Austin
Independent School District

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools

Final Report to the Board of Trustees

April 28, 2008

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

In late 2006, the AISD Board of Trustees created the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools (CCNS) to recommend policies and processes for major decisions affecting public schools in Austin. The CCNS reviewed experiences from other districts, and developed a set of findings and recommendations based on extensive public outreach including 25 focus group discussions, an open house with 150 attendees, and about 1,500 survey responses.

The Challenge

AISD facility use is imbalanced, with growing enrollment in some areas and declining enrollment in others. Meanwhile, state and federal accountability systems impose sanctions that encourage student flight from struggling schools and can result in school closures.

AISD needs to be able to inform and engage the community in positive discussions about these demographic and educational trends. While the trends themselves are not positive, they hold the potential to inspire positive change, which could include: increasing neighborhood and parent involvement; achieving fiscal efficiencies; helping shape city growth; improving equity; and exploring innovative education programs – all within the overarching goal of providing the best possible education for every AISD student.

The challenge, in short, is this: Potential exists to get more out of our existing schools. How can AISD inform and engage the community in positive conversations about the opportunity that exists?

Major Findings

Findings from Stakeholders. During the Committee's public outreach phase, several common themes emerged:

1. Stakeholders want to be regularly informed about the criteria against which AISD evaluates school vitality and to have a voice in shaping those criteria.

2. Opportunity exists to develop new partnerships outside the traditional AISD community.

3. District communication practices can do more to inspire trust that community voices are valued and that input matters.

4. Stakeholders recognize a strong connection between city growth patterns and school vitality, such as the impact of affordable housing on schools.

5. Stakeholders expressed strong opposition to closing neighborhood schools. Many expressed interest in helping develop new programs, initiatives, and partnerships to strengthen existing schools.

Other Districts' Experiences. The Committee's review of other districts' experiences revealed the following:

1. In the absence of a "crisis," AISD has a responsibility to demonstrate how any facility use decision will deliver clear improvement for affected students.

2. Models exist for formalizing opportunities for the community to propose and shape innovative educational programs and partnerships.

3. Models exist for city-district partnerships to explore and address the relationship between growth, housing, and schools.

4. Formal procedures to improve district-wide communication can be implemented without a massive commitment of new resources.

CCNS Recommendations

The CCNS report includes dozens of specific recommendations for board consideration. The Committee recommends specific criteria and processes for making facility use decisions, improvements to district communication practices and ideas for better interlocal collaboration. Underlying and cutting across the specifics of these recommendations are a set of key principles we urge AISD to bring to any policy or process discussion regarding facility use.

1. **Establish a context.** The community needs to know what trends may inspire facility use conversations, and where their neighborhood school stands in relation to them, early enough to have a meaningful role in addressing those trends. AISD must get the word out to a wider variety of stakeholders through a wider variety of means.

2. **Improve two-way communication.** Nothing creates community support for a decision like feeling like they had a hand in creating it. Improved communication must include two-way dialogue, including meaningful ways for the community to propose and develop new initiatives with AISD support. Not every campus will take advantage of these opportunities, but where the community will is there to do so, this is a strength to take advantage of.

3. **Build on existing strengths.** AISD already has Campus Advisory Councils, mandatory school report cards and other communication tools. With a few exceptions, our recommendations focus on getting more out of existing tools rather than creating new ones from scratch. Nevertheless, sustainability will require a certain level of institutionalization, and we recommend delegating

formal responsibility within AISD to support improved communication and engagement.

Specific Recommendations

Improve Ongoing Communication. At the campus level these include: providing an annual "State of the Campus" update; educating Campus Advisory Councils in leadership and communication; providing official communication to a wider variety of stakeholders; and improving outreach to immigrant parents. District-level recommendations include: adopting a formal policy that establishes major principles to guide facility use decisions; making district communications easier to understand; ensuring consistency in translation services; improving citizen access to the Board of Trustees; and providing an annual "State of the District" address and defining a process to support campuses in exploring innovative ideas for academic programs.

Adopt Criteria and a Process for Major Decisions. For major decisions affecting public schools, the CCNS recommends specific criteria that, at identified thresholds, will set in motion a defined public process. This process will include: immediate notification and outreach; initial community meeting to assess situation; additional outreach and data-gathering; additional community meetings to develop recommendations and action plans; implementation of action plans; regular briefings to the Board of Trustees; and finally, reassessment.

