



SCHOOL BOARD ACTION REPORT

DATE: January 7, 2020
FROM: Denise Juneau, Superintendent
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Dr. Concie Pedroza, Chief, Student Support Services,
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For Introduction: January 13, 2021
For Action: January 27, 2021

1. TITLE

Approval of Southeast Middle School Attendance Area Boundaries for 2021-22

2. PURPOSE

This Board Action Report outlines middle school attendance area boundary changes to Asa Mercer International Middle School, Aki Kurose Middle School, and Washington Middle School beginning in the 2021-22 school year due to enrollment overcapacity at Mercer.

3. RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the School Board approve the 2021-22 attendance areas for Mercer, Aki Kurose, and Washington, as outlined in Attachment A.1, and grandfather assignments for currently enrolled students impacted by these changes. This action shifts the Kimball feeder area into Washington, and the Hawthorne feeder area into Aki Kurose. I further move the Board to direct the Superintendent to take any appropriate action to implement this decision.

I further move to end, effective for the 2021-22 school year, the Board's June 24, 2020 partial waiver of Board Policy No. 3130, Student Assignment and Enrollment, that applies to new students to the district who would otherwise be assigned to Mercer Middle School as their designated attendance area school. The waiver shall be in effect through the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- a. Background** Mercer has been, and continues to be, enrolled above capacity and has no space to accommodate additional students. Mercer is the largest middle school in the district with 1,185 students in October 2020. Its right-sized capacity – which does not include portables – accommodates 792 students. This figure (792) does not include reduced building occupancy guidelines for public health social distancing measures.

In February 2019, Seattle voters approved the BEX V levy, which included a replacement building for Mercer with additional capacity opening in 2025-26. During construction (between 2023 and 2025), Mercer will be located at the Van Asselt School Interim Site, 7201 Beacon Ave S. An addition will be constructed at that location (starting in 2021) to

convert it to a site large enough for temporary use by middle schools. Both the interim site and the new Mercer building will accommodate 1,000 students, per the district's middle school building educational specifications.

Mercer saw unprecedented enrollment growth during 2019-20 as a result of students leaving a nearby charter school. On June 24, 2020, the School Board closed Mercer to new student enrollment for 2020-21, effective immediately.

As of December 2020, Mercer has 25 portables. There are no additional rooms within the building that can be converted to classroom space and there is no room to add additional portables on the property. Neighboring middle schools, Aki Kurose and Washington, have space for additional students.

Per review of enrollment, capacity, and demographic data, feedback from potentially impacted communities, initial discussions with the Board, staff developed two scenarios that were considered by the Operations Committee. At the Operations Committee of the Whole meeting on January 6, 2021, the Committee selected Scenario A.1. Scenario A.1 (attached) would shift the Hawthorne feeder area into Aki Kurose and the Kimball feeder area into Washington. This is estimated to relieve overcrowding at Mercer by approximately 400 students once grandfathered students roll up to high school in 2023. Data is based on October 2020 enrollment at Mercer within those feeder areas.

- b. **Alternatives** Do not approve. This is not recommended by district staff. If the School Board does not approve the boundaries for 2021-22 as outlined in Attachment A.1, the current boundaries will remain in effect, perpetuating capacity challenges at Mercer. Immediate and sustained capacity relief to Mercer will produce more equitable learning conditions for students across southeast Seattle.

Approve alternate boundaries. This is not recommended by district staff. If the School Board does not approve the boundaries for 2021-22 as outlined in Attachment A.1, but approves different attendance area boundaries, unintended consequences may include continued capacity challenges at Mercer. District and school staff developed the recommended boundaries to balance the greatest degree of immediate and long-term capacity relief for Mercer, with the least degree of disproportionate impact to students of color furthest from educational justice.

- c. **Research** District staff reviewed elementary and middle school enrollment, demographics (Attachment B). District staff conducted online community engagement via Zoom, Teams, and Let's Talk (Attachment C) and incorporated feedback into the proposed middle school boundary revisions.

