

Neighborhood Schools Committee

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Voting Members Present: Eric Christianson, Rob Proce, Rebecca Voigt, Janalle Roth, Tanika Strawder, Ray Vukovich, Jonathan White, Carole Plizga, Bill Anderson; Absent: Julie Ahern, Zenaida Figueroa, Nicole Fishman, Jose Guzman, Anita Hanna, Norma Jensen, Kathy Ludowise,

Others Present: June Maguire, Dr. Lamping, Janine Gruhn, Marilyn Krajenta, Alan Braun, Dave Fletcher, Brenda Farr, Abbey Avellino, David Fletcher, Sarah Kester, Rafael Sanchez, Herbert Amaya, Francisco Guadairama, Doug Cherry, Abelina Lopez, Javiar Escobedo, Mayra Capeta, Teresa Chavez, Jon Ashworth, Richard Jenkins, Tasha London, Sharon Brummitt, Jaine Delgadillo

Eric Christianson went over the minutes from last month's meeting.
Side note – get your mail in registration in by Friday!

A map was handed out that had Elementary zones with middle school splits. The map was drawn up with “main street” boundaries. Another way to do it would be to use elementary boundaries. There are pros and cons for either way.

Straight line boundaries vs. Keeping all elementary at one middle school.
In theory – they would have feeder schools, in practice they are not.

Greenwood and Little Fort schools would be split between two middle schools

Are these configurations based on numbers? Capacity for middle schools were given: Abbott=700; Benny=660; Jefferson=900; Juarez=875; Webster= 660. Middle school is handled a little differently since the same classroom can be used for more than one teacher.

What do these boundaries do for Sp Ed? Each building will house Spec Ed except for low incidents.

Has the bussing been addressed yet? Yes it has been looked at. Greenwood and North is an issue but they may not be bussed at the middle school level.

In the current configuration how are the fifth graders split for middle schools? In practice right now LF 60% go to Benny and others are gone to another school because of elementary school overcrowding, moving, etc.

The Choice program also plays a role.

The next thing brought to attention: there is a capacity of 28 students; 3 first grade, 3 second grade. What happens if you have 30 bilingual and only room for 28? Hyde Park and Clark for example, have two class rooms for each grade – what do you do with extra students?

Sharing students with “partner schools”. This is what we are currently doing with the Special Education classes. The numbers are not there to have two self contained classrooms for 1-3 or 3-5 in each school – so this works well for those situations.

Another thing to look at is to group some schools together – larger schools with smaller schools. Partnering schools may work for the bilingual population as well as overcrowding. Right now we are at 94% capacity. Instead of sending you across town there would be a choice of two or three close by.

Another option is to say that is your home school and that is where you are going to go. That would increase the class size and may not be best for instruction.

Did you also consider early and late schools? Yes, partner schools would have same start times.

For all elementary to start at the same time – we would have to save quite a lot on bussing – over a million dollars.

Transportation and transfer rules

Daycare – no daycare is reimbursed for bussing.

Door to door bussing if there is a licensed provider. But we are not reimbursed for the bussing.

Possibly make it that the daycare is within the same zone. But then what do you do if the grandparents are watching the children.

Children move within Waukegan during the school year – do we bus these students till the end of the year?

Is there a state law on this? Penalizing the parent for bettering themselves for finding a better place to live. How do you handle this if there are 4 or 5 kids in a household?

Special Ed student in a program – what about the siblings? On child in McCall and other at Oakdale for example.

If a parent does incur the cost – what is the basic cost of this bussing?

What about fee waivers?

Out of Area (zone)

Overcrowding

Programs – bilingual, Spec Ed, gifted, choice, parent voluntary transfer – for those who want this. NCLB choice – if you are at a failing school you have the right to request on that made AYP (elementary only) – we have to pay for transportation. Last year there were three schools and we only transferred about 70 students.

Bus over mile & ½ or over hazardous area we get reimbursed 65% for regular education students and 80% for special education students.

There are over 500 parent voluntary transfers each year. The number actually approved is about 125. Majority is Cooke 5th graders requesting Abbott. There is a place to put the reason and it needs to be a hardship. We could get stricter about paying for bussing with voluntary transfers. Only 20-25% are approved.

If you are going back to neighborhood schools, a ruled could be made that if you take it – you are responsible for transportation.

Grandfathering in – for choice programs – or after a year – you are responsible for transportation.