Strengthen Interlocal Collaboration. CCNS recommendations to improve collaboration with the City of Austin and Travis County include: adopting a formal policy regarding AISD participation in community and regional planning; clarifying the focus of the Joint Subcommittee; creating formal procedures for regular staff-level coordination and communication; encouraging the City of Austin to require an Educational Impact Assessment for development applications; developing clear policies and procedures to explore and implement shared-use facilities; coordinating capital planning efforts; supporting city planning goals for affordable housing, environmental sustainability, and other community goals; and annually reviewing interlocal partnerships and development agreements.

Introduction

On December 4, 2006, the AISD Board of Trustees formally created the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools (CCNS). As described in the committee's charter and process (see Appendices A and B), the committee was charged with making recommendations to the Board on processes and policy dealing with: criteria for identifying underutilized and overcrowded schools; criteria for assessing alternatives such as revitalizing, repurposing, realigning or closing; assessment considerations, such as academic performance, environmental implications or use of resources; opportunities for interlocal collaboration; and procedures for identifying and ensuring ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation.

The co-chairs and members of the CCNS were appointed in the spring of 2007. Membership was purposefully designed to represent diverse stakeholder interests, including parents, school community members, neighborhood associations, community groups, the District Advisory Council, the Austin Council of PTAs, the City of Austin, Travis County, the University of Texas at Austin, and the business community. The committee held its initial meeting on May 22, 2007, and met through April 8, 2008. Summaries of committee meetings are provided in Appendix C.

The committee conducted research and engaged in extensive public outreach to gain the broadest possible information and consensus on the issues in its charge. In addition to reviewing practices in other jurisdictions, committee members conducted individual interviews, met with a wide variety of citizen groups, surveyed community members both on-line and in-person, and held community-wide meetings. CCNS members also received informational briefings from district and other subject matter experts.

All meetings of the CCNS were posted and open to the public and every agenda provided time for citizens communications. In addition, the CCNS reported regularly and publicly on its progress to the AISD Board of Trustees and to the Joint Subcommittees representing AISD, the City of Austin, and Travis County. A draft of the CCNS report was presented for community review at a community forum on March 25, 2008. Individual community leaders and focus groups were also asked for additional review and feedback during the drafting stages.

Throughout this lengthy process, members of the CCNS have worked hard to understand AISD's current decision-making process, to learn from the community about specific areas needing improvement, and to achieve consensus about the best steps to create positive change. The committee presents this report with the hope that the recommendations contained herein will result in a practical, sustainable structure that will give community members a valued voice in future decisions affecting our public schools, our city, and our children.

Information and Data Reviewed

The Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools reviewed a significant amount of information and data in developing its findings and recommendations for the Board of Trustees.

Subject Matter Experts

The AISD Office of Facilities explained terminology and methodologies related to school capacity, presented enrollment patterns in the district, and commented on the effects of current growth and development trends in Austin. Also, the co-chairs of the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force explained the role and functions of that group. In addition, the AISD Office of Accountability presented information on state and federal accountability systems.

The City of Austin demographer made a presentation related to current and projected population patterns in Austin. Also, in a special meeting, the San Antonio Independent School District provided an overview of its Integrated Communications Network.

Terminology

Due to the diversity of the committee's membership, it was necessary to build a common language pertaining to neighborhoods and schools through a review of key terms. The list of terms, which can be found in Appendix D, describes common phrases and language associated with schools and community planning. For instance, zoning refers to the specification of permissible land uses in community planning; however, in school planning terms, zoning refers to the determination of school attendance boundaries.

Literature Review

The literature review, which can be found in Appendix E, addresses the experiences of other school districts in closing and repurposing schools, along with various issues papers concerning communities and schools. However, the literature review did not produce many resources directly related to AISD's situation. Specifically, while many urban school districts are closing schools due to declining enrollment and declining economy, AISD's overall enrollment is steadily increasing while pockets of inner city schools are experiencing underutilization, and the district's finances are in relatively good order.

Review of Community Engagement Best Practices

An extensive review of community engagement best practices can be found in Appendix F, along with an annotated bibliography on community engagement and public participation. This document provided committee members with a foundation for soliciting community input and participation, which was necessary in making their recommendations to the Board.

Communications and Community Input

In developing its findings and recommendations, the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools carefully considered stakeholder input from a variety of sources and maintained open communications with the community.

Web Page

A special page dedicated to the committee was created on the AISD website, at:

http://www.austinisd.org/inside/initiatives/ccns/

This web page included announcements of meetings, summaries of meetings, public review drafts, and various resource materials.

Open Meetings

All meetings of the committee were open to the public and community members were encouraged to attend. At the beginning of each meeting, an opportunity for citizens communications was provided on the agenda.

