



Education Services Center. 5776 S. Crocker Street. Littleton, Colorado 80120. 303.347.3300.

August 20, 2008

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Diane Leiker

Director of Communications

303.347.3386

dleiker@lps.k12.co.us

Board reviews work of the Facility Use Task Force

Board pleased with Task Force approach; public forums being scheduled

Last fall, the LPS Board of Education commissioned the formation of a Facility Use Task Force to find a method to best address the issue of underutilized facilities. Facility use has been discussed as far back as the 1980s and 1990s, and, as trends show a continued decrease in enrollment for the future, the Board expressed that the time has come to address the issue of facilities.

The Task Force, which includes a broad membership of parents, community members, teachers, classified staff and principals from elementary, middle, and high school levels, in addition to three district liaisons, began meeting last February. Since that time, Task Force members have been digesting mountains of data ranging from enrollment, school capacity, staffing levels, student achievement, and finances across all district facilities.

On Monday, August 18, the LPS Board of Education and the Facility Use Task Force had their first opportunity to discuss the Task Force's work to date and the ideas brought forth for the Board's consideration in a workshop setting.

The Task Force's charge is to find a method to best address the issue of underutilized facilities and includes the recommendation of minimum and maximum school enrollment sizes. In an effort to complete its charge, the Task Force looked at many different kinds of data, identified its values, and then developed criteria that honor those values.

The values include:

- **equity and rich curriculum** (which ensure that schools can offer similar opportunities for students),
- **choice** (which allows for a minimum of two sections per grade level per elementary school, or two core options per grade level in middle schools), and
- **high quality personnel** (by hiring teachers for no less than a half-time position, the district can attract and retain high quality staff).

“These values drove the committee’s entire process,” said Task Force Co-Chair Tracie Rainey. “It’s all about providing the best environment for student learning. There was never a predetermined end in mind.”

Criteria were developed that trigger an evaluation of schools. Elementary schools that meet the criteria have enrollment less than 350 and/or are at 75 percent building capacity or less. Middle schools that meet the criteria have 75 percent building capacity or less. No schools should exceed 100 percent of building capacity. As a result, nine elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school were identified for evaluation.

As part of that evaluation, the Task Force studied district enrollment: where students live by school neighborhood and by district quadrant. It was noted that approximately 20 percent of district elementary students live south of Dry Creek; no LPS schools are located in that area, therefore all of those students are being transported to school.

The Task Force developed 12 elementary ideas and 4 middle school ideas that move various school enrollments by neighborhood to other LPS schools. Many different school closure ideas are included. The Task Force also has several ideas around school consolidation. Care was taken to keep neighborhoods together and to reduce transportation whenever possible.

“These are only ideas, and no idea has preference over another. Some of them don’t even work well because they don’t meet the criteria the Task Force developed,” said Task Force Co-Chair Pat Wojahn. “But, we wanted the Board to see all of them to get a sense of our process, to see that the Task Force did not eliminate possibilities before getting feedback from others.”

After hearing the 16 ideas, Board members said they appreciated the Task Force’s methodical approach and the thoroughness of its work. They also agreed with the Task Force’s values and are looking forward to taking the ideas to the community for input. They noted that all of the ideas represent significant changes and that change is always emotional.

“This may be the most detailed report ever brought forth by a volunteer committee,” said Scott Murphy, LPS superintendent. “Serving on this committee is not easy; it takes courage and a great deal of time. We all thank you for doing this important work.”

Two forums are being scheduled for September, and the Task Force will then make its final recommendations to the Board in late October. The Board will then decide how to best proceed.

“It’s important to remember that whatever decisions are ultimately made must be in the best interests of the students, must take care of people, and must be financially responsible,” said Murphy.

More information about the Facility Use Task Force and its ongoing work can be found at www.littletonpublicschools.net.