

## **Bridger School Overcrowding Analysis**

Portland Public Schools

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### **Purpose of Overcrowding Analysis**

A petition from many Bridger families was sent to Superintendent Guerrero in the Fall of 2018, requesting the expedition of a solution to and participation in the decision process around overcrowding issues at Bridger School. Parents requested the following items:

- 1) Please expedite the delivery and installation of the promised portable and provide us with a date certain that the Bridger community can plan around.
- 2) In the medium-term, we will be short classrooms in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 if PPS again fails to act in a timely manner. We need to create a solution with you this year.
- 3) And in the long term, we need to be involved in a much more timely and transparent manner in discussion about whether our middle school kids will move to Kellogg when it opens.
- 4) We're requesting that you dedicate and empower a consistent high-level administrator who will both have responsibility for, and be accountable to you and to us, in resolving these urgent equity and crowding issues.
- 5) We ask you to request monthly updates on progress, and intervene directly if the District has not made significant progress by December.
- 6) We are requesting a seat at the table for Bridger families as crucial decisions impacting our school and community are made.

In response, Area Assistant Superintendent, Oscar Gilson was identified as the administrator responsible for leading the work regarding the equity and overcrowding issues raised by Bridger parents.

Acting quickly to remedy overcrowding issues for this school year, the District responded to this petition by creating a plan that would allow a portable to be delivered to Bridger and usable by November 7, 2018 (occupy date) and by investigating the rental of a tent that could be used for outdoor recess and PE.

Continuing the process, Oscar Gilson, along with a District team, investigated a variety of additional solutions, such as additional portables, a non-facility solution, and a combination of both. The process to permit an additional modular or modulars for future use was also initiated, as well as a request for proposals to support the boundary process for the District. The work began immediately in order to be ready for the 2019-2020 school year. .

The District committed to involving parents in discussions when decisions impacting the school and community were to be made, including the movement of middle school students to Kellogg when it opens. Weekly updates were prepared for Bridger parents keeping them apprised of progress made towards the two modular classrooms.

### History of Bridger

Bridger’s Immersion Program expanded in 2014, giving access to bilingual programming to more Bridger students and native Spanish speakers who live in the region. At the time, PPS expected to open Kellogg in 2018, so overcrowding at Bridger would be avoided. A complete rebuilding of Kellogg was approved by voters in 2017, moving the opening of the new school to Fall 2021. On November 6th, two modular classrooms were added to meet the current needs of classrooms for this school year.

### Demographics of Bridger Students 2018-2019

	Enrollment	Historically Underserved Students	Free Meal Eligible	Special Education	English Language Learners	Talented and Gifted
Neighborhood Program	238	29%	48%	12%	16%	4%
Spanish Immersion	265	61%	25%	12%	16%	16%
<b>Bridger Total</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>10%</b>
PPS K-8 Average	520	32%	41%*	15%	10%	7%

### State Assessment Data for 2017-2018

5th Grade SBAC Math 27% & LA 40% Benchmark or Above

6th Grade SBAC Math 28% & LA 41% Benchmark or Above

7th Grade SBAC Math 41% & LA 47% Benchmark or Above

[2017-18 ESSA Accountability Details Report](#)

[Bridger School Profile 2017-18](#)

### Process of Gathering Ideas and Feedback

Many ideas for addressing overcrowding have been considered this fall. The beginning point was a [list developed by Bridger parents](#) last spring. Many ideas were generated and reviewed for feasibility and degree of relief via community meetings and a feedback survey.

Questions that we used when considering an idea:

- Will it free up three or more classrooms for the next two years?
- Will it be ready by the beginning of the 2019-20 school year?
- Which students would be directly impacted by grade, program, demographic?
- How will it impact current programs and supports?
- What will it cost in dollars, additional staff, transportation, facility modifications, other resources?
- How does it prepare Bridger for the opening of Kellogg MS?
- What would make this a win for the affected students, and what would PPS need to do to make it work?