Progress Reports

Staff provided progress reports to the Board of Trustees on a monthly basis. In addition, the co-chairs of the committee provided a presentation on progress to the Board of Trustees, and two such presentations to the Joint Subcommittees of the Board of Trustees, City Council, and County Commissioners Court.

Up-Front Community Input

The committee felt it was important to seek input from the community early on in its deliberations to ask the question, “tell us what you think.” Several efforts were made to gain up-front input from the community.

Frequently Asked Questions

To facilitate public understanding of the committee and its work, a set of FAQs was developed, which is provided in Appendix G.

Focus Group Discussions and Individual Interviews

Committee members conducted a number of focused discussions with various community groups and organizations, and conducted a number of individual interviews with community leaders and citizens. To facilitate these discussions and interviews, committee members developed a standard set of Guiding Questions (see Appendix H). Input from these discussions and interviews proved invaluable to the committee, and summaries are provided in Appendix I.

Community Forum

A community forum was held on October 9, 2007 at Pearce Middle School. Promotional efforts for the meeting included: newspaper ads and PSAs in English

and Spanish; press releases; and email notices to an extensive distribution list. The committee provided a brief overview of its charge, with the main purpose of the meeting to gain input on the same guiding questions used for focus group discussions and interviews. Much valuable input was received, and a summary of the meeting is provided in Appendix J.

Community Survey

The committee developed a community survey (see Appendix K) to gain additional input early on in its deliberations. The survey was available in English and Spanish, and the same promotional efforts were used as with the community forum. Approximately 1,500 people responded to the survey; most of the responses were made online, but several paper copies of the survey were also received. The results of the survey (see Appendices L and M) contributed a wealth of information to the findings of the committee.

Follow-On Community Input

Once the committee developed a draft of its findings and recommendations, additional input was sought from the community to ask the question, "did we get it right." Several efforts were made to gain follow-on input from the community.

Community Forum

A second community forum was held at Martin Junior High School on March 25, 2008. Promotional efforts for the meeting included: newspaper ads and PSAs in English and Spanish; press releases; and email notices to an extensive distribution list. The committee provided a brief overview of its charge, with the main purpose of the meeting to gain input on its draft findings and recommendations. Much valuable input was received, and a summary of the meeting is provided in Appendix N.

Online Comments

Additional comments on the committee's draft findings and recommendations were received online through the committee's web page. These online comments are included in Appendix O. This input was largely supportive of the committee's work.

Additional Input

The committee received additional input from community groups and organizations, including the Facility Use and Boundaries Task Force, Community Action Network, and City of Austin Families with Children Task Force. This input was also largely supportive of the committee's work.

Findings

Findings from Stakeholders

In developing its findings and recommendations, the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools carefully considered stakeholder input from a variety of sources. This months-long process included: an online survey, to which approximately 1,500 people responded; an initial community forum attended by roughly 150 people; and a series of more than 25 focus group discussions and individual interviews with community organizations and leaders. The committee's draft findings and recommendations received further public review through posting and online comments on the district website, a second public forum, and additional interviews and emails. Throughout this extensive process, several key findings emerged:

1. **Stakeholders want to be regularly informed about the criteria against which AISD evaluates school vitality, and to have a voice in shaping those criteria.**

   Community members were generally unaware of how school facility use decisions were made. They wanted to be informed early and often about the criteria against which AISD was evaluating schools. Stakeholder desire for involvement did not stop at being "informed." Stakeholders expressed a strong desire for an authentic voice in shaping the analysis of a school's issues and opportunities, in particular to ensure that hard-to-quantify factors (such as the social and educational benefits of small schools) are considered.

2. **Opportunity exists to develop new partnerships outside the traditional AISD community, which will help inform and engage the community in school initiatives.**

   Neighborhood associations, volunteer groups and nonprofits such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters were identified as possible partners for increased communication and engagement. Stakeholders also felt AISD could benefit from renewed focus and commitment on partnerships with other governmental entities, like the city and county.

3. **District communication practices can do more to inspire trust that community voices are valued and input matters.**

   Survey responses revealed a higher level of trust in campus leadership than the district as a whole; this concern also emerged in stakeholder focus groups. Trust-improvement suggestions fell in two major categories: improved mechanisms for delivering AISD messages and improved opportunities to have a substantive voice in shaping AISD decisions. Spanish-speaking parents expressed additional concerns about the clarity of district communications and offered additional suggestions for making AISD communication and engagement processes more responsive to their needs.