5. **FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE**

Fiscal impact to this action in 2021-22 is estimated to be up to \$188,796 (two additional buses and Weighted Staffing Standards (WSS) Model changes) – calculated from the 2020-21 base cost per bus of \$83,742 since most current students would be grandfathered at Mercer. In Scenario A.1, up to three additional buses would be needed based on the middle school transportation standards. Changes to the WSS model, in addition to shifting teachers to follow

students include reductions of some support staff at Mercer and other staff increases to Washington and Aki Kurose.

The revenue source for this motion is the general fund.

Expenditure: One-time Annual Multi-Year N/A

Revenue: One-time Annual Multi-Year N/A

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

With guidance from the District’s Community Engagement tool, this action was determined to merit the following tier of community engagement:

Not applicable

Tier 1: Inform

Tier 2: Consult/Involve

Tier 3: Collaborate

Due to the remote engagement methods required at this time, an in-person collaboration work group was not possible. However, district staff used the following tools to consult and involve potentially impacted communities.

An issue overview video was prepared in Chinese, English, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese, and launched on October 21; additionally, the Let’s Talk feedback tool for Mercer capacity comments and questions opened on that date.

In-person posters with Let’s Talk QR codes were placed at district meal sites on October 22.

Information was shared on the district’s main webpage and social media accounts, pushed out through SchoolMessenger to potentially impacted families and school staff, and distributed electronically to community partners / PT(S)A groups.

A “What We Heard” community comment summary was first posted online in late November, and continues to be updated as additional Let’s Talk dialogues and emails come in.

Ten targeted engagements occurred online starting November 18, including:

- Kimball PTSA meeting, Wednesday, November 18 at 7:30p
- Southeast Seattle Education Coalition (SESEC) meeting, Thursday, November 19 at 12:00p
- School Board District 7 equity group meeting, Tuesday, December 1 at 6:30p
- Hawthorne PTA meeting, Monday, December 8 at 6:00p
- Kimball PTSA meeting for ELL families, Monday, December 14 at 7:15p
- Hawthorne meeting for Hispanic families, Tuesday December 15 at 5:00p
- Beacon Hill and Dearborn Park joint PTA meeting, Tuesday, December 15 at 6:00p

- STEMbyTAF at Washington community meeting, Wednesday, December 16 at 6:00p
- Beacon Hill Black Family Council meeting, Wednesday, December 17 at 7:00p
- Southeast Seattle Education Coalition (SESEC) meeting, Thursday, December 17 at 12:00p

Additional community meetings will be scheduled to present the recommended boundaries and collect additional feedback prior to the anticipated Board action on January 27, 2021.

7. **EQUITY ANALYSIS**

District staff developed the recommended boundaries to prioritize racial equity, then by the unranked guiding principles of proximity, program continuity, and fiscal impact. District staff reviewed aggregated demographic characteristics of southeast Seattle students potentially impacted by changes, as well as the impact of boundary changes on attendance area populations. District and school staff discussed student benefit, unintended consequences, and mitigations for the recommended boundaries.

District staff did not consider shifting the Rising Star feeder area out of Mercer 1) due to its Equity Tier 1 status and 2) due to its recent elementary attendance area boundary changes with Maple and Wing Luke.

District staff did not consider shifting the Maple feeder area out of Mercer 1) due to its recent elementary attendance area boundary changes with Rising Star and Dearborn Park and 2) due to its proximity to Mercer - all Maple residents live within the Mercer walk zone.

For Scenario A.1, all Kimball feeder area residents also reside within the Mercer walk zone, but some reside within the Washington walk zone as well. No other feeder areas are entirely within the Mercer walk zone (Attachment D). Some Hawthorne area residents are within the Mercer walk zone (of approximately two miles); some are within the Aki Kurose walk zone (of approximately one mile). To mitigate the transportation impacts associated with these boundary changes, district staff recommend current 6th & 7th Mercer students be grandfathered (in 2021-22 and 2022-23), with district-provided transportation.