## POSSIBLE OPTIONS

### **Option 1 - Four Additional Modular Classrooms @ Bridger**

Details: Install two modular buildings at Bridger, providing a total of four classrooms (with bathrooms)

Estimated Cost: \$1.2 million

Likelihood of implementation by August 2019: 50-75% (updated percentage based on new information from project architect and City of Portland meeting on November 26, 2018.)

### **Option 2 - Move Kindergarten to a nearby location**

Details: Kindergarten students and teachers would be located at the Holladay Annex (7100 SE Division St, .7 mi from Bridger)

-Other sites considered: 15 PPS K-5 or K-8 schools, 2 nearby churches, PCC

Estimated Cost: \$300k-\$750k for additional administrative FTE, extended transportation, possible facility modifications

Likelihood of implementation by August 2019: 99%

### **Option 3 - Move Grades 7-8 to a nearby location**

Details: Students and teachers in grades 7-8 would be located on the Marshall HS campus (3905 SE 91st Ave, 1.9 mi from Bridger).

-Other sites considered: Lane MS, Mt. Tabor MS, 6 nearby K-8 schools, Vestal K-5, PCC

Estimated Cost: \$300k-\$750k for additional administrative FTE, extended transportation, possible facility or site modifications

Likelihood of implementation by August 2019: 80-90%

## Summary of Feedback Received

On November 17, 2018 parents/guardians, staff and community members were invited to attend a Bridger Community Meeting to hear in greater detail the possible options for relieving overcrowding at Bridger. There was opportunity to listen, discuss, and provide feedback utilizing translators and interpreters around three different possible options. Parents, staff, and students were encouraged to provide written feedback on a form available in the five major languages of PPS, that could be completed that day, online or during Parent/Teacher Conferences. We received 171

feedback forms with 117 from parents, 27 from staff and 27 from students. We created a [document that summarizes all feedback forms](#) we received.

### **Option #1-Four Additional Modular Classrooms at Bridger**

Most importantly to parents, staff and students, Option #1 would allow the Bridger community to remain intact as both a Spanish Immersion and Neighborhood school. Siblings would remain in the same school building aiding families who would otherwise need to transport students to more than one school and giving families a chance to start and end the school year together. Highly important is the additional classroom space provided by the availability of four classrooms allowing capacity for short and long-term future growth. Option #1 affords the least amount of disruption or impact for students and families as it requires fewer transitions as students move through the grades.

Unfortunately, this option is viewed as not a permanent fix for the overcrowding issues at Bridger. Although the modulares would provide four additional classrooms, overcrowding in community spaces such as the cafeteria, library, and hallways would not be addressed. There would still not be enough space for a music, art, or extra PE classes. Parents, staff and students are incredibly concerned that the installation of the two modular classrooms would result in a dramatic decrease of outdoor play space, jeopardizing the playground fundraiser completed last year and all the effort put into creating an open, natural space. Furthermore, they feel that portables will alter the school's landscape permanently and decrease the school's aesthetics. By adding portables, parents feel that this option could anchor the school as an under-resourced, semi-permanent K-8 and hurt the chances for the middle schoolers moving to Kellogg in 2021. Of all three options, Option #1 has the highest cost, making it the most fiscally challenging and is not guaranteed to be ready by the Fall 2019. Parents feel that the large numbers will overburden the staff with having to focus on behavior, traffic, and logistic issues, rather than on instruction.

### **Option #2 Move Kindergarten to a Nearby Location (Holladay Annex)**

Parents, staff, and students feel that moving Kindergarten to Holladay Annex, located .7 miles from Bridger, provides an appealing option. This nearby location allows Kindergarteners a "soft start" to schooling, that is more developmentally appropriate, allows kindergarten to be self-contained, having the feeling of a location dedicated especially for them with even a private outdoor and indoor play space! Highly important, this options provides more space at Bridger, freeing up three classrooms to be used otherwise, solving the overcrowding issue short-term and slightly reducing congestion in common areas. An Option #2 model has been used at other school locations with success, so the logistics of two-campus schools would not be a new experience for PPS. Having the least impact or disruption on students who are already enrolled at Bridger, many families feel that because kindergarteners have not formed bonds with the school yet, it would be less of an adjustment than for middle schoolers being moved to an alternate location. Lastly, Option #2 is the one with the highest likelihood of readiness for start of school in August, 2019.

