

**Central and East Lawrence Elementary School Consolidation Working Group
February 13, 2012, Draft Meeting Minutes**

Pinckney Report: The co-facilitators indicated they had received a request from the Pinckney school representatives to address the group. Andrea Albright reported that they had polled school board members via e-mail about their opinions of the group's charge, and based on a majority of the board members' responses, the Pinckney group no longer supports its original proposal. Albright said that Pinckney's representatives support a recommendation focusing on established criteria, rather than specific school closures.

Introduction: Dr. Matt Wendt of RSP and Associates introduced himself and reviewed RSP's scope of work. (Addendum 1: RSP's PowerPoint – available on the district's website at: <http://www.usd497.org/Consolidation/>)

Discussion of RSP Analysis: Working Group members discussed RSP's analysis of four proposals in small groups organized by school. The small groups then shared Pros, Cons and Opportunities for Enhancements with the large group.

Proposal 1A Modified - Combine Kennedy and New York at 15th and Haskell:

Pros:

- Central location of new facility.
- Students don't have to cross 23rd Street to get to school.
- Some Broken Arrow students are shifted to Prairie Park.
- Relief for Sunflower.
- New facility.

Cons:

- The new facility opens over capacity.
- If early childhood program is added to new facility, enrollment tops 700.
- Two existing facilities are closed.
- Proposal reflects the highest concentration of students of low SES.
- Hillcrest continues to have low "reside" numbers.

- The ratio of ESL/Non is imbalanced at Hillcrest.
- The percentage of ESL could be increased at Cordley.
- A lot of boundary shifts.
- Expands Hillcrest, but doesn't add students.
- New York boundary changes siphon off an active parent group.
- 5 of 13 schools are over 90% capacity, 2 of 5 are over capacity.
- 9 schools see boundary shifts.
- Increases equity issues on the east side of Lawrence.
- Lots of kids are moved to different schools, rather than the new facility.
- The cost of 6 school additions and a new facility.
- If Sunset Hill adds a neighborhood ESL site, it would be over capacity.

Opportunities for Enhancements:

- We need to put the early childhood population in a school on the east side of Lawrence.
- Broken Arrow could be expanded to increase capacity.
- Broken Arrow is perceived to need major work (open classrooms).
- If open classrooms are addressed at Broken Arrow, also address them at Deerfield.
- Grow New York, possibly by making it an ESL school to relieve Hillcrest, and grow Kennedy with a designated early childhood wing.

Proposal 1B Modified - Close New York:

Pros:

- Doesn't require new facility.
- Doesn't require kids to cross 23rd Street.
- Kennedy would be large enough to warrant full-time services.
- Quail Run and Sunflower show a better balance of enrollment.
- Boundary shifts some Broken Arrow students to Prairie Park.

Cons:

- Broken Arrow and Cordley would be over capacity in less than five years.
- Kids are parceled out all over central and east Lawrence.
- If early childhood program stays at Kennedy, the school would be too large.

- The loss of New York school.
- The percentage of low SES at Kennedy is too high.
- 10 of 14 schools see boundary changes.
- 6 of 14 schools are over 90% capacity.
- Eliminating a school where growth is occurring is problematic.
- Hillcrest's "reside" numbers are low.
- It siphons off some of New York's most active parents.
- As you fix one problem, you create another problem.
- Hillcrest and Sunset Hill are expanded to 450, but not enough students are moved into those schools to warrant the expansion.
- The construction costs of expanding both Hillcrest and Sunset Hill.
- Hillcrest has a building capacity of 450 with only 68 reside students.
- Removes a school from a dense residential neighborhood (New York).
- Kids must travel long distances and cross busy intersections. Safety concern.

Opportunities:

- Place the early childhood program or an ESL program at New York to boost enrollment.
- Expand and/or reconfigure Broken Arrow.

Proposal 2 Modified - Combine Hillcrest/Sunset Hill at Sunset Hill and combine New York/Kennedy at a new facility:

Pros:

- Lowers high SES numbers at the combined Kennedy/New York facility.
- Diversifies the ESL program so that more of the community benefits.
- Includes a new, centrally located facility.
- Active New York parents remain with that student body in the new facility.
- The northern Pinckney boundary change would relieve Deerfield overcrowding.

