



News Release

Media contacts

David Northfield | dnorthfield@pps.net | 503-916-3066

Amber Shoebridge | ashoebridge@pps.net | 503-916-5091

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PPS Board moves ahead with opening two middle schools

Portland Public Schools will move forward with plans to open two middle schools in 2018-19.

The PPS Board of Education on Tuesday passed Resolution 5534, by a 7-0 vote, directing Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero to establish Roseway Heights and Harriet Tubman as middle schools, with students in grades 6-8. The board also directed that eight schools be converted into elementary schools with students from kindergarten to fifth grade.

The resolution established attendance boundaries for the middle and elementary schools, and established the high schools the middle schools will send their students to.

The vote came after extensive discussions by the board and nearly a dozen community meetings in multiple languages. Former Superintendent Carole Smith initially called for opening the middle schools in time for this school year, but the plan was delayed because of leadership changes and other issues.

At its Oct. 24 meeting, the Board voted to move ahead with the plan to open the schools, but with contingencies, including a comprehensive health and safety screening at Harriet Tubman. The resolution passed Tuesday calls for the community and Board to receive results of those tests “on an expedited basis,” but adds that PPS staff has assessed that there are “no insurmountable health and safety impediments to opening Harriet Tubman.”

The campus had been set to be tested for lead, radon, asbestos, diesel particulates, visible mold and carcinogens. Board member Paul Anthony on Tuesday added an amendment, which was passed 7-0, that the school also be tested for heavy metals cadmium, zinc, copper and iron oxide.

PPS Chief Operating Officer Jerry Vincent reported that the district is ramping up efforts on Harriet Tubman, with a meeting with officials from the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Environmental Quality set for Friday, with the aim of creating an action plan by Dec. 1. Vincent also reported that the district has budgeted work to stabilize a hillside on campus that had caused concern about it potentially shifting.

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The resolution will convert Boise-Eliot/Humboldt, Sabin, Irvington and Martin Luther King Jr. from K-8 schools into K-5 elementary schools that send students to Harriet Tubman. The middle school will be put into the feeder pattern to the dual assignment zone of Grant and Jefferson High Schools.

The plan also calls for Vestal, Scott, Jason Lee and Rose City Park to be made into K-5 schools that feed Roseway Heights, which would become a feeder school for Madison High School.

The Board also directed that ACCESS Academy, a Talented and Gifted Education program that is currently housed at Rose City Park, be placed in a “bridge or permanent” facility that can hold about 350 students for the 2018-19 school year. The district also was directed to develop a complementary district-wide TAG program to serve students in neighborhood schools.

The changes are part of an overall plan to correct enrollment imbalances in the district that officials hope to rectify by converting more K-8 schools to K-5s, and with the projected 2021 opening of a rebuilt Kellogg Middle School. The resolution also calls for the district to develop options to boost the enrollment at Martin Luther King Jr. by Dec. 31, 2018.

The moves will be undertaken to give families in North and Northeast Portland appropriately-sized schools while also ensuring that students from marginalized and historically underrepresented communities have equitable access to a quality education that prepares them for success in high school and beyond.