Implementation for 5th grade or all middle school.

This was done three years ago – grand fathered in

Overcrowding – over flow

Start thinking about these: IF we charge the parent – we cannot be reimbursed. Brian Luosa will look into the approximate cost of bussing.

We are working on a recommendation for Dr. Batitse - Drafting a plan. The Dr. Batiste will take our recommendations to the board.

What do we do with students that “live” with grandma or whomever instead of the parent which is out of the district?

All of us should be reporting these students. This year there are already over 100 students that have been taken out of our schools because they do not live in our district.

If my child has a hazardous route – will I have to pay for bussing? No. We have a list of these hazardous routes.

Some schools have specific programs that requires bussing

Couple of block from Lyon – my kids go to Jefferson – kids spend a lot of time on bus. If the plan goes through the plans would be more prominent.

Crossing guard – kids will cross where ever they want. We need more police when schools are let out because they drive crazy.

There might be a misunderstanding regarding the hazardous routes, etc. There are a lot of cases where there isn't a hazardous route but it is a mile and a half.

Cold weather for a second grader to walk a mile and a quarter away.

Elementary idea about the bussing – current situation for a lot of families have children in three or four different schools. There is an issue with parent teacher conference. Three busses – different times – different grades. Three busses two times a day – six trips – where if all three kids were at the same school it would be only two trips. Why cant they all go to their Choice school. In a perfect world that is great – but there is a lot of overcrowding. OR better yet – all three kids could walk. The problem with this is there are not enough elementary schools on the south side and not enough middle schools on the north side. Space availability.

One of the reasons we got away from neighborhood schools
Older sibling was “choiced” and the younger sibling is at neighborhood school.

Choice – priority = home school, sibling, choice

Overcrowding - our schools are at 94% - this problem will still exist. We are trying to do this without spending 200 M dollars for a school. Long term – we need another school – or two.

If we can make it mandatory that the whole household goes to one school – it would save us money. If you look at the minutes from November – that is what we are doing.

Students at Lyon, Washington, - get them at the same school

Concern – moving Lyon or Cooke to the north side. Basically we are bussing a lot of schools to the north side. If we move one or both schools to the north – we would be bussing less students. This committee is helping to decide if this is worth while. This plan will go to Dr. Batiste and then to the Board. This will not happen until at least 2009 - 2010. Your input helps influence the decision of what we give to Dr. Batiste.

Significant majority is in favor of doing nothing with these magnet schools.

We are glad to see new faces here tonight. We are trying to come up with new ideas to save the district money. We encourage people to come out and make a difference. We are at a meeting stage – no changes are being made yet.

Have we been bussing kids to daycare for a long time? Yes
Moving a magnet school – what then would happen to these schools? There would be bussing because of hazardous routes but it would be a better “neighborhood school”

Hazardous route -
IDOT guideline – Belvidere and McCalister, Dugdale near Jefferson Middle School.
Lyon – if you had a larger school that would be better.

If we move a magnet school will the teachers and staff go along with it?
Staffing issues are implementation issues – we are not looking at that.
We are going to be changing the district – we need to look at everything, including AYP

Mission – total transportation costs –
In a perfect world – all students walk to school – we need to get a handle on how much money we save by going to neighborhood schools.

Appreciate the diplomatic, with the significant majority engaging to keep the magnet schools off the table – it is a fair request. Why are we continuing to discuss if the majority is saying don't do it? Let's take it off the table.

Voting committee will discuss summer calendar and possible sub-committees.

There is only one meeting left before the end of school.

Transportation rules, boundaries, etc. Our hope is that we can vote on this in October for the 09-10 school year. We should not disband this summer if we want to get this finalized by fall. Subcommittees would help hammer out some of these other issues.

Keep the third Wednesday – but have sub committees meet some other times.

Sub committees – chair person – they choose when to meet – but definite times. This will include voting committee at first. After the next meeting others can decide what committee to participate in. Included what would be their best available time.

Transportation rules,

Around the community

- What we need to do to walk to school? Bad winters – sidewalks – what do we do when sidewalks not shoveled., crossing guards Bike racks available -
- Rules for Transferring
- Communications -
- Town Hall

Determine schedule for over the summer and when is the final date.

The next meeting is

Wednesday, May 21, 2008, 6:30pm to 8:30pm

All information will be available at www.waukeganschools.org/neighborhoodschool