4. **Stakeholders recognize a strong connection between city growth patterns and school vitality, such as the impact of affordable housing on schools.**

   Because the viability of our schools affects city growth patterns (and vice versa), stakeholders felt AISD should also play a stronger role in community and regional planning efforts. Stakeholders expressed extremely strong concern about the impact that the affordable housing crisis is having on schools and a desire for AISD to help address this root cause of under-enrollment.

5. **Stakeholders expressed strong opposition to closing neighborhood schools. However, this was not a "don't change anything" message.**

   Stakeholders generally reacted negatively to the prospect of closing neighborhood schools. However, many saw great room for improvement in neighborhood schools, and many were interested in the opportunity for substantive participation in planning innovative educational offerings, outreach efforts and partnerships. In other words, many stakeholders were interested in exploring new ideas and innovative uses for AISD facilities, provided they have an active role in ensuring any resulting decisions provide a clear improvement.

Findings from other Districts

In struggling with localized enrollment declines and overall enrollment imbalances, AISD is not alone among urban school districts. A review of other districts' experiences (see Appendix E) revealed major facility use debates in districts throughout the country. The examples below are only a handful of the experiences of different.

Closure in the Context of "Crisis"

In many urban districts, overall enrollment declines have left a large percentage of the total facility space empty. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, for example, the district in 2006 had 36,000 students in a district with room for 50,000. In the north quadrant of the city, the enrollment dropped 50 percent (from 8,000 to 4,000 students) since 2000. Pair that with a $20 million budget deficit, and the district could make a strong case for action. The board voted to close six schools.

The situation is different in Austin, which is experiencing enrollment imbalance, not enrollment decline. Without an apparent "crisis," it seems all the more imperative to make a clear case that any change will result in educational improvements, particularly for those students directly affected by facility use changes.

Closure in the Context of Comprehensive Reform

Districts considering facility use changes often highlight the expanded educational offerings made possible from the cost savings such closures realize. The Minneapolis example cited above paired school closures with new educational programs in the schools that remained open, for example.

This was also the case in Denver, a 68,000-student district that in 2007 was, on average, 70% full. At that time, about half of Denver students attended a school other than their assigned one; half of those attended private or charter schools.

A citizen's committee was convened to consider closing up to 40 of the district's 151 schools. The final proposal developed by the committee came to the school board agenda as a comprehensive reform plan, in which the closure of 8 schools was considered in the context of improvements. These included:

- Dedicating 60% of the savings from closures to the schools that would house most of the transferred students; and 29% to other facilities with majority high-needs students.
- Instituting new programs at 5 schools, including a Montessori elementary, an arts academy, and several early childhood programs.
- Creating an RFP process within the district's New Schools Office to solicit proposals for innovative programs. The office also provides grant opportunities and support for parents and campus leaders with ideas for new programs at their schools.

Schools and City Growth

The link between city growth and school vitality is being explored in various ways in Portland, Oregon. The City of Portland developed a Schools, City, and Neighborhood Partnership that includes a combination of City affordable housing initiatives; an integrated effort to plan joint use of city and schools facilities and grants to support neighborhood school initiatives. As for the school district, Portland Public Schools kicked off its facilities master planning process with a charette-style meeting to identify the community's expectations and goals for schools facilities, including extensive discussion of joint-use arrangements.

Authentic Communication

The CCNS review of best practices focused on other districts' experiences addressing facility use decisions, not on communication strategies per se. However, the CCNS was fortunate to receive a guest presentation from Sylvia Reyna of San Antonio ISD about its Integrated Communication System (ICS). The ICS brings leaders from every campus together with top district administrators at least monthly to hear about school trends, raise concerns, and ask questions. Campus leaders immediately learn who at the district is responsible for providing answers, and district leaders commit to responding by the next meeting. In addition, regular contact between leaders of different campuses gives all a broader perspective on shared challenges and innovative solutions. The system had the following key characteristics:

- **Based on existing infrastructure.** It used and expanded the existing organizational and communicative structure of the district (e.g., district and campus

leadership teams, advisory committees, etc.) and increased the involvement of key stakeholder organizations outside the district.

- **Communication.** Stakeholders were able to exchange ideas, discuss issues and offer possible solutions to problems. The communications among stakeholders flowed up (from neighborhoods and schools up to the Board), down (from the Board to the neighborhoods and schools) and across the network so all key stakeholder organizations had an opportunity to share information.
- **Timing.** It was used routinely, early enough in problem solving processes, and frequently enough so that the entire community of participants and their constituents worked on issues that were relevant, had timely information to support their work, and took appropriate actions in an effective manner.
- **Sustainability.** The system became an integral part of existing plans, schedules and information systems; its frequent, predictable meetings ensured that the system would operate effectively on an ongoing basis.