District staff did not consider shifting portions of multiple feeder areas – as opposed to entire feeder areas – to retain the neighborhood peer group of current fifth graders. This approach was informed by current and prior community comments requesting the district maintain cohorts when shifting to a new school.

8. **STUDENT BENEFIT**

This action will reduce overcrowding at Asa Mercer International Middle School.

9. **WHY BOARD ACTION IS NECESSARY**

Amount of contract initial value or contract amendment exceeds \$250,000 (Policy No. 6220)

Amount of grant exceeds \$250,000 in a single fiscal year (Policy No. 6114)

- Adopting, amending, or repealing a Board policy
- Formally accepting the completion of a public works project and closing out the contract
- Legal requirement for the School Board to take action on this matter
- Board Policy No. 3130, Student Assignment, provides the Board shall approve this item
- Other: _____

10. POLICY IMPLICATION

Board Policy No. 3130, Student Assignment, states that students shall have the opportunity to attend an elementary, middle, or high school in a designated attendance area based upon home address, unless the school designated by a student’s home address does not have the appropriate services for the students’ needs, as determined by the district. Per the Student Assignment Transition Plan for 2020-21, any changes to boundaries, feeder patterns, geographic zones, or assignment rules subsequent to the implementation of the Student Assignment Plan require Board action.

11. BOARD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

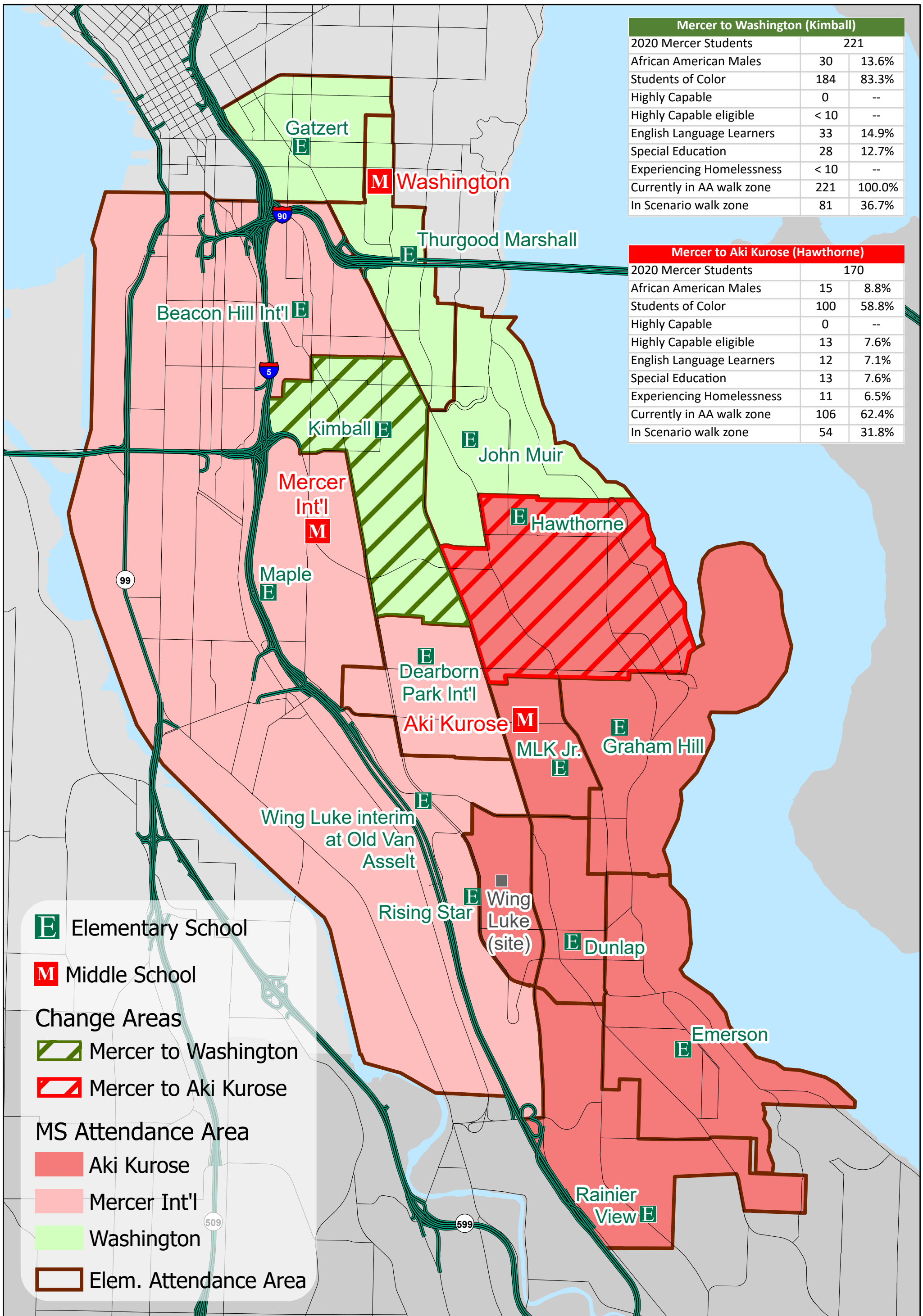
This motion was discussed at the Operations Committee of the Whole meeting on January 6, 2021. The Committee reviewed the motion and moved the item forward with a recommendation for approval by the full Board.

12. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Upon approval of this motion, the selected middle school attendance area boundaries scenario, as attached to this Board Action Report, will be implemented beginning in the 2021-22 school year. The Student Assignment Transition Plan, Transportation Service Standards, and Superintendent Procedure 3130SP, Student Assignment, will be updated to reflect these changes.

13. ATTACHMENTS

- Proposed attendance area scenario for 2021-22
 - Attachment A.1: Proposed attendance area map for 2021-22
- Attachment B.1: Demographic data supplement for Scenario 1 (for reference)
- Attachment C: Community feedback from Let’s Talk (for reference)
- Attachment D: Aki Kurose, Mercer, Washington Middle Schools with feeder pattern Elementary Schools and Middle School Walk Zone Map (for reference)
- Attachment E: Let’s Talk Data (for reference)



Mercer to Washington (Kimball)		
2020 Mercer Students	221	
African American Males	30	13.6%
Students of Color	184	83.3%
Highly Capable	0	--
Highly Capable eligible	< 10	--
English Language Learners	33	14.9%
Special Education	28	12.7%
Experiencing Homelessness	< 10	--
Currently in AA walk zone	221	100.0%
In Scenario walk zone	81	36.7%

Mercer to Aki Kurose (Hawthorne)		
2020 Mercer Students	170	
African American Males	15	8.8%
Students of Color	100	58.8%
Highly Capable	0	--
Highly Capable eligible	13	7.6%
English Language Learners	12	7.1%
Special Education	13	7.6%
Experiencing Homelessness	11	6.5%
Currently in AA walk zone	106	62.4%
In Scenario walk zone	54	31.8%

The names on this map are not intended to reflect the official name of any school building. They are instead intended to ensure better public understanding based upon familiar reference, particularly in situations where program and school building names differ. This information has been compiled by SPS staff from a variety of sources and is subject to change without notice. SPS makes no representations or warranties, expressed or implied, as to accuracy, completeness, timeliness, or rights to the use of such information. SPS shall not be liable for any general, special, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages including, but not limited to, lost revenues or lost profits resulting from the use or misuse of the information contained on this map. Any sale of this map or information on this map is prohibited. MapFile: Mercer_Assignment_1

Mercer International Middle School- Feeder Area Analysis

Actuals

October 2020 Attendance Area Residents

Mercer:	1397
Washington:	452
Aki Kurose:	943

October 2020 School Enrollment

Mercer:	1185
Washington:	603
Aki Kurose:	727

Actuals

Oct 2020 residents, in grades 6-8 (count, percent)

all Mercer area residents, in grades 6-8: **1397**
 Residents of Color: 1150, 82.32%
 African American / Black Males: 156, 11.17%
 Highly Capable: 109, 7.80%
 Special Education: 180, 12.88%
 English Language Learners: 224, 16.03%
 Experiencing Homelessness: 69, 4.94%

