

**Central and East Lawrence Elementary School Consolidation Working Group
January 16, 2012, Meeting Minutes**

Discussion of Member Suggestions: The co-facilitators received anonymous suggestions from members to:

1. Send each of the six school groups' proposals to RSP for analysis,
2. Complete a written survey asking members:
 - In light of the new enrollment projections, do you think it's possible to close 3, 2, or 1 school(s)?
 - Would you recommend not closing any schools?
 - Do you think the group can reach consensus?

The group discussed both suggestions and recommended moving the survey issue (#2) to the end of the agenda. Instead of sending all six school proposals to RSP (#1), the group decided to discuss the pros/cons of scenarios A-G, summarized in bulleted points on flip-chart paper.

Defining “viable:” Members said there are different interpretations or phases of “viable,” in terms of simply forwarding a proposal to RSP for analysis versus agreeing that a proposal is a viable consolidation option. Members said they would like to see the RSP analysis of some of the proposals in order to give the group time to react to it, but that doesn't mean they favor the proposal. Members are concerned that forwarding an idea to RSP may seem to the community to give those ideas undue “traction.”

Pro/Con Discussion of Proposals:

A) Pinckney's Updated Proposal

- Consolidate Kennedy and New York at 15th and Haskell or at the Kennedy Site with a neighborhood ESL site and necessary boundary adjustments.
- Consolidate Hillcrest and Sunset Hill at an expanded Sunset Hill site.
- Create a third ESL cluster site at Prairie Park.
- Expand Pinckney to a three-section school.

Pros:

- Boundaries could be adjusted to ensure reasonable enrollment size.
- The district has a history of adjusting sites that provide English as a Second Language (ESL) services, such as when the district added a cluster site at Cordley to relieve Hillcrest and added neighborhood sites at Schwegler and Sunflower.
- If being an ESL cluster site is a benefit to all students, expanding the program would enable other school communities to have that benefit.
- The 15th and Haskell site near the Boys and Girls Club main site has the potential for synergies.
- Brings more ESL neighborhood sites online to serve students in their home schools.

Cons:

- Size (New York/Kennedy at 548 without early childhood program. Kennedy's projected to be at 400 by 2016.)
- Combining two large low-SES populations is a concern.
- Expanding Pinckney to a three-section school on one of the least workable sites.
- Expectation of state funding changes and lack of assurances of needed resources.
- Uncertainty of staffing levels affects class sizes in combined schools.
- Cost.
- Dismantling existing ESL cluster site at Hillcrest. District may lose economies of scale.
- Implications for ESL teachers due to state requirements.
- The size of a Hillcrest/Sunset Hill combined school would require boundary changes that send Hillcrest students to three schools.
- Would require a maximum number of students to adjust to new schools.
- Traffic/safety issues.
- Eliminates Sunset Hill as a "relief valve" for other schools that are overcrowded or growing.

- Concern about adding an ESL program to Prairie Park, which already has an autism program. (Pro: Having highly qualified teachers working with autism/ESL cluster benefits all students.)

B) From Pinckney, New York, Kennedy and Cordley Proposals:

- Combine Hillcrest and Sunset Hill at Sunset Hill
- Move some students near the N.E. boundary
- Combine Kennedy and New York at East Heights or at 15th and Haskell.

Pros:

- When combined, they are large enough schools for full-time support staff.
- 15th and Haskell site is a good size lot, about 8 acres.
- Keeps early childhood program in east Lawrence.
- Create parity with building a new facility in east Lawrence.

Cons:

- Combining two large low-SES populations without a guarantee of small class sizes.
- The East Heights' site is too small/the slope of the land is too steep.
- Puts one of the largest schools on one of the smallest lots.
- If it gets to be a four-section school, staff will need to be shared again.
- High need for resources.
- How does the proposal save money if the district is mitigating the concerns by reducing class sizes and increasing resources?
- New York/Kennedy and Hillcrest/Sunset Hill combinations are too large.
- Eliminates Sunset Hill as "relief valve" for Sunflower.
- Combining schools at the maximum size means boundaries would have to change as the population grows; this is not a long-term solution.

C) Sunset Hill Proposal:

- C-1) Keep Hillcrest open to take Pinckney students. Close Pinckney.
- C-2) Combine Hillcrest and Pinckney at Pinckney.

Pros:

- C-1: keeps model ESL cluster site at Hillcrest open.

- C-1: preserves Sunset Hill as a “relief valve” for Sunflower.
- C-1: Hillcrest traffic flow.
- C-1: preserves a community that is not defined by geography.
- C-2: a site evaluation by an architect indicates that Pinckney can be expanded.

Cons:

- C-1: a long way to Hillcrest for some Pinckney students who live north of Sixth St. or on Michigan St.
- C-2: too many students at Pinckney site.
- C-1: keeps a building open for a program (ESL) at the expense of a neighborhood school, Pinckney.
- C-1: Hillcrest catchment area.
- C-1: Hillcrest not a “neighborhood” school.
- C-1: Hillcrest cluster site is not sustainable. It can’t keep growing.
- C-2: increased traffic flow (Hillcrest has 5 ways to get in/out, New York has 8 ways in/out, but Pinckney has 1: Sixth St.).
- C-1: Pinckney walkability.
- C-1: does not keep school populations intact.
- C-2: removes Pinckney as a “relief valve.”

D) New York Proposal:

- D-1) Combine Cordley and Kennedy at site southwest of 19th and Haskell.
- D-2) Combine Cordley and Kennedy at site near 15th and Haskell.