Major Lessons from Other Districts

Although Austin's demographic situation of localized declines in a context of overall growth is relatively unusual, and although no facility use decision is without controversy, AISD can still take important lessons from other districts:

1. In the absence of a "crisis," AISD has a responsibility to demonstrate how any facility use decision will result in clear improvement for affected students.
2. Models exist for formalizing opportunities for the community to propose and shape innovative educational programs and partnerships.
3. Models exist for city-district partnerships to explore and address the relationship between growth, housing and schools.
4. Formal procedures to improve district-wide communication can be implemented without a massive commitment of new resources.

Recommendations

In this section, the CCNS presents detailed policies and action plans based on extensive research and community input. Recognizing the need for fiscal prudence, our recommendations emphasize optimized use of existing district and community resources. However, we also recognize that some of our recommendations will have budgetary implications, including increases in translation and interpretation services, advertising costs, meeting costs, and staff related to communications and interlocal collaboration. We support budget proposals by administration to implement the recommendations of the committee.

Our recommendations fall into four broad categories:

1. The **ongoing communications system** that will proactively develop relationships with the community, build understanding of the ways demographic trends affect AISD, and provide early awareness of trouble signs at individual campuses.
2. The quantitative and qualitative **criteria** that will be used in making facility-use decisions.
3. The **decision-making process** that the district and community will use to assess and respond to sub-optimal facility use.
4. The improvements that will be made to **interlocal communication and collaboration** to expand partnerships and community services.

Ongoing Communication System: Establishing the Context and Building Trust

To address the desire for information and lack of trust reported by stakeholders, the CCNS recommends the following proactive communication strategies for individual campuses and the district. These strategies aim to establish a context and build trust to lay the stage for productive, positive discussions about ways to get more out of AISD facilities.

Campus-level recommendations

AISD should engage every campus in an ongoing communications system to inform stakeholders of overall district trends, and where each campus stands in relation to the criteria that can affect facility use decisions. The district will make this information available at least once each school year through a “State of the Campus” event publicized in partnership with each school’s Campus Advisory Council (CAC). The CCNS recommends that this ongoing communications system include, at a minimum, the following steps.

1. Provide an annual “State of the Campus” update to educate the community about campus and district trends.

The heart of the recommended ongoing communication system is the State of the Campus report card and community meeting. AISD will prepare for each campus an annual “State

of the Campus" report card that will be presented by the principal in a public meeting which includes the CAC, PTA, and other interested community organizations, businesses, churches, and individuals. This report card will augment the academic performance data the district already provides (i.e., the current "School Report Card") with detailed enrollment and demographic data to give campuses and the community an ongoing status report of where each campus stands in relation to criteria that could affect facility use. We also recommend a much stronger effort to publicize this annual campus check-up.

A. Contents of the State of the Campus Update

The State of the Campus report card must include:

- Five years of enrollment data, presented graphically to indicate a trend line
- Current enrollment, including:
  - Number of transfers in and out under NCLB choice
  - Number of transfers in and out that are not NCLB transfers
  - Any other factors believed to have affected enrollment
- Projected enrollment
- Any demographic or neighborhood information used to make that projection, including:
  - New developments or redevelopments permitted in the attendance zone
  - Over-enrollment at nearby schools
  - Other factors affecting enrollment, such as nearby private or charter schools
- State and federal accountability status
- A clear indication of the "threshold" points that set in motion a decision-making process regarding facility use (as described in the "Criteria" section)

B. Widely Publicize the State of the Campus Update Outside of Traditional Campus Communities

Each school's CAC, PTA, and principal will work together to develop a list of interested stakeholders to invite to the "State of the Campus" address, including local neighborhood associations, businesses, churches, nonprofit groups, and other potential community partners. Each campus will mail the report card to all campus stakeholders, including parents, neighborhood associations, churches, businesses, and other interested parties. Additionally, each CAC will share the written "State of the Campus" report card with parents, faculty, staff, and the PTA, as well as with the broader community through neighborhood or church newsletters.[1] If stakeholders are aware of relevant demographic data that does not appear in the State of the Campus report card, the CAC will report this additional data back to appropriate district staff following the public meeting.

[1] The suggestion was made in several focus groups that important communications such as this one be distributed to broader stakeholder groups through Austin Energy utility bills.