Oct 2020 enrollment, in grades 6-8 (count, percent)

Mercer residents, attending Mercer: **1167**
 Students of Color: 985, 84.40%
 African American / Black Males: 123, 10.54%
 Highly Capable: 48, 4.11%
 Special Education: 147, 12.60%
 English Language Learners: 206, 17.65%
 Experiencing Homelessness: 48, 4.11%

all Washington area residents, in grades 6-8: 452
 Residents of Color: 360, 79.65%
 African American / Black Males: 101, 22.35%
 Highly Capable: 50, 11.06%
 Special Education: 74, 16.37%
 English Language Learners: 96, 21.24%
 Experiencing Homelessness: 43, 9.51%

Washington residents, attending Washington: 346
 Students of Color: 277, 80.06%
 African American / Black Males: 77, 22.25%
 Highly Capable: 49, 14.16%
 Special Education: 57, 16.47%
 English Language Learners: 80, 23.12%
 Experiencing Homelessness: 30, 8.67%

all Aki Kurose area residents, in grades 6-8: 943
 Residents of Color: 862, 91.41%
 African American / Black Males: 151, 16.01%
 Highly Capable: 38, 4.03%
 Special Education: 147, 15.59%
 English Language Learners: 200, 21.21%
 Experiencing Homelessness: 41, 4.35%

Aki Kurose residents, attending Aki Kurose: 663
 Students of Color: 619, 93.36%
 African American / Black Males: 96, 14.48%
 Highly Capable: 0, 0.00%
 Special Education: 108, 16.29%
 English Language Learners: 167, 25.19%
 Experiencing Homelessness: 30, 4.52%

Potential Impact

Oct 2020 residents, in grades 6-8 (count)

Hawthorne to Aki Kurose

Mercer: 1397-257=	1140
Washington:	452
Aki Kurose: 943+257=	1200

Oct 2020 enrollment, in grades 6-8 (count)

Hawthorne to Aki Kurose

Mercer: 1185-170=	1015
Washington:	603
Aki Kurose: 727+170=	897

Kimball to Washington

Mercer: 1397-261=	1136
Washington: 452+261=	713
Aki Kurose:	943

Kimball to Washington

Mercer: 1185-221=	964
Washington: 603+221=	824
Aki Kurose:	727

Both

Mercer: 1397-251-261=	879
Washington: 452+261=	713
Aki Kurose: 943+257=	1200

Both

Mercer: 1185-170-221=	794
Washington: 603+221=	824
Aki Kurose: 727+170=	897

Mercer International Middle School- Feeder Area Analysis

Mercer Feeder Areas

Oct 2020 *residents*, in grades 6-8 (count, percent)

all Beacon Hill area residents, in grades 6-8: **160**

Residents of Color: 138, 86.25%
African American / Black Males: <10, --
Highly Capable: 10, 6.25%
Special Education: 19, 11.86%
English Language Learners: 29, 18.13%
Experiencing Homelessness: <10, --

all Hawthorne area residents, in grades 6-8: **257**

Residents of Color: 137, 53.31%
African American / Black Males: 23, 8.95%
Highly Capable: 50, 19.46%
Special Education: 24, 9.34%
English Language Learners: 13, 5.06%
Experiencing Homelessness: 17, 6.61%

all Dearborn Park area residents, in grades 6-8: **208**

Residents of Color: 202, 97.12%
African American / Black Males: 30, 14.42%
Highly Capable: <10, --
Special Education: 31, 14.90%
English Language Learners: 51, 24.52%
Experiencing Homelessness: <10, --

