

Dear Chief Sealth Community:

As you may know, the Superintendent and Facilities staff are presenting to the School Board three options for the money allocated for Chief Sealth High School and Denny Middle School in the Building Excellence III Levy.

The first option calls for continuing the concept of a shared campus with no additional dollars devoted to Chief Sealth beyond the \$125 million dollars originally allocated for both schools. Since the time of the passage of the levy, the cost of construction has skyrocketed, and, as a result, the scope of work on the Chief Sealth building under the original plan has decreased. The construction cost acceleration is a national issue, impacting not just school districts, but also businesses, governments and communities. It is very unfortunate that we are experiencing this, but it is the economic reality of the situation.

Under the first option, Chief Sealth would receive mechanical upgrades including a fire-sprinkler system, seismic retrofitting to prevent collapse in case of a severe earthquake, and a new boiler system. With this design, Chief Sealth and Denny would share common spaces including a Galleria, a pre-engineering lab, a family and consumer science kitchen, as well as common physical plant systems including a kitchen. Many other upgrades to Chief Sealth, including improvements to the gym and auditorium, would be dependent on the amount of money available after the major structural work was done, taking into account the increasing cost of construction and other factors.

The second option could result in all of the above work being performed and would provide \$5-10 million more dollars for additional work specific to Chief Sealth. Facilities staff has told me that this money could be spent on making sure that many, if not all, of the items that are optional under the first plan would be done. I have been told that our staff would be able to make certain choices that I think are critical, including maintaining the current Chief Sealth library as is.

The third option would be to build a new Denny Middle School in its current location while Chief Sealth would receive a new heating system and the upgrades necessary to meet city codes and safety requirements. According to the calculations done by the Facilities personnel, an additional \$10-15 million dollars would need to be allocated by the School Board to complete option three.

I have been told that under all three options, Chief Sealth staff and students would still have to relocate to the Boren Building as the new mechanical upgrades cannot be done with students in the building.

I believe that the initial plan to commensurately upgrade both buildings was conceived in good faith by the prior School Board's Operations Committee when faced with the knowledge that Chief Sealth would have to move in order to receive a new heating system. They hoped to do more work to improve our building beyond the heating system. As most of you know, the order in which work is done on buildings is determined by a

survey of building conditions. Chief Sealth would not have been included on the BEX III Levy if not for the needed work to the heating system, and was not in line for a major remodel for at least another levy cycle. I do not think that there was ever intent to slight our community, but I can understand why people have grown concerned about the difference in the upgrades that have been allocated to Chief Sealth as opposed to Denny since the idea was conceived and the levy passed.

I know that many of you feel like your voices have not been heard in this process. I am troubled the process has led to such discord. I know that I share part of the responsibility for that. The reduction of the scope of this project as set forth in option one is not what I supported initially and brought forth to you.

As a Chief Sealth graduate, a Delridge Community member, and a parent of an incoming Chief Sealth student, my feelings about this issue go beyond that of my job. I have struggled with watching how this debate has impacted the Chief Sealth staff who I know to be among the best in the District and whom I believe are committed to the success of our students. I have also worried about the impact of this on our students and particularly as they internalize the idea that they are somehow less worthy of a new building than other high school students in Seattle.

I know that people have concerns about middle and high school students sharing a campus. I have faith in our students. I believe that our students are and will be good role models to their counterparts at Denny. I believe that the staff at both schools can work together to ensure that the best interests of our students are met. I would love to see all students who currently attend Denny choose to attend Chief Sealth because they know it is a place where they will be embraced and encouraged. I think that many exciting things could happen if Chief Sealth and Denny were in a position to work collaboratively, especially if each school were in comparable facilities. For these reasons, I am not opposed to the concept of a shared campus.

I have to acknowledge that my perspective on the potential of a shared campus comes in part from my having taught at Denny Middle School for five years and having been the Principal of the Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center which is a 6-12 school. I think that it is because of my experience as the SBOC Principal that I do not feel a sense of trepidation about mixing the populations of students. As a parent of two girls who are entering middle school, I need you to know that I would have no hesitation with having my daughters attend a middle school that shared space with Chief Sealth because I have the greatest confidence in our students as role models and our staff as care takers.

I feel like I cannot remain silent regarding my feelings about this issue any longer. At this time I am weighing the merits of both options two and three. I am open to option two, if the School Board is committed to providing the Chief Sealth community with facilities that will cause us to walk into the building and say "Wow." I want to see the details of what is going to be included in option two just as you do so we can all have a clear understanding of what it entails. If option two were selected, I would ask for

assurances that efforts to bring the Chief Sealth and Denny staff together are fully supported so that the potential benefits of a shared campus could be realized.

I am hoping that our school community can keep an open mind and honest dialogue regarding the options and move forward together for our students, staff and community.

I know that many people have stated that there needs to be more investigation into the academic benefits of a shared campus. At the request of the Superintendent, I will be meeting with Denny Principal Jeff Clark and Instructional Directors Michael Tolley and Ruth Medsker next Wednesday after school to talk about ways in which our two schools can benefit academically from a shared space campus design. I would like to hear from you about what questions you would like me to take to this meeting or thoughts you would like me to share. I believe that no matter what decision the School Board makes, this type of conversation about working together with our neighborhood Middle School will be incredibly valuable.

At the end of the day, I believe that it is the people that make the home, not the house. Regardless of what the School Board decides to do, my personal goals remain the same. I am committed to:

1. Improving academic achievement and reducing the achievement gap,
2. Continuing to develop our international/global focus,
3. Recruiting and retaining neighborhood students and high quality staff,
4. Improving the image of our school.

Being the Principal of this school means a lot to me. I cannot overemphasize how proud I am to serve the community that I grew up in and to serve the children of the people I grew up with. In the nearly four years that I have been the Principal at Chief Sealth, I believe we have instilled a sense of faith in our community that Chief Sealth is a strong, academically-challenging, and safe school to send their children to, as well as a school in which all of our students will be appreciated for who they are. We must to keep the momentum we have gained in the community and move forward collectively.

I respect your opinions and beliefs and that you are passionate about sharing those. I felt that it was time that I shared with you my own beliefs about this issue not just as the Chief Sealth Principal, but as someone who cares about what happens to our school. I know that you may not all agree with me. However, I ask that we all move forward together in the best interests of our students no matter what choice the School Board makes.

John Boyd,  
Principal, Chief Sealth High School