2. Empower CACs to better fulfill their leadership and communications responsibilities.

The committee understands that CACs are already charged with communicating important campus information to the wider community, but that many CACs are not aware of this requirement or are unable to fulfill it. We strongly recommend an effort to educate CACs in their communication responsibilities and to better equip them to serve as leaders.

- Campus Improvement Plans shall include components that fulfill the CAC bylaws to ". . . ensure that systematic measures are in place to obtain input from the community, parents, and staff, and to provide information to those persons and organizations. . ."
- CACs should receive a written list of guidelines to develop effective communication systems, with the offer of additional communication training or advice from district personnel or volunteer communications professionals as needed. A recommended draft of this notice with communication guidelines is provided in Appendix P.
- In addition, every CAC should be urged to recruit outside leaders from local neighborhood associations, businesses, or other groups who will commit to serving as community partners to monitor the health and progress of a single campus or set of neighboring campuses. These partners may augment the district's new UpClose program and some UpClose leaders may wish to serve this role; but whereas the UpClose program is designed to represent AISD to community networks district-wide, the community partners will serve as advocates for an individual campus or small set of campuses and provide an ongoing bridge between a school or schools and the surrounding community.
- CACs should also develop and maintain a list of community stakeholders that should receive written notice of campus and district communications.

The CACs shall review and assess the success of their communication strategies, and regularly seek feedback from the community (such as through campus- or neighborhood-level meetings) on how to continually improve communications practices.

3. Provide regular AISD communication to a wider variety of stakeholders.

District and campus staff should also reach outside the traditional campus community with their communications strategies. Regular school newsletters should be sent to all local neighborhood associations (available by zip code through the City of Austin Community Registry at *www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighbor/search.htm*), as well as area churches, businesses, recreation centers, libraries, and nonprofit organizations such as the nearest YMCA/YWCA or Boys and Girls Club. In addition, campuses should be encouraged to communicate with local media, including English- and Spanish-language TV and radio. A recommended list of community partners is included in Appendix Q; this list is not exhaustive and will evolve and expand over time.

4. Provide immigrant parent orientations.

At campuses that include immigrant families, Parent Support Specialists shall offer frequent immigrant parent orientations. In CCNS stakeholder meetings, immigrant parents indicated they placed a high priority on in-person communication. Thus, orientations (which can be in the "cafecito" format) should include a formal introduction to the school staff, PTA, CAC, and other school contacts who can help answer questions.

District-level Recommendations

The CCNS recommends the following to improve communications between the district, AISD campuses, and the wider community.

1. Adopt a formal policy outlining the major principles guiding facility-use decisions.

The CCNS recommends that the AISD Board of Trustees adopt a formal public policy that commits AISD to three fundamental goals as a foundation for making major decisions about our public schools:

- To provide an equitable, enriched and challenging education for all of Austin's children
- To engage the community in an open and transparent public process for important decisions affecting our public schools
- To act as a responsible partner in community planning by acknowledging the crucial role schools play in shaping our city, committing to reinvestment in our existing neighborhood schools and recognizing that schools should only be closed as an extreme last resort after all other options have been exhausted.

2. Make district communications materials easier to understand.

All district communications shall be as jargon-free as possible and be written in a conversational tone, in both English and Spanish with additional languages available as needed.

AISD will ensure district publications clearly define lines of communication and accountability within AISD. The documents shall provide appropriate steps for the following situations: informally or formally appealing staff decisions; and getting approval for proposed projects or seeking help with staff or leadership problems. This document shall include information about the District Ombudsman, including what kind of issues the Ombudsman does and does not handle. Specific information shall be provided about the appropriate steps for parents experiencing problems with district personnel. Information should be available in English and Spanish.

3. Ensure consistency in translation services.

Professional certified translators who can effectively balance academic Spanish with the local vernacular should translate all official district communications. These translators should create a glossary of education terms in Spanish to be distributed and used consistently at all campuses (for example, the Spanish term for Parent Support Specialist should be consistent at all schools). Established terminology should be used consistently in all district communications.

AISD should take the following steps to ensure that translation services are consistently available at the campus level for meetings and translations of campus-level documents:

- Expand existing central translation services and allow schools to request translation services from this pool as needed.
- If two otherwise equally qualified individuals apply for a frontline job at an AISD school with a significant Hispanic population, the applicant who speaks both English and Spanish should be given preference in hiring based on this additional skill.
- Consider additional compensation for campus-level employees who are already providing *de facto* translation services in addition to their regular duties.