Cons:

- Large schools add to equity issues.
- Changes are contrary to the school board's goal of closing achievement gaps.
- Moves a lot of low SES students.

- Sunflower is over capacity.
- The cost of a new facility.
- Sunset Hill grows too fast.
- 2 schools are at 120% capacity, 4 are at capacity and 6 are over 90% capacity.
- A pocket of New York students who are within walking distance of the new facility are sent to Cordley instead (15th and Burroughs Creek).
- Boundary changes for 7 of 12 schools.
- The new facility would be at 700 students with the early childhood program added.
- The new facility opens full.
- ESL is spread too thin across the district.
- It would be a shame to lose the Hillcrest facility and the accessible Ryan Gray Playground.

Opportunities:

- Adjust Sunflower, Deerfield and Quail Run boundaries per 1A and 1B.
- Keep New York school and expand it to 350 by adding ESL.
- Keep Kennedy open.
- Expand Broken Arrow.

Proposal 3 – Close Pinckney:

Pros:

- Balances ESL enrollment at Hillcrest.
- Preserves a functioning ESL site at Hillcrest without major disruption to ESL students/staff.
- Kennedy would be large enough to gain full-time services and accommodate early childhood program.

Cons:

- 10 schools see boundary changes.
- Deerfield is too large.
- Closes Pinckney, a historic building.
- Walkability issues, including difficult intersections for children to cross safely.

- High capacities in the west-side schools that may prompt the need for a new west-side school.
- 50% ESL at Hillcrest may still be too large of an imbalance.
- The change in the southern boundary of New York moves kids who have already been moved.

Opportunities:

- Increase Sunset Hill enrollment to relieve Deerfield.

Further Discussion of Pinckney's Previous Statement: Andrea Albright and Stacey White shared e-mail responses they had received from five board members: Rick Ingram, Mark Bradford, Bob Byers, Keith Diaz Moore and Vanessa Sanburn. They said it appeared from the e-mails that a majority of the board has shifted away from supporting the group's charge. As a result, Pinckney's representatives are no longer willing to support a recommendation closing specific schools. They support making recommendations about key issues, such as ESL, programming needs, the needs of low SES students and boundary changes.

Kelly Jones, Cordley, said that the Working Group had already polled members at its last meeting about making no recommendation versus continuing to pursue the charge, and the group had decided to move forward.

Dawn Shew, Kennedy, said that the status quo in Lawrence is not good enough for many kids. She said that it would be great to keep all of the schools open and have the services that kids need. She asked from where the money would come for all that, including a full-time nurse for Kennedy and New York kids.

Superintendent Rick Doll addressed the group to clarify that a single board member's opinion carries no more weight than anyone else's opinion, because the board can act only as a group and only during an official open session.

Doll said that the Working Group has a unique opportunity to influence an important decision in the district. He acknowledged that the political landscape on the board had changed since it

approved the group's charge. He added that some district data had also changed, in terms of an unexpected enrollment increase this year. Doll said that whatever information the group can give the board will be important to its decision-making process.

Doll added that Lawrence can, and must, do better with its elementary schools. He mentioned as examples, ADA-compliance issues at the Cordley facility and the continued use of portable classrooms. He said that the Working Group has worked long and hard and should feel positive about the process. He added that it's important for this group to help the district build momentum for a bond issue.

Questions About Bond Issues: In response to members' questions about whether a bond issue can raise funds for school nurses and other operational costs, Doll said that no, bond issues may only be used for capital needs, such as land acquisition, construction, renovation, remodeling, furniture, equipment and technology. He said that the district currently allocates resources, such as nursing services, based on student enrollment. However, as a result of a school board goal, the district is in the process of developing a rubric to allocate resources based on need.

Doll said that the district doesn't have the funding to keep all of the schools open, fix them all up and provide all of the services that kids need. He said that consolidation of schools is one way to free up a chunk of money to use for programs and services. He used the closing of Wakarusa Valley last spring as an example. He said that the Wakarusa Valley closure saved about \$450,000 that the board then used to reduce class sizes and expand full-day kindergarten.