all Maple area residents, in grades 6-8: **229**

Residents of Color: 202, 88.21%
African American / Black Males: 12, 5.24%
Highly Capable: 16, 6.99%
Special Education: 34, 14.85%
English Language Learners: 38, 16.59%
Experiencing Homelessness: <10, --

all Rising Star area residents, in grades 6-8: **282**

Residents of Color: 253, 89.72%
African American / Black Males: 44, 15.60%
Highly Capable: 11, 3.90%
Special Education: 39, 13.83%
English Language Learners: 53, 18.79%
Experiencing Homelessness: 22, 7.80%

all Kimball area residents, in grades 6-8: **261**

Residents of Color: 218, 83.52%
African American / Black Males: 38, 14.56%
Highly Capable: 14, 5.36%
Special Education: 33, 12.64%
English Language Learners: 40, 15.33%
Experiencing Homelessness: 10, 3.83%

Oct 2020 *enrollment*, in grades 6-8 (count, percent)

Beacon Hill residents, attending Mercer: **144**

Students of Color: 125, 86.81%
African American / Black Males: <10, --
Highly Capable: <10, --
Special Education: 17, 11.81%
English Language Learners: 28, 19.44%
Experiencing Homelessness: <10, --

Hawthorne residents, attending Mercer: **170**

Students of Color: 100, 58.82%
African American / Black Males: 18, 10.59%
Highly Capable: 13, 7.65%
Special Education: 13, 7.65%
English Language Learners: 12, 7.06%
Experiencing Homelessness: 11, 6.47%

Dearborn Park residents, attending Mercer: **189**

Students of Color: 184, 97.35%
African American / Black Males: 23, 12.17%
Highly Capable: <10, --
Special Education: 28, 14.81%
English Language Learners: 46, 24.34%
Experiencing Homelessness: <10, --

Maple residents, attending Mercer: **214**

Students of Color: 189, 88.32%
African American / Black Males: <10, --
Highly Capable: 12, 5.61%
Special Education: 29, 13.55%
English Language Learners: 38, 17.76%
Experiencing Homelessness: <10, --

Rising Star residents, attending Mercer: **229**

Students of Color: 203, 88.65%
African American / Black Males: 35, 15.28%
Highly Capable: <10, --
Special Education: 32, 13.97%
English Language Learners: 49, 21.40%
Experiencing Homelessness: 16, 6.99%

Kimball residents, attending Mercer: **221**

Students of Color: 184, 83.26%
African American / Black Males: 30, 13.57%
Highly Capable: <10, --
Special Education: 28, 12.67%
English Language Learners: 33, 14.93%
Experiencing Homelessness: <10, --

Attachment C: Mercer International Middle School Capacity Challenge

Summary of What We Heard through Let's Talk as of Jan. 6, 2021

Several respondents expressed a desire to use a racial equity lens in making decisions and ensuring the least amount of disruption to students of color, furthest from educational justice.

Many respondents at Dearborn Park and other schools don't want to see disruption to language immersion pathways and several said they want to ensure the pathway continues from Dearborn Park and Beacon Hill to Mercer.

A few respondents are concerned about loss of DLI access (by testing in) in middle school for those who aren't in the DLI program currently.

Some respondents asked about moving the middle school dual language immersion program to either Aki Kurose or Washington or adding DLI to those schools to allow Beacon Hill and Dearborn Park to feed to middle schools other than Mercer.

Many respondents suggested proximity be a deciding factor in assigning students to middle school.

Many respondents expressed concerns about walkability and transportation if Kimball is moved to Washington, mentioning the availability of safe walk/bicycle routes to Mercer and no direct Metro bus service to Washington.

Several respondents advocated for keep neighborhoods and families together and at neighborhood schools and/or expressed unhappiness about moving students from Beacon Hill (Kimball/Mercer) to another neighborhood (Washington).

Some respondents expressed that they want current students to remain at Mercer, that priority be given to students who have siblings at the school.

