

Cooper Elementary School

SCHOOL CLOSURE FACT SHEET

<http://cooper.seattleschools.org/>

School closure background Information:

On November 25, 2008, Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson released preliminary recommendations for capacity management and building closure for Seattle Public Schools. Cooper Elementary was not originally included in the list of schools to be closed or repurposed. As of the original recommendation, Arbor Heights Elementary was listed as the West Seattle program to be discontinued. Its building was listed to be repurposed to house Pathfinder K-8. Following public comment and questions by the school board, including extensive organizing from the Arbor Heights community, the Superintendent announced on December 3, 2008 that she was initiating a process of further data analysis to evaluate the possibility of repurposing the Cooper School building to house Pathfinder K-8.

Cooper Elementary is not a wise choice for school closure. Relocating Pathfinder K-8 to Cooper Elementary would result in significantly insufficient capacity in the West Seattle North Cluster to serve area students. 56 displaced Cooper students would be mandatorily forced to bus outside of their clusterⁱ, a clear violation of the SPS student assignment plan. Additionally, displacing vulnerable Cooper students would cause significant academic and socio-emotional harm to Cooper's historically marginalized student population.

As outlined in the SPS strategic plan *Excellence for All*, SPS envisions a city where, "all students achieve at high levels, receive the support they need and leave high school prepared for college, career and life" (SPS, 2008, pg. 1)ⁱⁱ. Closing Cooper School would not support this vision. The following document outlines why Cooper School is not a wise choice for school closure.

Cooper Elementary serves an increasing population of diverse learnersⁱⁱⁱ

- ✓ Cooper Elementary School is a vibrant community school of 304 kindergarten through fifth grade students. We serve students from a variety of ethnic groups; about 2/5 of our students are African-American, including a significant African immigrant population from Somalia, 1/5 of our students are Asian-American, 1/5 of our students are Latino, and 1/5 of our students are Caucasian. About 80% of our students receive free and reduced lunch.
- ✓ Cooper's Bilingual Program serves a culturally diverse group of English language learners. Two bilingual teachers and three instructional assistants provide instruction and support to students and parents who speak Spanish, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Somali.
- ✓ Cooper's Autism Program continuum serves 24 students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Eight students are served in Cooper's general education classrooms with additional support and instruction provided by one special education teacher and 2 instructional assistants. Sixteen students are served in rooms 209 and 107, Cooper's self-contained Autism K-2 and

3-5 classrooms. They are supported by two special education teachers and six instructional assistants. Additionally, Cooper’s resource room supports students with learning disabilities and developmental delays through both pull-put and push-in support.

- ✓ Cooper School’s enrollment continues to increase, despite the negative impact of a legacy of proposed school closure from the 2005-2006 school closure process. Many families have communicated to Cooper staff that they are hesitant to enroll their child in a school that has been previously identified as a school in need of closure. Despite this legacy, Cooper school has added students for the past three school years.

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Oct. 1 enrollment	246	268	300

Cooper Elementary serves 139 students living in the West Seattle North Cluster^{iv}

- ✓ Relocating Pathfinder K-8 to Cooper Elementary would violate the SPS student assignment plan and force 56 displaced Cooper students to be transported across the cluster line, significantly increasing district transportation costs and time on buses for Cooper students. As outlined in the Superintendent’s 12/09/08 proposal to the board, the recommendation to close Cooper School instead of Arbor Heights would “incur additional transportation costs^v” (SPS,12/09/08,pg.42) as former Cooper students are transported across the cluster line to schools in West Seattle South.
- ✓ According to SPS dataⁱⁱⁱ, there is a significant lack of capacity in the West Seattle North schools of Alki, Schmitz Park, and Lafayette to house displaced Cooper students (18 open seats) which would result in 121 former Cooper students being reassigned to West Seattle Elementary. (This number assumes that the 69 open spots at the relocated Pathfinder would be chosen by Cooper students. It must be noted that Pathfinder is an alternative school and SPS has no precedent of assigning students to alternative schools without parental choice. This number also assumes that the Autism programs are displaced from the Cooper building as the quantity of 69 spots is derived using the planning capacity for the Cooper Building, not the functional capacity.) According to the functional capacity of West Seattle Elementary, given their Bilingual and Head Start Programs, there is only capacity to house 65 displaced Cooper students who live in West Seattle North. This would result in 56 displaced Cooper students without a building in their cluster. The SPS student assignment plan guarantees all students a seat in a building within their home cluster. Therefore, the displacement of Cooper students would result in a violation of the SPS student assignment plan.
- ✓ Closing Cooper School and displacing Cooper students to West Seattle Elementary would leave no empty seats in the West Seattle North cluster. Implementing a school closure

