

Edmonds School District #15 Board of Directors
Procedure 5300 – R2
Review of Criteria for School Closure
Woodway Elementary School

The Edmonds School District Board of Directors is committed to providing students in the Edmonds School District the resources and facilities required for the successful implementation of programs needed to serve a diverse student population. To meet this responsibility, the School Board may address educational programs, school facilities or district financial issues by redrawing school boundaries and/or reducing or increasing the numbers of schools in operation in the District. In taking steps to redraw boundaries to reduce the number of schools in use, the School Board is guided by their primary responsibility to the school district community in totality. It is the role of the Citizens Planning Committee (CPC) to assist the School Board in this process by studying issues related to school closures/boundaries and forwarding recommendations to the School Board.

Working in conjunction with District staff and the CPC the School Board may initiate a review of school boundaries/school use when they have a compelling need to do so. In June of 2008 the School Board instructed the CPC to develop plans to consolidate Woodway Elementary into neighboring schools. The proposed consolidation would take effect and students would start at their new school in the fall of 2009. This recommendation was made to reduce annual operational costs for the school district. For the 2008-2009 operating budget the District reduced 3.3 million dollars as a result of limited resources and increased costs. In order to be fiscally responsible, the District must continue to reduce costs and build capacity to meet budget challenges. The basic overhead required to operate an elementary school in the 2008-2009 school year has been estimated to be \$722,000 a year. Thus, taking one or more elementary schools out of service and providing an appropriate and equitable educational program for students at another facility would result in a substantial reduction of operational costs.

Physical Plant

A comprehensive study of the physical condition of every school and facility in the District was conducted by the directors of Capital Projects and Maintenance in 2000 (see attachment A). The study included both the structural aspects of the facilities as well as their adaptability to current instructional models. Based on that study, each school was assigned a “score” using a rating scale of 100 points. Woodway Elementary was determined to have a score of 68, and Evergreen Elementary a score of 65. These two schools are being considered for closure. These scores place the two schools in the bottom 20% of rankings for all elementary schools. The scores for the elementary schools ranged from a low of 55 (Esperance Elementary, which has since been demolished) to a high of 98 (Seaview). Not included in the study were the elementary schools that were newly built or under construction, these schools were assigned a score of 100 (Chase Lake, Meadowdale, Maplewood and Terrace Park). This data was reviewed with the CPC sub-committee on facilities, and used in part to develop the priorities for construction projects included in the 2002, 2003, and 2006 bond proposals.

Demographic

A comprehensive analysis of student and adult demographic patterns is completed every two years with the update of the District’s Capital Facilities Plan. In addition, the District contracted with Mr. Les Kendrick in January, 2007 to do a study of long-range enrollment trends. The data supports the conclusion that the District’s enrollment is expected to continue to decline (1.5% - 2% per year), until approximately 2015. The enrollment in the southern portion of the District, including the Evergreen and Woodway attendance areas, has declined more rapidly than that of the rest of the district. Given current enrollment trends, it is expected that the student population at Evergreen and Woodway will continue to decline at a faster pace than the overall District.

As part of the analysis of demographic patterns in selecting schools for possible closure, available capacity at nearby schools was considered. Schools of comparable facility quality and having available space to serve more students are adjacent to both Woodway and Evergreen, thus allowing for a smooth merger of students into neighboring schools. In the initial review process for identifying schools for possible closure, schools were eliminated from consideration if adjacent schools did not have available capacity to increase their student enrollment as needed. Schools were also not considered for possible closure if an adjacent school was experiencing high levels of enrollment that might require a future boundary adjustment.

Transportation

Woodway currently has 40 to 50 students who live within the walking distance of the school. They are not provided with bus transportation. These students would probably require transportation to their new school. An additional 100 students living in the Woodway attendance area are currently provided bus transportation and would continue to need transportation. After a review of the requirements for transporting students to their new schools-- if the current recommendation was accepted--the transportation department estimates the cost of busing to range from \$3,000 to \$10,000 in additional costs. The new routes to transport Woodway students would be built into other bus routes required within the District. Reasonable efforts will be made to minimize time on busses for students.

Program

A common methodology for determining the capacity of individual schools at each level has been established and is updated periodically (Attachment B). The template and the resulting capacity for each school facility, is described in the District's Capital Facilities Plan. A review of available capacity at Westgate and Sherwood Elementary Schools, the schools proposed to accept students from Woodway, indicates sufficient unused capacity at the schools to absorb additional students. This assessment of available capacity considers both classroom space and auxiliary space used for specialized programs of learning such as physical education and supplemental instructional programs for individual students.

Classroom materials, library books and some furniture would need to be redistributed to the receiving schools. This effort requires staff time to coordinate, assign, and distribute items to be moved, as well as additional support for the moving process. The cost for this is estimated to be about \$50,000. Some additional textbooks and teaching materials might have to be purchased to balance out school collections as students are reassigned.

The Human Resources Department has initiated meetings with staff members at Woodway Elementary and is in discussion about the processes to be used for reassigning staff. Parents have requested that attention be given to allowing staff from Woodway easy access to new positions at Sherwood and Westgate created by the reassignment of Woodway students. The presence of familiar faces at the new schools would be supportive and comforting for students during this transition and efforts will be made to facilitate this request. It is also important to plan in this process ways to support staff in making a transition to their new assignments and to feeling welcomed and a part of a new professional community. Opportunities for newly assigned staff to meet and confer with new colleagues will be provided during the spring and summer months.

Social and Political Factors

The CPC and staff members have engaged parents and community members in the recommendation to close Woodway Elementary. Proposals for how students will be reassigned are being developed by the CPC. These proposals will be shared with parents and community members through the school principal, community meetings at the school with district staff, direct mailings to families, meetings with school staff and two public hearings.

Every effort will be made to transition students to their new schools smoothly and with attention paid to the social and emotional challenges to students and families in adjusting to a new neighborhood school. Working with staff, parents and students from Woodway and the receiving schools, a plan will be completed that provides support and orientation activities to new families and recognizes the existing culture and community of the receiving schools. Such activities may include:

- school open houses for new families
- introductory meetings between parent leaders
- inclusion of potential new students in special evening activities during the current school year, and
- distribution of school newsletters to new parents.

Should the School Board approve closure of the Woodway Elementary building, an evaluation would be completed to determine future possible options for the facility. The District will continue to maintain the property as an asset to the District and the community. The District currently provides security patrols to supervise District property during evening hours and on weekends; this would continue at Woodway. The grounds and playground area will be maintained by the district for use by the community.

Financial Factors

An analysis of the estimated cost savings related to staff and the physical plant has been updated, using actual cost data for the 2008-09 fiscal year. The estimated savings for closing an elementary school is \$722,000 using that data; actual savings in 2009-10 will likely be greater due to increases in compensation and utility costs prior to the 2009-10 school year. The potential for leasing or productively using the closed facilities to generate revenue for the District have been considered in general terms. The District has successfully offered surplus properties for long-term lease in the past three years, and anticipates similar interest in the long-term lease of closed facilities, as the School Board directs.