A member asked if the district would close a school to add full-day kindergarten at Langston Hughes. Doll said that the board is currently evaluating an expansion of full-day kindergarten. He said that the district has found as part of its work with the elementary school communities on an "accepted standard," that some people believe that full-day kindergarten is a basic need for all schools.

Chuck Epp, Cordley, said that it is clear that there is too much need chasing too few dollars, but that closing a couple of schools won't get the district very far. He said that the funding pie needs

to be expanded by passing a capital bond. He said that this group could help by making recommendations to the board that best assure the passage of a capital bond.

Epp also referenced the ongoing legislative session. He said that the district doesn't know yet what will result from the Governor's proposal, which would maintain the current base state aid for another year and expand school districts' ability to increase local property taxes. Epp said that the pie will expand if the Legislature removes the LOB cap. He said that the question is – How do we get Lawrence behind funding improvements for schools?

Josh Davis, New York, said that he was open to the original charge, but hasn't seen any proposals that do more good than harm. He said that meeting additional school needs is beyond the focus of the Working Group.

Epp said that the district tried to pass a bond issue ten years ago that included elementary facility improvements, but it failed because it was perceived as being tied to school closures. He said that it appears that there is enough energy among the group for passing a bond, but that it can't be tied to school closures, which would tear the community apart.

Epp said that the RSP data was very difficult to see and enabled the group to conclude that consolidation won't work. He encouraged the generation of a recommendation without consolidations, but one that includes a bond issue to invest in schools and meet the needs of these six schools, as well as other schools, including schools on the west side of town.

Dawn Shew suggested that two subgroups be formed: a subgroup that supports consolidation and a subgroup that doesn't support consolidation. She said that neither group would recommend specific schools for closure and both groups would support a bond issue.

Sally Kelsey, Cordley, said that with the hundreds of hours spent working on the charge, the group owes it to itself to recommend a well-articulated, comprehensive proposal to the school board, and not just a list of bulleted points.

Poll of Membership: Members voted 23-0 with 1 abstention to break into two groups. The co-facilitators asked individuals to choose which group they wanted to join, to sign in at their tables (as voting and non-voting members) and to discuss future meeting dates/times in order to publicize those meetings as open to the public.

Sign-ups for the Subgroup Supporting Consolidation, a Bond Issue and no Specific School Closures:

Voting Members: Milton Scott, SH; Daisy Wakefield, SH; Kissan Joseph, SH; Don Barnett, SH; Tim Laurent, KD; Dawn Shew, KD; David Unekis, PK; Andrea Albright, PK; Stacey White, PK; Karla Hughes, PK; and Michelle Iwig-Harmon, WD. **Non-Voting Members:** Paulette Breithaupt, SH; Jill Anderson, KD; and Alison Nye, PK.

Sign-ups for the Subgroup Supporting a Bond Issue and no Specific School Closures:

Voting Members: Kelly Jones, CD; Sally Kelsey, CD; Chuck Epp, CD; Mark Kalusha, CD ; Mike Myers, NY; Josh Davis, NY; Natasha Naramore, NY; Chris Lempa, NY; Leslie Newman, HC; Edith Paredes, HC; Shannon Criss, HC; Dennis Hill, HC; and Megan Richardson, WD. **Non-Voting Members:** Paula Meyers, KD; Linda Kucza, NY; Annette Dabney, HC.

Member Absences: Two voting members from Kennedy were absent: Shonda Anderson and Stella Murphy. Two non-voting representatives were absent: Lois Orth-Lopes, CD; and Jeny Bellavia/Barbara Gossett, WD.

Meeting Dates:

- The subgroup supporting consolidation will meet at 7 p.m. on February 19, at the Carnegie Library, 9th and Vermont.
- The other subgroup will meet at 1 p.m. on February 18, in the New York school library.
- The Working Group will meet at 7 p.m. on February 20, at the school district office, 110 McDonald Drive.