Although there are many positive reasons for considering moving Kindergarten to Holladay, parents, staff and students also feel this plan has many negatives. A large number of the stakeholders felt that transportation would be a huge issue. Parents who have students in multiple grades might have to transport their children to different buildings, students may have to bus back and forth between the buildings, and this option might pose undue hardships on single parents and low income families. Almost equally troubling is the fact that Bridger would be divided. More specifically families and siblings would be divided. Continuity would be decreased, asking students to experience another transition after only one year. Additionally, there would be less opportunity to interact with peers in similar grades or partner with students in higher grades as “Buddies” or mentors along with little chance to experience events at Bridger as a whole school. Some parents are concerned that programs such as SUN or Champions would also not be available. Important to stakeholders is the availability of access to specials, such as library, music, or art and administrative support. Coordinating the logistics of these services are understood to be challenging.

### **Option #3-Move Grades 7- 8 to a Nearby Location (Marshall High School)**

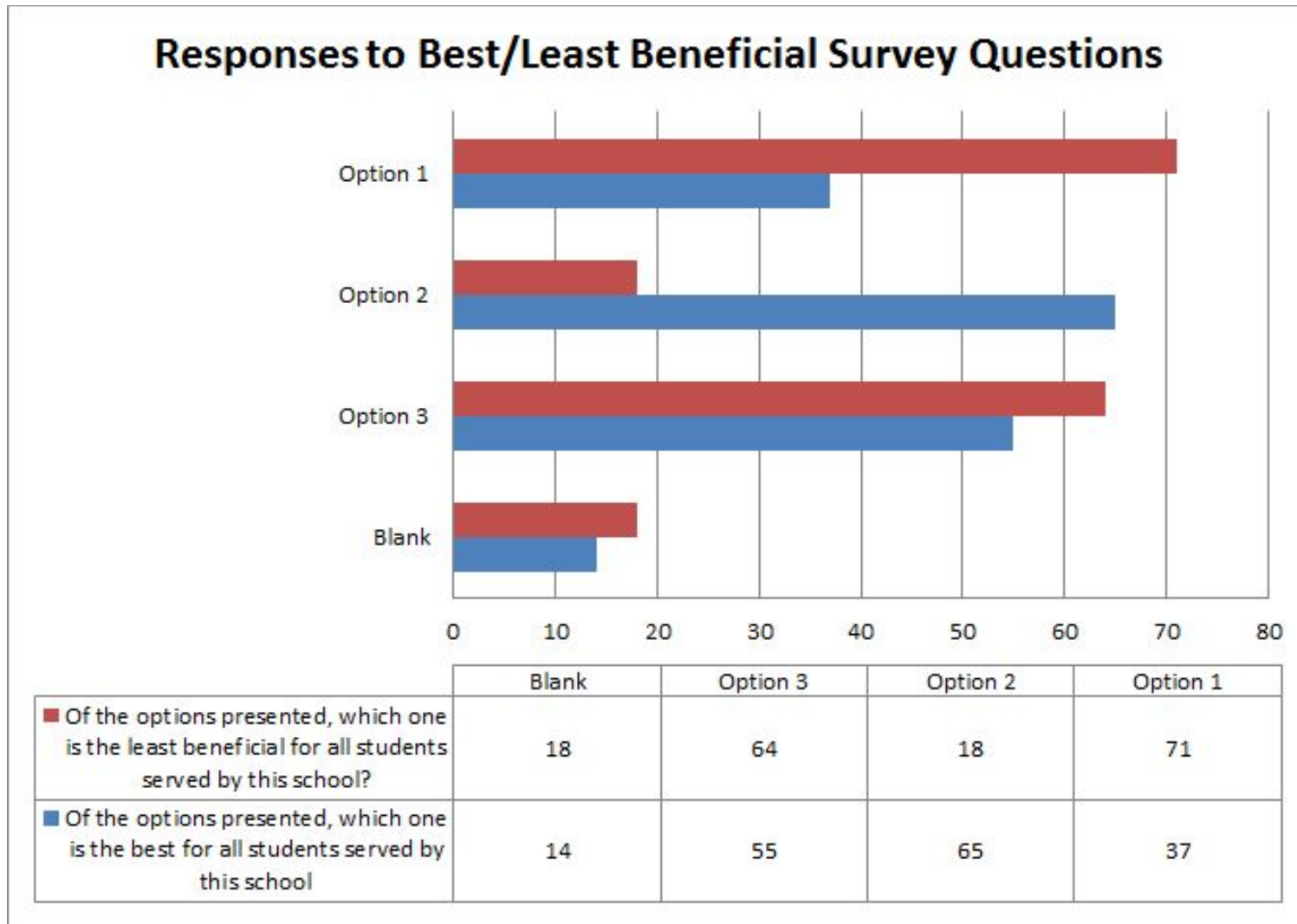
Moving 7th and 8th graders to Marshall is considered by many of the stakeholders to be a strong solution for Bridger now and long-term. This option provides the most relief for all overcrowding issues and frees up the highest number of classrooms, allowing there to be dedicated rooms for art and music. By moving 7th and 8th graders out of the Bridger building a smaller age range will remain on campus and allow the school to transition to its eventual status as a K-5 elementary school. Transitioning at the middle school level is also a model that PPS supports and will provide the middle school students of Bridger with an environment that closer to a comprehensive middle school, something they have not been able to experience. High on the list of strengths is the possibility of access to higher level courses for high school credit, curriculum, and possibly more electives affording Bridger Middle School students with richer educational opportunities. This transition, easier for students at this age, may even have the benefits of increasing students’ readiness for high school. Option #3 is more fiscally responsible and manageable and does not involve construction.

