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News Release

From Seattle Public Schools

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Superintendent Shares Capacity Process Guidelines Building Closure Timeline Confirmed

On October 29, 2008 the Seattle School Board directed District staff to accelerate work to consider how to correct a long-standing imbalance in capacity across the District. A number of recent studies have confirmed that Seattle Public Schools has more buildings than needed for its current and projected number of students.

Recommendations may include closing buildings, repurposing buildings, and moving or adding programs.

At the School Board meeting on November 12, Superintendent Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson outlined the guidelines staff will use in making recommendations to close or repurpose buildings. Five specific guidelines will be used:

- **Geographic Need:** How to balance capacity across the district to ensure the appropriate number of seats in each geographic area.
- **Building Condition:** Recent surveys and analyses will be used to evaluate the quality and condition of each building, using factors such as cost of maintenance, lot size, etc.
- **Cost per Pupil:** How non-instructional costs per student, including both core staffing and administrative mitigation, compare with District averages.
- **Proximity:** Whether other nearby schools serve the same grade levels.
- **Academic Performance:** Whether the school has made the expected annual academic progress under the federal No Child Left Behind law.

“As we examine these guidelines,” Goodloe-Johnson noted, “we will do so in the context of three foundational questions to ensure that all students have access to a high quality education: 1) Do programs need to **move to other areas** of the district to improve

access to these programs? 2) Do programs ***need to be added in areas*** of the district to improve access to these programs? and 3) How do closures or program moves relate to our students' ***academic needs*** and strengthen our ***fiscal health***? Answers to these questions inform both immediate capacity changes as well as the longer-term changes to the District's Student Assignment Plan. "

Tonight's Board approval of amendments and updates to [Board Policy H01.00](#) means that the proposed timeline for consideration of building closure is confirmed. The policy sets out the steps required for the process of closing buildings for instructional purposes. The amendments add additional notification methods for public hearings on building closure, but delete a notice requirement that is dependent on the publishing schedules of community-based newspapers. This change retains the minimum 14-day notice requirement for public hearings on building closure, and updates a ten-year-old notice policy to reflect the multiple ways in which community members receive information today. All other notice requirements for the closure process will remain the same.

The timeline for considering building closures across the district is provided in detail below. Preliminary recommendations will be announced on November 25, 2008 and a final vote by the School Board is expected on January 29, 2009. In addition to the legal requirements for public hearings at buildings proposed for closure, the Superintendent has directed that additional community workshops be held.

"We must ensure that families, staff and community members have the opportunity to understand and comment on these difficult – but necessary – decisions," she said. "And we must ensure that all of our decisions are focused on meeting our students' academic needs."

Key dates in the capacity management timeline include:

- November 25: Preliminary recommendation
- December 3: School Board meeting – discussion of recommendation
- December 15, 16, 18: Public hearings at buildings proposed for closure
- December 17: School Board meeting
- January 6: Final recommendation
- January 7: Recommended motion introduced at School Board meeting
- January 21: School Board meeting
- January 22: Final public hearing
- January 29: Board vote on recommendation

Updated information about the process and timeline will be provided via the District's Web site, <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/capacity/index.dxml>. An array of communication methods will be employed to notify staff, families and community members of recommendations, community workshops and public hearings.

Feedback related to capacity management is welcome. Comments can be emailed to capacity@seattleschools.org, 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.

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