process that would leave no elementary seats available in the entire West Seattle North cluster is a shortsighted decision with negative implications for the entire cluster of schools, including Alki, Schmitz Park, Lafayette, Cooper, and West Seattle Elementary.

Closing Cooper Elementary will have far-reaching negative effects

- ✓ Closing Cooper School would displace 187 of the most vulnerable students in Seattle Public Schools (current Cooper enrollment less 48 general education 5th graders and 69 general education students merging with Pathfinder. It is unclear based on the published data where the 24 students in the Autism program would be housed). 81% of Cooper students are living in poverty (based on free and reduced lunch status) and 45.5% of Cooper students have limited English proficiency. 56% of Cooper students do not live with both parents^{vi}. Compared to Arbor Heights students, Cooper students experience frequent transitions and inconsistencies in many aspects of their lives. They would be disproportionately affected by displacement as compared to the majority of Arbor Heights students, who have more family resources to offset the transitions caused through displacement. Additionally, Cooper School is home to 24 students with ASD, a significant cognitive disability characterized by a strong reliance on structure and routine. Disrupting the learning environment by displacing Cooper students and staff would cause significant regression in achievement and socio-emotional development for our fragile students with ASD.
- ✓ Closing Cooper School would eliminate the EARTH project and sever partnerships with community environmental organizations.
- ✓ Closing Cooper School would eliminate the Cooper Buddy Program and end relationships developed between Cooper's Autism and General Education Program staff and students.
- ✓ Closing Cooper School would not promote racial and class desegregation. Given the similarity in student demographics, displacing Cooper students to West Seattle Elementary would only continue the racial and class segregation experienced in many West Seattle Elementary Schools. The additional strain of adding Cooper's historically underserved population would burden the already struggling West Seattle Elementary and lead our district further away from its goal of fostering diversity and increasing academic achievement in all Seattle Public Schools.
- ✓ Current research into the link between poverty and school achievement does not support closing Cooper School and placing Cooper students currently living in poverty with other large populations of students in poverty at West Seattle Elementary^{vii}. The U.S. Department of Education's *Prospects* report (Puma, Jones, Rock & Fernandez, 1993) finds that the level of poverty school wide has an effect on an individual student's achievement--whether or not that student is living in poverty. Puma et al. found that the test scores of all students, both poor and non-poor, decline as they are enrolled in schools with increasing numbers of students living in poverty. Additionally, even though non-poor students perform consistently better than their low-income counterparts, the performance of non-poor students nevertheless declines as the proportion of their classmates living below the poverty line

increases. Overall, the report finds that "students in low-poverty schools score from 50 to 75 percent higher in reading and math than students in high-poverty schools" (Puma et al., 1993). Further, the report finds a "tipping point", where school poverty begins to significantly affect student performance. "School poverty depresses scores of all students in schools where at least half the children are eligible for subsidized lunch and seriously depresses the scores when more than 75 percent of students live in low income households" (Puma et al., 1993). Closing Cooper School and displacing Cooper students to other high poverty schools only exacerbates the already existing achievement disparities between poor and non-poor students.

Cooper Elementary has strong WASL scores for its student demographic

- ✓ Cooper Elementary has strong WASL scores in comparison to other schools serving similar demographics of students^{viii}.

