

## Bainbridge Island School District

# School Board Charge to the School Configuration Committee

June 14, 2012

### Context

#### Economic challenges

Like all districts in Washington State, the Bainbridge Island School District has experienced five years of cumulative reductions in state funding. However, unlike many other districts, Bainbridge Island has been able to largely maintain the educational programs, services, and opportunities that directly impact student learning. To do this, the district has employed numerous strategies including deep cuts to non-teaching services such as transportation, central administration, and custodial/maintenance. It has also requested and received significant additional support from the community through the Bainbridge Schools Foundation, Parent-Teaching Organizations, Educational Programs and Operations Levies, a Technology Levy, and a Capital Facilities Bond. As the district looks to the future, it appears unlikely that state budget allocations for K-12 education will dramatically increase within the next few years.

#### Demographic challenges

The challenges confronting the district are now both economic and demographic. Like other districts in the Puget Sound Region that experienced significant growth in enrollment between 1990 and 2005, the Bainbridge Island School District is now serving fewer students. During the past 7 years, student enrollment decreased by 7.5%. The district regularly monitors enrollment trends, and as part of its ongoing strategic planning efforts, it commissions a demographic study every 3-4 years. The most recent demographic study was completed in April and presented to the Board of Directors on April 25th. The report indicates that student enrollment during the next 10 years is likely to remain flat or slightly decline.

### Implications for School Configuration

#### Purpose for considering change

The primary purpose of all economically or demographically driven strategic changes is to utilize available resources to provide the students of Bainbridge Island with the highest quality educational opportunities in alignment with the district's mission, vision, and guiding principles.

During recent years, the district has significantly reduced operating costs of infrastructure and non-teaching services and operations in order to focus district resources, to the greatest extent possible, on the classroom and the educational programs and services that directly impact student learning.

The district has also been a good steward of taxpayer dollars by keeping school taxes stable, utilizing every available opportunity to reduce tax impacts of facilities bonds (e.g. Build America Bonds, Qualified School Construction Bonds, refinancing of existing bonds), and returning to citizens any unused portion of previous bonds.

#### Purpose for considering school configuration changes

The two key drivers for considering changes to school configuration are economic and demographic projections. Like other economically driven change processes that have occurred within the district, the purpose of revisiting school configuration is to consider whether such changes would be beneficial to the students and citizens of Bainbridge Island.

### Charge to the School Configuration Committee

The School Board charge to the committee is to develop school configuration options that best accomplish the district's mission, vision, and guiding principles within the constraints of the district's economic and demographic limitations. It is expected that the committee will analyze multiple scenarios and bring to the School Board a recommended set of options to be considered for implementation.

## **Factors to be Considered**

### **Competing values**

The district last debated school configuration in the late 1990s, when it was experiencing rapid growth in student enrollment. At that time, there were three Gr. K-5 elementary schools (@550 students each), one Gr. 6-8 middle school (@900 students), and one G. 9-12 high school (@1200 students). The existing facilities for were not built to accommodate those numbers, and there was significant overcrowding at the elementary and middle schools. Numerous portables were being utilized, and class sizes were large. A district committee was formed, and the decision was made to create smaller schools for Gr. K-8 students by constructing a new, Gr. 5-6 intermediate school which opened in the fall of 1999.

Student enrollment on the Island continued to grow through the 2005-06 school year; but since that time, changes in birth rate, population trends, and housing have contributed to a reduction of 365 students (43 in Gr. K-4; 47 in Gr. 5-8, and 175 in Gr. 9-12). While the community expressed its preference for smaller neighborhood schools in the late 1990s, smaller schools present an additional economic challenge when dollars for operating schools are scarce. The district cannot take advantage of economies of scale, is less able to efficiently deploy staff resources, and has more facilities to operate and renovate. Therefore, maintaining small schools is in competition with the district's need to minimize non-teaching operational costs. It is important for the School Configuration Committee to provide the forum for reconciling these types of competing values.

### **Programs and facilities**

Any discussion of reconfiguration must also take into account the implications for existing programs and facilities. Changing grade level configurations or closing or combining schools could have significant impacts, both positive and negative, on the number and type of educational programs and opportunities that are available to students. This is especially true in Gr. 5-12 where students have elective opportunities. Additionally, consideration must be given to the costs that would be associated with improving or reconstructing facilities when closing or combining schools. Certain programs require specialized facilities (e.g. special education, science, music, art, etc.). Facilities will always be important to the quality of educational opportunities the district can offer its students.

### **Adaptive change**

The School Configuration Committee will need to be aware of educational trends that are driving changes in the content and delivery of educational programs and services. The committee will be working in parallel with district processes to assess program and service offerings with the goal of providing the most value for the available resources. The committee must also work in concert with other district committees as they consider adaptive and innovative changes in educational programs and services.

## **Committee Tasks and Responsibilities**

The term "configuration" refers to the relative disposition or arrangement of the parts or elements of an object or system. In this case, the School Configuration Committee is being asked to consider factors such as school size, school locations, grade levels served, and the relationship of these types of elements to educational programs and services. The committee is being asked to accomplish a number of tasks as it develops and considers a number of options:

1. Consider relevant research regarding school size and grade level configurations in determining options.
2. Consider educational programs and services in relation to space and facilities needs in determining configuration options.
3. Consider size and location of school populations that would make any recommended configuration a viable option.
4. Consider enrollment patterns and projections to determine time frame possibilities and constraints relative to configuration options.

5. Consider the current condition and location of existing facilities and implications for configuration options.
6. Develop both short-term and long-term configuration options, ranging from the option of no change to closing school(s) and combining school populations.
7. Communicate with constituent groups regarding committee activities and deliberations and solicit feedback for consideration.

### Proposed Committee Composition

- District administrators (3)
- School administrators (2)
- Certificated staff (5)
- Classified staff (3)
- Parents (7)
- Community members (5)
- Ex-Officio School Board representatives (2)

### Proposed Timeline

The School Configuration Committee is expected to present its recommendations to the School Board following the conclusion of its Fall 2013 meetings. The Board will receive regular updates of SCC work during the 2012-13 school year.

Should the School Board determine that schools should be reconfigured to better serve the students of Bainbridge Island, additional public process would be initiated before decisions are made.

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|---|---------------------|
| • Determine committee composition   | June 2012           |
| • Distribute background information to committee members                    | August 2012         |
| • Committee meetings to be held 5:30-7:30 pm (day of week to be determined) | Fall 2012-Fall 2013 |

Proposed number of meetings for 2012-13:

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|---|------------------------|
| ✓ September (1 meeting)   |                        |
| ✓ October (2 meetings)  |                        |
| ✓ November (2 meetings)   |                        |
| ✓ December (1 meeting)  |                        |
| ✓ January (2 meetings)  |                        |
| ✓ February (2 meetings)   |                        |
| ✓ March (2 meetings)  |                        |
| ✓ April (1 meeting)   |                        |
| ✓ May (2 meetings)  |                        |
| ✓ (Fall 2013 meetings TBD)  |                        |
| • 2-3 community outreach meetings to be held in 2012-13 school year | Fall 2012 -Spring 2013 |