

Frequently Asked Questions – Facility Use Task Force September 2008

1. Why were the ideas put together?

The ideas were created to honor the values and criteria developed by the Task Force. In order to provide all student and parents within the district these values there is a minimum enrollment needed. All underlying detail for the ideas can be found on the Task Force's website.

2. What would happen to the buildings?

It is important to remember that no decisions have been made regarding the need to close a school. If a school were to close, it would be up to the Board of Education to decide what to do with the facility. The Task Force has discussed that closing a school does not necessarily mean no longer using the building. A building could be repurposed, and the Task Force has identified uses the school Board may wish to investigate.

3. What is the impact on open enrollment?

The open enrollment policy is part of state law and will remain in place. LPS has consistently stated that it values a parent's choice for their child based on what is best for the child and current space availability in the district. LPS welcomes out of district students and will continue to do so. Once a student has chosen LPS they are encouraged to stay throughout their education. Currently, about 13 percent of the district's population comes from out of the district.

4. What are the performance measures being used?

The performance measures being used are part of a Body of Evidence regarding the school's performance that is compiled over time. Measures include but are not limited to the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests, the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests and classroom assessments reflecting student grades.

5. How much would be saved by closing schools?

Estimates presented to the Task Force by LPS Financial Services stated the maximum operational savings for one elementary school is \$559,120 and the maximum operational savings for one middle school would be \$969,180. However, the realized savings could be considerably less due to a number of factors including disposition of the building and grounds, transportation, moving special programs, as well as enhanced opportunities which could total \$200,000.

6. What is the impact of closing schools on home values?

It is important to remember that no decisions have been made regarding the need to close a school. The Task Force does recognize the importance of home values and will

recommend the Board consider this factor when making their decisions regarding facility utilization.

7. Are transportation costs driving the task force?

Transportation is one of the many criteria that must be examined as part of any idea. The other areas include special programs, boundaries and the staffing implications.

8. Why are school closings the main option being considered now?

The 16 school -based ideas are the main focus of this part of the Task Force's work, but they are not the only options being discussed by the Task Force. The interim report of the Task Force discusses numerous Facility Utilization Ideas that will be part of the Task Force's recommendations to the Board.

9. Why has marketing the district not been considered?

LPS has and always will make marketing the district a priority within its fiscal capacity. Currently, LPS has one of the highest percentages of out-of-district students in the Denver metro area. The Task Force encourages this practice to continue.

10. Why have residents not been asked if they are willing to pay more?

The LPS community has been generous in its support for its schools over the years. Most recently, the community voted in favor of a bond election in 2002 and a mill levy election in 2004, both of which have kept LPS a strong, high-performing district in difficult financial times. Public schools are prohibited by state law from charging tuition, and state law also restricts the amount of funding that public schools may raise locally through elections. The LPS Board will be having conversations about budget challenges later this fall. The LPS Financial Advisory Committee will be forwarding recommendations to the superintendent by the end of October which in turn will be forwarded to the Board of Education.

11. How many elementary school redistribution recommendations will be made to the Board?

The Board has asked the Task Force to narrow its recommendations when it presents them on October 23. There is no set number of recommendations at this time, and no decisions have been made about which schools or even which level of schools (elementary or middle) might be included in those recommendations.

12. Is there a goal/timeline for when the board will decide on recommendations? When is implementation planned?

The Task Force will present its recommendations to the Board on October 23rd. It is then up to the Board to decide when or if to pursue these recommendations.

13. Would the equity issues from the Task Force's values lead to the end of site-based management?
The equity issues are in place to ensure that every school can continue to provide similar educational opportunities to its students. They are not meant to supplant site-based management.

14. How much of a mill levy is proposed in November? How much would be needed to delay closure?

LPS is not asking voters for a mill levy increase in November, 2008. It is important to remember that no decisions have been made regarding the need to close a school.

15. Does the use of the years of enrollment trend data accurately portray enrollment trends? Would 10 years of data be better?

The district's current enrollment projections use a three year rolling average. This means that whatever direction the enrollment is currently projecting, the ten year figure will be in the same direction. LPS has successfully used this method of projecting enrollment for many years. Even though a three year average was used, the task force has been provided data back ten years.

16. Do the schools that are being considered for closure have representation on the Task Force?

Yes. Several of the schools considered in the ideas have representation on the Task Force. The Task Force is made up of a broad group of individuals. There are parents, community members, teachers and principals with support from district staff. Not every school in the district has representation on the Task Force.

17. Would 4th and 5th graders be required to attend a new school for one or two years or will changes be gradual?

It is important to remember that no decisions have been made regarding the need to close a school. Should the Board decide to close a school, the Board would direct administration to develop an implementation plan. The Task Force will recommend urgency to the Board if that decision is made.

18. How does enrollment from other districts impact the revenue in LPS?

When a student enrolls in LPS from outside the district, the district receives additional funding for the student.

19. If schools are closed, will in-district open enrollment students be given priority over out-of-district open enrollment students?

Yes, per the guidelines set forth in Board policy JFBA, which states that "Students within a designated attendance area shall have priority in registering in that school. Students who are residents of the district shall have priority consideration for open enrollment/transfer over students who are not district residents and are requesting interdistrict enrollment during the October 1 to January 31 Littleton Public Schools open

enrollment period. After January 31, all enrollment requests, including nonresidents, will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis if statutory admission requirements are met.

Key Comments and Areas of Concern

Along with questions posed at the meeting and through note cards a number of themes were evident from the public forum and note card comments. They are briefly discussed below.

A large number of people commented on the high regard they have for the school their child attends and their wish that the school not be closed or changed dramatically. The comments included;

- a. The wonderful after school programs provided;
- b. Amazing staff who have long tenure, are highly educated and have the best interests of students in mind;
- c. The fact that they had moved to specific neighborhoods to attend specific schools;
- d. The unique characteristics of their home school that create a special school culture;
- e. The amount of time and resources donated to their school;
- f. The wonderful special education programs available at the school.

There seemed to be a belief that over time the criteria that were set are absolute and if a school could just get on the right side of the criteria then they would not be affected by any possible changes. The criteria are to be viewed in conjunction with trend data. If a school is trending toward any of the criteria, they would be highlighted by the process over time. Also, even if a school does not meet one of the explicit criteria, it could be affected if a facility utilization plan is created for the entire district.

It is important to remember that schools are likely to experience changes in the future regardless of the outcome of the Facility Use Task Force work. LPS is facing a \$4 million budget deficit for school year 2009-2010, which could impact all LPS schools significantly.

It was stated numerous times that neighborhoods seem to be attracting a number of young families. At this time LPS is not seeing the effect of this in enrollment figures. The 2007-08 kindergarten enrollment figure (excluding charter schools) was 951 students and the 2008-09 figure is also 951.