AISD should also evaluate the potential for professional translation services for languages other than Spanish.

4. Improve citizen access to the Board of Trustees.

Agendas for meetings of the AISD Board of Trustees shall be publicly posted a minimum of five business days in advance.

The email system used by the Trustees shall be configured so that messages from the public to board members are transmitted immediately and automatically, without being filtered or forwarded by an administrative staff member.

5. State of the District Address

AISD should institute an annual “State of the District” address in which the Superintendent and key administrative staff will provide an overview of student achievement and capacity at campuses throughout the district. Although the Superintendent already delivers a variety of updates through regular board meetings, the CCNS recommends this address be delivered at a “special event” outside of regular board meetings to better create the opportunity for a vigorous marketing and outreach effort. The district should pursue opportunities to broadcast the address online as well as on radio and television. As part of the address, adequate time will be allotted for questions and feedback from the public.

6. Develop systems to support innovative ideas for educational programs.

AISD should create a defined process to enable campus leaders to explore and implement innovative academic programs and creative approaches to learning and to communicate with others about their successes. In other urban school districts struggling to maintain or

increase enrollment, specialized educational programs are an important tool to recruit and maintain parents who otherwise would be drawn to nearby districts, or to private or charter schools.

AISD has considered and initiated several innovative new programs over the past few years, including the large-scale projects such as the Ann Richards School and or smaller campus-level programs such as New Tech High at Akins High School. The CCNS supports these efforts and encourages AISD to explore the development of special academic offerings and programs throughout the district. To do so, however, AISD needs to establish procedures by which innovative ideas can bubble up from below in addition to being proposed from above. CCNS interviews found some faculty, administrators, and parents reporting a lack of support for creative learning, citing the need to "fly under radar" with innovative programs that might otherwise serve as models for other schools. AISD can demonstrate support for campus leaders to identify and share innovative, creative methods by creating a defined process for campus-level pilot programs, including a means by which campuses can share their successes or lessons learned.

Criteria: Threshold Points and Qualitative Factors

For major decisions affecting our public schools, the CCNS recommends two tiers of criteria. The **threshold criteria**, when met, set in motion a decision-making process with the broadest possible stakeholder participation. During this process, stakeholders will identify and consider **qualitative criteria**, which may offset quantitative factors. These two tiers of criteria are explained in more detail below, and in tabular form on Page 22.

Threshold Criteria

The CCNS recommends the following threshold criteria to set in motion a public process to consider and develop plans to respond to the identified demographic or educational trends:

- The enrollment of a campus is at 85% of capacity or drops 5% over the course of two years
- The enrollment of a campus is at 105% or gains 5% enrollment over the course of two years
- A school has failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress or reach required state accountability standards

To determine the percentage of enrollment, the CCNS recommends AISD adopt a functional capacity definition. Current capacity definitions are calculated from the size of a school's core capacity (such as the cafeteria and library). This calculation does not adequately address the many other uses to which a school is put. Stakeholders also raised concerns that alternative centers for education, special academies, and special education offices should count in utilization equations. Capacity calculations should also reflect, for example, the difference between new schools and older campuses as older structures tend to be "funkier" in terms of layout, maintenance needs, and other related issues that will affect capacity.

AISD should make its capacity calculation determination methods and results clear to the public, communicate clearly with the public about temporary/permanent space available on each campus, and identify staff that can respond to the public's questions or suggestions regarding such determinations.

Qualitative Criteria

The CCNS recommends the following criteria as a starting point for discussions in any major decision affecting a public school, recognizing that each school community may identify additional factors for consideration. Qualitative criteria may include, but are not limited to: academic performance and state/federal accountability status; number of high needs students; specialized programs or curriculum; core capacity of school facilities such as cafeteria, library, gymnasium; transportation options to other schools if boundaries are redrawn; current utilization of campus during school hours; feasibility of adding or subtracting portable buildings;[2] likelihood of future increase or decrease in school age population; other demographic trends and projections; identified neighborhood and city planning goals; historic value of school building; potential environmental impacts of proposed change; importance of school to neighborhood; whether a school currently provides, or could provide, needed services such as day care, library, police substation or other community benefits; planned residential projects in or near attendance zone; range of academic and other offerings during the school day; after-school academic programs; teacher-student ratio; history and extent of renovations, alterations, and expansions; public perception of that campus and other factors identified by the community.

Discussions should also recognize qualitative criteria that speak to goals beyond the individual campus. These will include but not be limited to city and regional planning goals; environmental impacts of proposed change; proximity of the campus to major centers of work; success of students on that campus and the value to AISD of having a diverse portfolio of newer/older/smaller/larger campuses.

