattle School Board. The maps, if approved in mid-November, will determine students' initial school assignments based on their addresses. This new assignment plan would be phased in beginning in the 2010-11 school year for students at entry-grade levels—usually kindergarten, 6th, and 9th grades.

“Seattle Public Schools is committed to ensuring an excellent education for every student,” said Superintendent Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson. “The current way we assign students to schools is extremely complicated and costly. Families have told us they need a process that is predictable, equitable and easy to understand, and we agree. We know this is a big change for the Seattle community, and we look forward to hearing the community’s feedback over the next few weeks.”

The release of the maps kicks off a wave of community meetings designed to gather public input about the proposed boundaries. The first two meetings will take place on Saturday, October 10 at Eckstein Middle School (10 a.m. – Noon) and at Washington Middle School (2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.). A complete list of community meetings is available at <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/newassign/communitymeetings.html>. Interpretive services will be available at all meetings.

“I urge families to review the boundary maps and to give us their feedback,” said Dr. Goodloe-Johnson. “We will be listening, and we will review comments as we evaluate any needed adjustments in the boundaries. An extensive schedule of community meetings; an on-line survey; brochures and comments cards are just some of the ways we are reaching out to as many families as possible.”

Families will be able to check their attendance area schools online, based on their address. A web-based tool will show a student’s attendance area elementary-, middle-, and high school assignment based on that student’s address. The program, as well as copies of the boundary maps, is available via the new student assignment Web site at: <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/newassign/>.

Other resources include brochures with the proposed maps that will be available at community meetings and sent home to all families with students in Seattle Public Schools; flyers about the new student assignment plan that have been translated for multilingual families; and presentations about the plan that have been posted online.

Predictable Assignment Hallmark of New Plan

The general idea behind the new student assignment plan is that students will receive an initial assignment to an attendance area elementary-, middle-, or high school. This assignment will be based on their address. Students may also apply to an option school associated with their attendance area. A student can choose to apply to a school outside their attendance area; that assignment will be based on a series of tiebreakers. The tiebreakers are greatly simplified compared with the existing plan.

At the high school level, the proposal is to set aside approximately 10% of available seats for students from outside the attendance area, which will provide more equitable access to specialized programs.

Currently Enrolled Students May Remain at the Current School

If a student is currently enrolled at a school outside their attendance area, they can stay at that school through its highest grade under a process called “grandfathering”—as long as the services the students need are available at that school.

The new plan will be implemented in phases, beginning in the 2010-11 school year; the assignment rules for the current 2009-10 school year will remain the same.

New Attendance Areas To Replace Outdated Boundaries

If adopted by the School Board, the new attendance area boundaries will replace a set of school reference areas that haven’t been updated in decades, no longer reflect city demographics, and do not accurately reflect the capacity of the District’s facilities.

By comparison, the development of the new attendance boundaries has been a data-driven process, designed to reflect demographic shifts and building capacity more accurately—as well as provide greater assignment predictability while preserving choice options.

Boundaries Reflect Need For Increased Capacity

Enrollment at Seattle Public Schools has been trending up for the past two years, and has exceeded growth projections. This trend is expected to increase through 2015. These projections reveal the need to add capacity in certain areas of the city.

Seattle Public Schools needs to balance availability of facilities with where students live now, and where enrollment changes are projected for the future. In some areas of the city, buildings currently in use cannot accommodate projected enrollment, so the proposal is to open buildings to align available capacity to meet the needs of current and projected students.

As a result, McDonald Elementary, Rainier View Elementary, Sand Point Elementary, and Viewlands Elementary schools have been proposed for opening as attendance area schools. Old Hay has been proposed to open as an option school with a focus on Montessori.

Opening of buildings would be phased between 2010 and 2012, as follows:

Proposed Building	Timing
Sand Point	2011
Old Hay (students at Lincoln in 2010-11)	2011
McDonald (students at Lincoln in 2010-12)	2012
Rainier View	2011
Viewlands	2011

Review, Recommendations To Follow Community Engagement

After reviewing all comments from the community, Seattle Public Schools staff will formally introduce recommended boundary maps—including any revisions—at the School Board meeting on Wednesday, November 4. The School Board will vote on the recommended boundary maps on November 18, 2009. The development of an implementation plan will begin after the approval of the recommended boundary maps.

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