School	Free & Reduced Lunch	Transitional Bilingual	Ethnic Makeup*:				
			AI	A	B	H	W
Cooper	79.5%	33.2%	0.4%	19.2%	42.1%	20.3%	18%
Roxhill	77.4%%	34.3%	2.8%	22.5%	23.7%	37.2%	13.8%
West Seattle	78.9%	32.3%	4.1%	21.8%	33.6%	23.2%	17.3%

School	Reading WASL: 2008			Math WASL: 2008			Writing WASL: 2008
	3	4	5	3	4	5	4
Cooper	63.4%	63.2%	60.6%	68.3%	31.6%	36.4%	57.9%
Roxhill	47.1%	56.8%	67.4%	52.9%	16.2%	37%	27%
West Seattle	38.2%	36.8%	54.8%	30.3%	13.9%	36.6%	23.7%

*AI (American Indian), A (Asian), B (Black), H (Hispanic), W (White)

Cooper Elementary is a model school for serving students with Autism

- ✓ Cooper Elementary is home to a well-respected program for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including a K-5 inclusion program and a K-5 self-contained program consisting of a primary and intermediate classroom.
- ✓ Special Education and General Education staff are currently in their first year of implementation of the Cooper Buddy Program. This program pairs students with and without disabilities, in order to build friendship and communication skills and expand inclusive programming across the school day. The Buddy Program is funded by a \$10,000 grant from the McCarthy-Dressman Foundation renewable for up to 3 years.

- ✓ Cooper staff has committed over a decade of extensive relationship building activities between general and special education staff and students that has resulted in a cohesive and inclusive school community. All specialists, related service providers, and general education staff have been trained in the provision of instructional services and support to students with ASD. Closing Cooper School would result in the elimination of this strong collaborative community of staff and students supporting students with ASD.

Cooper Elementary has a unique environmental education program

- ✓ The EARTH Project at Cooper (Environment, Art, Respect, Technology, wHole child) is an environmentally focused curricular program that developed out of a \$53,000 grant from Washington State and in-kind service matching from partner organizations: Northwest Environmental Education Council (NWEEC), Nature Consortium, and Camp Long. The environmental theme is woven throughout the school's curriculum, allowing teachers to take advantage of the surrounding greenbelts to give students hands-on experiences in their natural environment. By developing a deeper understanding of the interconnection of humanity and the natural world, cross-curricular lessons prepare students to be stewards of their environments and communities as children and adults. With Nature Consortium and NWEEC, Cooper students explore environmental ideas through different artistic mediums and techniques, including scientific illustration, nature sketching, recycled material trees, mosaic tiles, and papermaking. For more information: <http://cooper.seattleschools.org/EarthProject.html>.
- ✓ Over the 2007-2008 school year, Cooper students, staff, families, and neighbors partnered with the Northwest Environmental Education Council and the Nature Consortium to restore the native plant habitat in the immediately adjacent Pigeon Point Park, part of the West Duwamish Greenbelt. Additionally, Cooper students continue to develop the native plant and arbor garden on the South corner of the school. This rich natural environment enhances the school's environmental education program and expands the lives of Cooper students. In the garden, as well as in the surrounding greenbelt, students have opportunities to practice scientific inquiry, data collection, and measurement in an outdoor setting. Also, students learn to be stewards of the environment by caring for the garden and learning about the needs of plants and animals.
- ✓ The Cooper building was originally built in 1999 in its current location adjacent to the West Duwamish Greenbelt in order to serve Cooper's low-income, majority immigrant population of students. Due to economic factors, many Cooper students have limited access to natural green spaces. Cooper school's EARTH project represents the only venue through which most Cooper students learn about and participate in the natural world. Displacing Cooper students to another school building would eliminate their access point to green spaces and environmental education. Additionally, most students currently served at Pathfinder K-8 would continue to have access to environmental education and green spaces through their involvement in the Pathfinder School Program and during their home lives, regardless of where the program eventually is housed.