While Option #3 would establish a defined structure for Bridger as a K-6 (later K-5), this transition could be difficult for all involved. Students, staff, and families would be divided. Middle schoolers would be impacted the most, leaving behind younger friends and siblings, perhaps feeling kicked out, creating difficulties with transportation including busing and other issues for families with multiple students in different grades. The middle school staff and students may feel isolated as the location is 1.9 miles, quite a distance, from Bridger itself. The cohesive middle school program would be uprooted, jeopardizing the quality of the educational experience for the 6th graders left behind. Option #3 asks students to experience change more than other groups of students. As this option has not been used before, it would be a new experience in PPS for all stakeholders as well and could present many difficulties. On the minds of many families, staff and some students is the chance that Bridger students may be negatively influenced by interacting with older students and experience social-adaptive struggles that they are not yet prepared for such as behaviors, language, substance use, violence, and social media. It might mean that Bridger students are intimidated by high school students and afraid for their emotional and physical safety as well. Not wanting their children to have these experiences, parents and staff feel enrollment

would drop drastically as those families that have the means to leave would enroll their students elsewhere leaving the most vulnerable students behind, changing the character of Bridger Middle School.

### Comparison of Responses Received

We received feedback from 171 people with 117 from parents, 27 from staff and 27 from students. The table below shows the responses to two questions regarding which option is the best or least beneficial for all students in the school:



For more detailed response information, please see the attached document entitled [Feedback Summary Document](#).

## **Supporting Documents**

[Feedback Summary Document](#)

[November 17th Community Meeting Questions and Answers](#)

[November 17th Feedback from Wall Charts](#)

[Letters from 3rd Grade Class](#)

[Family Equity Work using Equity Lens 2017-18](#)