Several respondents (prior to the potential scenarios being shared) suggested changing the schools feeding into each middle school. Suggestions included:

- Kimball to Washington
- Hawthorne to Washington
- Hawthorne to Aki Kurose
- Rising Star to Aki Kurose
- Beacon Hill to Washington
- Beacon Hill to Aki Kurose
- Dearborn to Aki Kurose
- Dearborn to Washington

Multiple respondents want Kimball to feed into Mercer.

Multiple respondents want Dearborn Park to feed into Mercer.

A few respondents (after the scenarios were shared) suggested moving Beacon Hill to Washington instead of Kimball/instead of Hawthorne.

Some respondents expressed preferences for certain schools, specifically Hawthorne to Aki Kurose (primarily for proximity) or Hawthorne to Washington (primarily for STEMbyTAF), while others were against moving to certain schools (primarily due to reputation, HC, or STEMbyTAF).

A few respondents who reported that they were Kimball families said they were in favor of moving Kimball to Washington.

A few respondents who reported they were Hawthorne families said they were in favor of moving Hawthorne to Aki Kurose.

Several respondents expressed the importance of keeping the entire elementary school feeding to the same middle school.

Some respondents expressed safety concerns about overcrowding at Mercer.

Some respondents suggested that the district evaluate why Mercer has been attracting more students than others and to implement changes to duplicate that success at neighboring middle schools.

Some respondents suggested building Mercer for more students given population growth or asked why it could not be built larger.

Some respondents asked about high school assignments if elementary schools feed into a different middle school.

A few respondents expressed a desire for remote learning to continue as an option after schools re-open.

Some respondents expressed concern about the schedule for developing potential solutions.

Other comments included:

- Ensuring that all three middle schools have adequate staffing and equitable programs
- Sending students south of Othello to Aki Kurose and those north of Lander to Washington
- Staggering classes and start times
- Verifying addresses for Mercer students
- Having families visit middle schools
- Share information introducing families to STEM by TAF at Washington
- Making Kimball or Maple a K-8
- Making Kimball 5-8 and Maple K-4