Pros:

- A better SES mix than a Kennedy/New York combination.
- D-2: potential synergies related to the 15th and Haskell site.
- D-1: 19th and Haskell site may be more readily available given the city owns the land.

Cons:

- D-1: 19th and Haskell site is too commercial/industrial and there are safety concerns with a grain elevator nearby.
- D-1 and D-2: walkability is a concern.

- D-2: Cordley overflow to Schwegler is not possible due to capacity issues there.
- D-2: lose southern “relief valve” for Broken Arrow, Sunflower.
- D-1 and D-2: too large of a school population.
- D-1: negative impact on schools in areas that have already been impacted by school closures.
- D-2: endangers the success of a bond issue by seeking to build a new school near existing facilities.
- D-1: busy streets near 19th and Haskell. All of the newer schools in the district have been built on “sleepy” streets.

E) Cordley Proposal

- Combine Cordley and New York at expanded/upgraded Cordley site.

Pros:

- Cordley is already a 2-section school and needs accessibility upgrades anyway.
- It may be cheaper to add to a school than to build a new facility.
- This is a better SES mix than a New York/Kennedy combination.
- Moves fewer students (185 students at New York).
- Better “relief valve.”
- Cordley location borders more neighborhoods.
- Combining students of different backgrounds enhances the “social capital” of the students involved (diversity).

Cons:

- Closes a school, New York, where growth is occurring.
- Pinkey would have to take some New York students to make it work.
- Expense of upgrades at Cordley. There is a \$1.8 million backlog of maintenance/upgrades needed there.
- Cordley school has four levels, whereas New York has one level (Sight lines).
- Closing New York would be a blow to the downtown area.
- Leaves less of a “relief valve” at Cordley for Broken Arrow and Sunflower capacity issues.
- ESL/transfer shifts at Cordley.

- Walkability.

F) New York Proposal

- Combine Cordley and New York at an expanded New York site.

Pros:

- Good SES mix.
- New York, strong downtown-centric school.
- Walkability. Some New York students walk as a necessity.

Cons:

- Would still need to do something with early childhood program at Kennedy.
- Would like to see the district make some investment in Kennedy.
- Lot size at New York.
- Walkability.
- Adverse traffic impacts at New York.

G) Hillcrest Proposal

- “Belt” Concept
- Expand Hillcrest at current site to three-section school
- Take additional students from Pinckney. (Close Pinckney.)

Pros:

- Growth in central Lawrence.

Cons:

- Pinckney closure.
- Unclear where kids will go.
- No flexibility to ESL program.
- Eliminates northern school that serves a neighborhood in favor of retaining a program (ESL).
- Proposal is vague.

Discussion of Parameters: Members discussed giving RSP specific parameters for its analysis:

- School enrollments of 350-450.
- Class sizes of 20 K-3 and 25 4-5.

- Show enrollment projections for the next five years.
- Walkability - Show #/% students living .5 mile, .75 mile and 1 mile.
- % low SES (free/reduced).
- #/% of students displaced by consolidation.
- Traffic impacts (Note: *traffic impacts are not within the scope of RSP's work.*)
- Keep neighborhoods intact as much as possible.
- Show where student overflow is going for all elementary schools over capacity.
- Send no students across the river to Woodlawn as a result of consolidation.
- Impact on ESL and early childhood programs.

Other factors for the school district to analyze:

- Impact on ESL. (Where are cluster/neighborhood sites?)
- Impact on early childhood, Title, Full-Day K.
- Costs associated with additions, new facilities (architectural services).
- Site analysis (e.g. classrooms, playground, parking, etc.) (architectural services).
- Data request for the number of households indicating that Spanish is the language spoken in the home.

Voting: The group was polled about the following issues:

- Removing D-1 from the list of proposals to forward to RSP. (Vote: 20 yes, 4 no, 1 abstaining)
- Removing D-2 from the list of proposals to forward to RSP. (Vote: 18 yes, 0 no, 5 abstaining)
- Removing G from the list of proposals to forward to RSP. (Vote: 15 yes, 4 no, 3 abstaining)
- Removing from Proposal B the option of East Heights as a site. (Vote: 17 yes, 0 no, 6 abstaining)
- Submitting to RSP Proposals A, B, C-1, C-2, E and F as submitted by the school groups in their original/revised written proposals. (Vote: 25 yes, 0 no, 0 abstaining)

- Using the liaison subcommittee to clarify any questions during the analysis. (School groups discussed this and approved it by consensus.)

Future Meeting Dates: Because RSP would not be able to get its analysis to the group in one week's time, the Working Group decided not to meet on January 23. The next meeting is scheduled for January 30. Since the school board granted a timeline extension (February 15), the group added meetings to its schedule on February 6 and 13.

Written Survey: The discussion returned to a member's suggestion of surveying the group in writing (via e-mail) about the potential for school closures and reaching consensus. A member said that moving to three-section schools has been a conversation in the community for 20 years. A member questioned how the results of the survey would be used. Another member suggested delaying the survey until after the group has had time to discuss the RSP analysis. Some members indicated they would be interested in seeing the survey results as a way to get a general sense of how the group is feeling.

Vote: A vote was taken on whether to administer a written survey. (Vote: 13 no, 10 yes, 1 abstaining)

Building the Next Agenda: The group will plan to discuss the analyses received from RSP, the district administration and Gould Evans architects.

Meeting Dates:
January 30 and February 6 and 13.