Cooper Elementary is a model school for technology instruction and integration

- ✓ Cooper School has an integrated technology program that delivers a customized set of hardware and software to its classrooms, library, and *state of the art computer lab*. Each classroom is equipped with a technology presentation station consisting of a computer, projector, and document camera as well as a wall mounted television that is connected to a closed circuit system for all-school broadcasts. Classroom teachers can also take advantage of an additional set of student computers depending on grade level.
- ✓ Students learn keyboarding with the Type to Learn program, Writing and bubble mapping with Kidspiration software, and have fun creating artwork with Kid Pix Deluxe. These extras are anchored by the Microsoft Office suite enabling students to begin word processing in grade 2, Powerpoint presentations in grade 3, and Spreadsheets in grades 4 and 5. Cooper technology is also quite unique in that all 4th and 5th grade students create and maintain their own individual Web Sites with an industry standard set of software, Dreamweaver, and Photoshop. Additionally, the Cooper's tech program utilizes the Accelerated Reader and Star Reader programs where students earn points for reading. This is coupled with Cooper's Read A Million Words program that allows teachers to track the number of minutes their students read at home and at school on a weekly basis. Cooper's tech program also offers its students the experience of Everyday Math Games Online as well as a variety of educational activities that it hosts on its own hosted school website.
- ✓ All of these tools and their products are organized and integrated within the program so that each student and staff computer looks and feels the same. This visual and organizational uniformity streamlines and enhances the learning environment. Cooper also has an on-site technology coordinator who teaches students, maintains its website, and provides all technical support to the program.

Cooper Elementary has strong before and after-school programs

- ✓ The YMCA Community Learning Center (CLC) at Cooper Elementary provides free after school programming from 3:15 - 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, including homework help, crafts, sports, drama and leadership. Over seventy students in second through fifth grade are served daily in the CLC.
- ✓ The YMCA offers before and after school child care to thirty Cooper students from 7-9 am and 3-6 pm, Monday through Friday. An additional 19 children, many of whom are siblings of Cooper students, are served in a full-day preschool through the YMCA.

Cooper Elementary holds important historical relevance to the Community

- ✓ Cooper holds the distinction of having had the first African American teacher hired to teach within the Seattle Public School District. Thelma Dewitty started work in September of 1947. She retired from teaching in 1973 after years of civic involvement.

- ✓ The original school, "Youngstown School", opened in September 1906. The original enrollment was 70 children. The name, Youngstown, was borrowed from an Ohio steel city. The families attending Youngstown primarily came from workers at the local steel mill opened by two Pacific Northwest entrepreneurs, William Pigott and Elliott Wilson. The Seattle Steel Company offered the Youngstown building to educate these children.
- ✓ In tune with Cooper's current multi-cultural population, children from Slavic and Greek families as well as children of Scandinavian, Italian and Russian immigrants attended the school. The original population also consisted of Japanese-American, African-American and Native-American children. Most recently, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Samoan, Somali and many other cultures have been added to the Cooper School Community.
- ✓ The name Cooper was inspired by Frank B. Cooper, a pioneer superintendent of the early 1900s. 1939 saw the school change names to the Frank B. Cooper School.
- ✓ The district closed Youngstown-Cooper in 1989. Cooper students were moved to the Louisa Boren School as a new school building was being constructed on Puget Ridge, or Pigeon Point. In 1999, the new Cooper school was opened to neighborhood children.

ⁱ Source: SPS, "Capacity Management: Preliminary Report..." 11/25/2008.

ⁱⁱ Source: SPS, "Excellence for All: Strategic Plan." 6/4/2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: SPS, Annual Report,

www.seattleschools.org/area/asiso/test/demographic/2007/216.pdf, accessed 12/07/08.

^{iv} Source: SPS, "Capacity Management: Preliminary Report...", 11/25/2008.

^v Source: SPS, "Capacity Management—Building Closures: School Board Work Shop," 12/09/2008.

^{vi} Source: SPS, Annual Report,

www.seattleschools.org/area/asiso/test/demographic/2007/216.pdf, accessed 12/07/08.

^{vii} Puma, Michael J., Calvin C. Jones, Donald Rock, and Roberto Fernandez, for Abt Associates, Inc. (1993, July). *Prospects: The Congressionally Mandated Study of Educational Growth and Opportunity: Interim Report*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education).

^{viii} Source: OSPI, Washington State Report Card, www.reportcard.k12.wa.us, accessed 12/07/08.