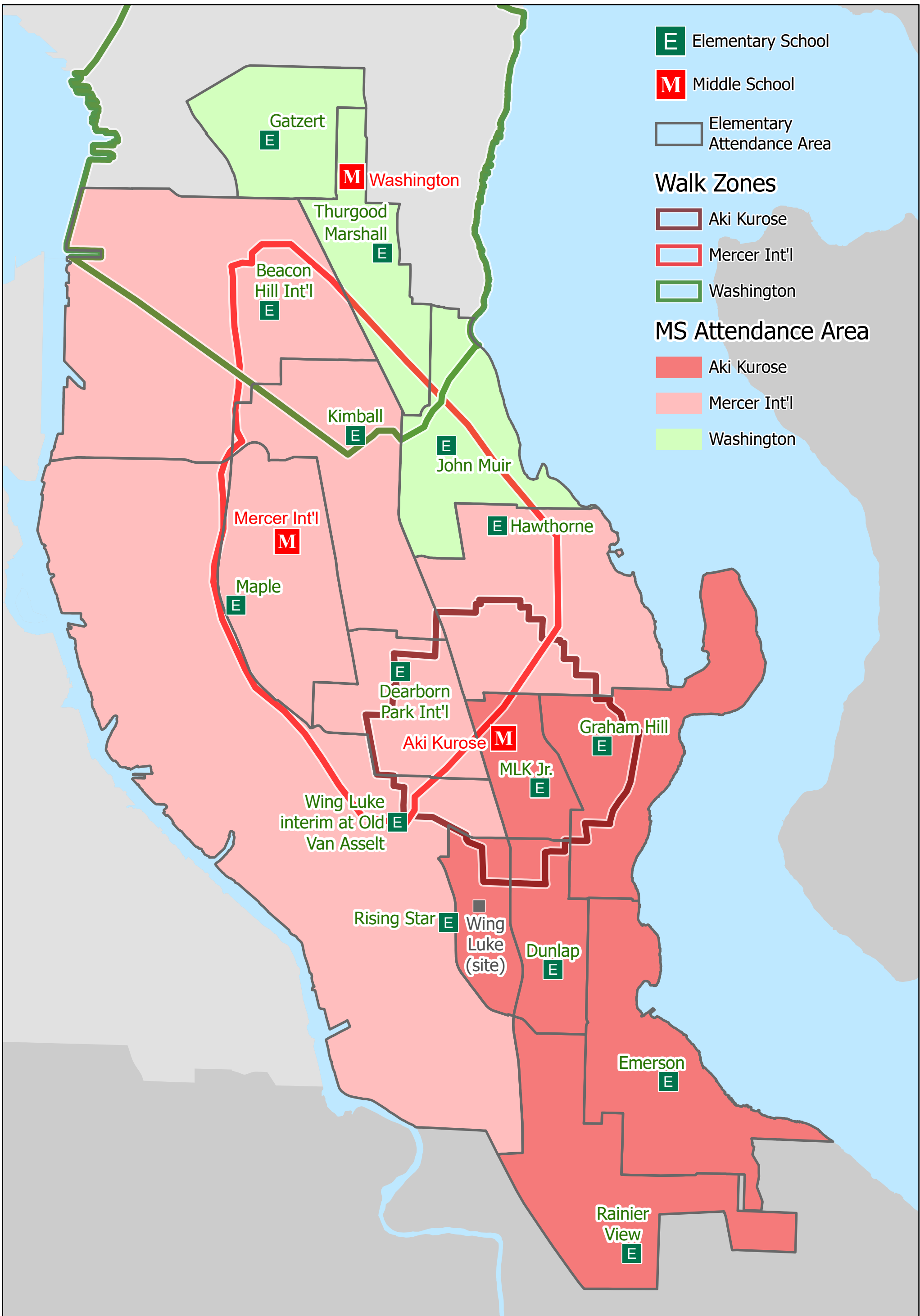
- Providing yellow school bus transportation to Washington
- Keeping Maple feeding to Mercer
- Building two middle schools
- Adding more portables instead of replacing Mercer
- Considering expanding the DLI program at both ES and MS level to meet demand
- Considering what changes to the HCC program will do to Washington enrollment
- Considering a Washington replacement construction project and the impact on students who would go to Kimball at the current location, Kimball at the interim site, Washington at current location, and Washington at an interim site.
- That changing Kimball to feed to Washington means that Kimball students in grade 3 would not be at the interim site for two years as Kimball students and then two years as Mercer students
- African American students should be allowed to pick school to remedy racial disparities.
- Hawthorne to Aki Kurose increases diversity at Aki Kurose; Hawthorne to Washington reduces diversity at Washington.
- Difficult year for families; this makes it more challenging.
- Should not be making a decision this fast and just before open enrollment.
- Disruption of social groups/community resources at middle school age will be damaging.

2020



Aki Kurose, Mercer, Washington Middle Schools with feeder pattern Elementary Schools and Middle School Walk Zones

Last updated:
12/4/2020



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Attachment E: Mercer Capacity Let's Talk Respondents

Response data: Oct. 21, 2020–Jan. 6, 2021

Dialogues received = 229

Total respondents = 219 (some sent more than one dialogue)

Respondent Type (respondents could select more than one respondent type)

Parent/guardian	Employee	Community member	Student
222	17	20	<10

School* (respondents could select more than one school)

Beacon Hill	Dearborn Park	Hawthorne	Kimball	Maple	Rising Star
33	40	40	82	15	<10

Mercer	Washington
39	<10

Dunlap*	Graham Hill*	T. Marshall*	McDonald*	MLK*
<10	<10	<10	<10	<10

*Feedback directly requested from families attending one of the Mercer feeder schools (Beacon Hill, Dearborn Park, Hawthorne, Kimball, Maple, Rising Star elementary schools) and Mercer Middle School families.

Race/Ethnicity of Student(s) (respondents could select more than one option)

African American	African/Black	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic/Latino	White	Other
12	<10	<10	60	<10	15	134	15