

## **Superintendent's Charge**

On October 17, Superintendent McKean met with the DBRAC committee to provide direction regarding its work for the fall of 2016. Specifically, the Interim Superintendent asked DBRAC to:

Develop recommendations, utilizing the Enrollment Balancing Values Framework, to address:

- Balancing boundaries for Ockley Green K-5 feeder schools, ensuring that Chief Joseph 5th graders are moved off of Ockley Green campus next year
- Consolidation options to support middle grades programs
- Options to address overcrowding where possible during the 2017-18 school year.

In a memo to Interim Superintendent McKean, DBRAC notified the Superintendent that the committee would focus its work during the fall 2017 on balancing boundaries for Ockley Green K-5 feeder schools and creating options to address overcrowding and underenrollment where possible within that feeder pattern during the 2017-18 school year.

This memo describes the two options we believe best address these issues in the immediate term, along with an explanation of our process and the constraints in which we within which we worked.

### **Historical Context**

After experiencing decades of building grade reconfiguration, program changes and school closures, the Chief Joseph and Ockley Green Communities were significantly impacted by changes in the 2012-2013 Jefferson Cluster Enrollment Balancing Process. Furthermore, in Fall 2016, Ockley Green was converted to a single-campus middle school, and Beach, Chief Joseph, Peninsula, and Woodlawn buildings were converted from K-8 to K-5 configurations.

This area of the city has a complex history. It is home to a historically strong African American community and tradition; however, the area has been significantly impacted by housing segregation, school closure and re-configuration, and gentrification. Given this complexity, DBRAC recognizes that the committee needs to be candid, collaborative, and transparent about our work. We will strive to demonstrate ultimately how our work both sustains and improves access to programs and services for all students.

DBRAC acknowledges the contradiction expressed by members of the community: some have called for rapid change to address overcrowding and under enrollment challenges,

and others for slower or delayed change as this area has already experienced significant and ongoing change. While we do not have an answer to this apparent paradox, we do recognize the tension that it creates.

DBRAC recognizes that the current enrollment balancing process offers PPS the opportunity to rebuild trust with communities that lived through past changes and implementation, which led to program inequities in multiple communities. It is the committee's responsibility to pay close attention to causing some communities to experience more impacts than others, particularly if these communities have previously experienced multiple changes or impacts.

**Constraints:**

The committee deliberated with the understanding that although the current recommendations focused on a limited geography, DBRAC would later need to address the changes required to successfully open two additional middle schools in N/NE Portland. Therefore, the Committee confined their recommendations to achieve their goal while impacting the fewest number of students.

Furthermore, the committee wanted to avoid making changes that would move student who would likely be affected again when the committee addresses its broader, longer-term mission in the spring.

**Preliminary Options Developed by Staff**

On November 5, staff identified three options for analysis by DBRAC and feedback from the community. Each of these options was based on a previously identified DBRAC recommendation, community input, and/or Board direction. The three Recommendations were:

- Safe Routes to Schools: Use major streets to define school boundaries
- Eliminate Co-located Immersion Schools
- Model an alternative individual student assignment methodology for incoming kindergartners

**Racial Equity Lens Applications**

The committee received a short training on the use of the racial equity lens at its December 3rd meeting. Jeanine Fukuda made time to be present at our November 5<sup>th</sup> session, and provided feedback to the leadership team regarding how to further center race in our analysis.

When sharing and analyzing both community input and analytic information, the committee used the racial equity lens to isolate race when considering alternative

models for achieving a more balanced enrollment scenario in the Ockley Green Middle School cluster.

Given the demographic changes in N/NE Portland, the Committee's ability to forecast the future demographics of a specific school's enrollment is limited. When we analyzed future scenarios, involving changes to assignment that apply only to kindergarten students we used expected neighborhood demographics rather than school demographics. This may render the analysis less accurate when predicting the racial composition of future classes in an area that is rapidly gentrifying.

