

Preface

The District's final recommendations don't work for West Seattle. Maintaining the 4 classrooms for the Cooper Autism Spectrum program – the only responsible part of the current recommendations for West Seattle - does not leave enough capacity in the building to house all of the Pathfinder program students there. And, as the district found out the last time they tried to shove Pathfinder into Cooper, because of the Greenbelt surrounding the school, the only place to put portables at Cooper to provide more classroom space takes up playground space. Being responsible about the Autism program's fragile population means Pathfinder won't fit at Cooper.

Another plan is needed.

Preliminary Approach

District Stated Goal:

West Seattle District needs to close one building and eliminate the administrative costs of one program for the coming year in order to do our part in the budget adjustment

Responsible Goal:

Reduce needed budget for SPS while maintaining or improving the education of the students.

Criteria for Choices:

Follow the Guidelines for Closure to determine which building and which program to impact. As a corollary to the criteria of fiscal health within the Guidelines, lay solid ground work for the new student assignment plan, at least as far as it can be understood, since the details of it are not yet developed.

Step 1

Merge Roxhill, as a full cohort, into Denny Middle school and close the Roxhill building.

- Reduces capacity in WS South cluster
- Eliminates highest admin costs in West Seattle,
- Improves use of existing building,
- Has little or no impact on transportation costs.
- Produces the district-favored K-8 program in a building that has a rating of 100.

Here is District goal success - one building and one program's admin costs eliminated.

Step 2

Move WS North Cluster's Spectrum program to Cooper School.

- Merges a program (Spectrum) which requires busing into a school (Cooper) which requires busing.
- Provides real transportation cost savings by merging bus routes across West Seattle.
- Fills empty seats at Cooper
- Provides a good fit for program sizes -Cooper has 6 empty classrooms, Spectrum needs 5
- Opens up general ed. seats in Lafayette to support adjustments needed for the New Student Assignment plan.

Step 3

When the middle school aged students at Denny move over to their new building, move Pathfinder into Denny and close Genesee Hill.

- Provides Pathfinder with a much better building than Genesee Hill.
- Resists compromising values taught at Pathfinder by destroying another school for Pathfinder's benefit. (current District Recommendations result)
- Maintains the K-8 in the Denny building.
- Provides much better facilities support for the middle school students in Pathfinder.
- Gives Pathfinder ready access to the Long Fellow Creek headwaters and bog to support their environmental focus.
- Brings the Roxhill cohort of students to a building with about 50% free and reduced lunch (which is known to improved educational opportunities).

Result

Financial success:

- Eliminated high admin cost in one program,
- Closed two buildings*,
- Significantly reduced transportation costs across WS.

*This is a net gain of one building closure, since the Denny building was slated for closure in 2010 and now will not be closing.

Educational success:

- Refused to fail a student population by consigning them to a reduced quality education. (current District Recommendations result)
- Refused to traumatizing a student body by shredding their school community and dispersing it to the wind. (current District Recommendations result)
- Improved the educational opportunities for two student bodies.
- Reduced excess capacity in WS South.
- Positioned the District to better balance the WS North Cluster's student assignments.
- Provided a better home for Pathfinder.

End Notes

Each step described here can be taken independantly. However the results provide the most advantage taken together. Adjustments need to be made if Steps 1 and 3 are not both accomplished. If Step 1 is taken and not Step 3, the Roxhill cohort should be mainatined in a blended K-8 with the Denny middle school students in the new Denny building. I do not have data on whether the size of the new Denny building will allow this. If Step 3 is taken without Step 1 you don't accomplish the budgetary relief expected by reduction of administrative costs and the Denny building has a large excess capacity.