### **Listening and Learning**

Community perspective is a critical aspect of the DBRAC process and the committee is grateful for the dozens of community members who provided valuable input during this process.

In previous DBRAC cycles, the committee heard community advocates suggest that the committee may hear a broader and more equitable distribution of voices by leveraging existing meeting times and going to the communities instead of organizing single larger scale listening session at times outside the normal structure of school communities.

Consequently, this fall DBRAC listening sessions were scheduled at OGMS and each of its feeder schools during regularly scheduled PTA meetings and Principal Coffees. The Community Involvement and Public Affairs department also reached out to school-based culturally specific organizations, and if invited to participate, DBRAC attended these meetings as well.

Further input was obtained through:

- Public comment time allocated at each DBRAC meeting and work session
- A short survey available in both English and Spanish and online tabling by district staff at Black Parent Initiative Symposium, Parent Teacher Conference Days, and Unite Oregon-Seeds of Change Conference
- Working with translators at specific schools to include voices of families for whom English or Spanish was not their native language.
- Email sent to the ppsgrows.net email account and forwarded to DBRAC

In addition to community input and demographic information, DBRAC received input from staff on topics such as facilities, transportation, Title I status, programming at middle schools and dual language immersion.

## Tensions Identified

By attending multiple listening sessions and hearing various community perspectives on how DBRAC's work would affect them, DBRAC identified differing perspectives on our work.

1. Acting locally vs. addressing the whole east side.

DBRAC repeatedly struggled with the tension between the need to immediately provide relief to the OGMS cluster, and the desire to provide the flexibility needed to address the broader boundary review required to complete our work next year, including opening two new middle schools in N/NE Portland. The committee ultimately recommended two potential methods for short-term rebalancing. The committee acknowledges that the outcomes are not optimal since DBRAC prioritized creating options that minimized the likelihood of re-impacting the same neighborhood as DBRAC moves to address its main charge - a district-wide review of boundaries.

2. Mitigate concerns associated with co-located programs at Beach vs. minimizing change in this small section of the city.

In its previous memo, DBRAC expressed concerns regarding co-located dual language immersion programs. Specifically the committee is concerned about the effect on small English-only programs at co-located schools. However, the committee did not want to move forward with this scenario at this time given both the large number of students that would be impacted and potentially re-impacted, as well as the limited geographic scope under consideration.

3. Continue to assign addresses to specific schools vs. move to a more flexible, individual student assignment model.

During our work it remained clear that accurate and sustainable boundary assignment is difficult, especially in a city experiencing as much change as Portland. The committee heard various levels of support for switching to the individual student assignment model. Families in support of this model shared that they valued right sized schools over the certainty of attending school with students in their immediate vicinity. We also heard concerns that an individual assignment model would limit a family's ability to draw support from nearby families attending the same school for help with issues such as transportation and after school care. Parents are also concerned about how this model might affect the travel distance to school and school administrators are concerned about the cost of that transportation. Parents also worry about whether this model will affect the continuity and articulation of academic programs. Finally, many are concerned that we do not fully understand the racial equity impacts of implementing a new model particularly if it is used in only one set of schools. Many of these concerns grew from the lack of time available to research the potential unintended

consequences of the model based on the experiences of districts across the country that have implemented similar models. Although DBRAC does see the need to test this type of a model to determine its benefits and costs in the long term, the committee decided to table this model at this time to allow for a more thorough investigation of those benefits and costs.

**Recommendation:**

At DBRAC’s final meeting of 2016, individual committee members expressed support for three option that were still under consideration using a colored card system: support(green card), support with reservations (yellow card) or do not support (red card). Based on show of cards by members present, the committee was able to eliminate one option but felt that the remaining two options were viable alternatives for addressing our goals of:

- Mitigating overcrowding at OGMS by making the school a 6-8 (vs. 5-8)
- Prevent overcrowding at Chief Joseph
- Increasing enrollment in Peninsula K-5

These options, as well as identified pros and cons of each possibility, and the final DBRAC recorded R/Y/G card votes (including both those present at the meeting and those collected via email) are expressed below.

Both scenarios outlined below reduce overcrowding at OGMS by not having the 5th graders at the school next fall. Additionally, both scenarios mitigate overcrowding at Chief Joseph and increase enrollment at Penninsula in differing ways. Finally, neither proposed option changes enrollment Beach and Woodlawn, and no changes are made to the Spanish immersion program at Beach.

1. **Option 1 (A5):** Adjust boundaries along major roads for incoming Kindergarteners to achieve two (2) right-sized sections of Kindergarten for 2017-2018. Incoming students living in the Kenton neighborhood would no longer attend Chief Joseph, but would attend Peninsula K5.

| PROS  | CONS  |
|---|---|
| Likely the most sustainable since K5 model aligns with district and major streets are used as boundaries (including I5) | Boundary change: are we going to be redoing next year or will the effort to not re-impact families reduce DBRAC flexibility when considering entire East side |

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|--|---|
| Allows Chief Joseph to be K-5 next year  | Woodlawn is still small   |
| Compared to moving 5th graders, easier to shift kindergartners who haven't yet started school  | Based on small number of unknown kids. If those numbers are off, this could not work at all.  |
| Does best job of balancing schools to similar sizes  | Kenton neighborhood higher concentration of poverty and historically underserved are being moved (vs rest of Chief Joseph neighborhood) |
| Limits multiple changes in same community  | Kenton students may not have same access to programs at Peninsula than they do at Chief Joseph  |
| May move some kids to a closer school (Peninsula vs Chief Joseph)  | Chief Joseph will be packed next year. Unclear how long that would continue.  |
| Compared to prior versions of this scenario, protects areas most vulnerable to additional future so that we can address with other schools later | May not be aggressive enough to reduce enrollment at Chief Joseph. May not solve the problems we are trying to solve.                   |

**DBRAC Final Vote:**

**6 Green      7 Yellow      2 Red**

**2. Option 2 (D1):** Temporarily send Chief Joseph 5<sup>th</sup> graders to Peninsula for one year.

| PROS  | CONS  |
|---|---|
| Doesn't make long-term decision   | A lot of change for Peninsula, with their high rate of historically underserved students, for a one year switch.          |
| Boosts enrollment at Peninsula right away   | Staffing may increase at Peninsula, but may have to change and be redistributed later                                     |
| Impacts smaller percentage of historically underserved students than boundary change.     | Large impact on one group that has already seen transition (Chief Joseph 4 <sup>th</sup> grade) with no long term benefit |
| More certainty of relief at Chief Joseph  | Complicated expensive transportation  |
| Integration of 5 <sup>th</sup> graders could go very well                                 | Possible loss of Peninsula Title I status   |
| Only option that lets us freely do what we need to do next year                           | Change could be done well, but could be done really badly   |
| Moves an entire cohort together, which has been set as a district precedent               | Moves an intact group who are already in a school community (vs moving incoming kindergartners)                           |
| Allows for community building between 2 school communities before moving to middle School | Environmental impact of increasing busing   |
|   | Re-impacts Chief Joseph, but differently  |

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|--|---|
|  | A lot of transition for educational staff: 2 teachers that come one year and leave the next |
|  | More families will have students in more schools  |
|  | Does not build community at Peninsula   |

**DBRAC Final Vote:**

**8 Green      3 Yellow      4 Red**

**Conclusion:**

Boundary Review and grade configuration are only two of many levers for increasing the equity of opportunity for PPS students. The committee strongly encourages the District to use all levers, including funding and programming to complement our efforts.

We look forward to our work this spring in addressing all Eastside schools to ensure that PPS is a district where, regardless of race, income, zip code or ability, every student is able to thrive and have access to equitable educational opportunities