Example of How the Criteria Will be Used

Consider the following example: A campus has an enrollment of 84% of its functional capacity and thus meets the threshold criteria for further analysis of qualitative factors. Using the process described below, AISD and the community convene a series of meetings to discuss the way the current campus enrollment and projected enrollment trends shape the school, neighborhood, district and city. In the course of public discussion it becomes clear that this school provides outstanding services to a high-needs population (qualitative). Further, this high-needs population lacks transportation and all nearby schools are already at capacity (qualitative). The district will have to pay for bus service to schools that have space, but these schools do not offer the same services provided at the home campus (qualitative). Finally, the campus community demonstrates an interest in working to help market the campus to new neighborhood families and other students who may wish to take advantage of its programs, thereby boosting enrollment.

[2] Several architects suggested that AISD investigate more modular designs for schools so that structures could be expanded or made smaller to respond to natural population fluctuations without using portables, which provide "second-class classrooms."

Criteria for Assessing Schools

Indicators	Assessment Criteria
Threshold Points	
Enrollment	▪ Enrollment at 105% or more of functional capacity ▪ Enrollment at 85% or less of functional capacity ▪ Enrollment increase or decrease of 5% over at least two years
State and federal accountability status	▪ Failure to meet any state and federal performance targets
Qualitative Factors	
Current utilization of the campus during school hours	▪ Portables ▪ Empty classrooms ▪ List internal range of services ▪ Number of programs during school hours ▪ Number of portables >8 ▪ Number of portables used as classrooms
Possible other uses of the campus after school	▪ List external range of services ▪ Number of programs after school ▪ ASUS, APIE, CIS, etc.
Number of high-need kids and the nature of their needs	▪ Specific other: scores, pre-K, EC, etc.
Transportation	▪ Distance to school ▪ Other physical barriers
School location	▪ Number of similar schools within 2-mMile radius ▪ Current occupancy of those schools
Demographic trends and projections	▪ 5-year projection (minimum)
Range of services provided by school	▪ After-school programs ▪ Summer lunch programs for low-SES areas
Transfer policies	▪ Number of transfers ▪ Kind of transfers (NCLB choice, other)
Condition of facility	▪ Current physical condition ▪ Adaptability
Teacher-student ratio	▪ 1/9 < Pre-K < 1/18 ▪ 1/11 < Grades K-4 < 1/22 ▪ 1/12 < Grades 5-6 < 1/25 ▪ 1/14 < Middle < 1/28 ▪ 1/14 < High < 1/28 ▪ AISD staffing formulas (budget)
Core capacity	▪ Crowding in cafeteria (lunch times) ▪ Gym (availability) ▪ Library (availability)
Potential for innovative programs	▪ District or community interest in developing innovative educational offerings
Community involvement in rebuilding efforts	▪ Demonstrated community interest in supporting a Campus Action Plan to rebuild enrollment

From there, the process could go in several directions. Perhaps the recruitment effort is a success, and within a few years the school reaches 94% enrollment. Perhaps the community works hard to boost enrollment but with little success. Or, it's also possible that the campus community fails to follow through on tasks identified in the action plan. Each situation would suggest a different appropriate response. Campus communities that demonstrate an active interest in addressing the identified trends should be supported for 5 years. However, not every campus community will demonstrate this interest. If a campus community chooses not to develop recommendations and campus initiatives to address the causes of academic or enrollment issues, AISD may move forward with a facility use decision before the end of 5 years.

Finally, it is imperative that these criteria and capacity calculation methods be communicated clearly to the public. This is the rationale behind the Ongoing Communication System described above: to ensure every campus community has a regular opportunity to review where they are in relation to criteria that could affect the facility's future; to review and offer feedback on the criteria and to improve the reach and clarity of campus and district communication efforts. The overall intent is to create better community-wide understanding of demographic trends facing the district, to establish a context for facility use decisions, to empower the community to anticipate and participate in these decisions and to build greater knowledge and trust in AISD.

Decision-Making Process: Analysis and Action for Schools That Have Reached Threshold Criteria.

When schools hit one of the threshold indicators described in the Criteria section above, we recommend the following process to consider and assess alternatives. When the Ongoing Communication System described above has been in place for a few years, the fact that a given campus has reached a threshold point should not come as a surprise to the campus community. However, we recognize that because of existing, and sometimes longstanding, facility use imbalances, AISD may decide to immediately implement this process on some campuses.

The decision-making process includes the following steps:

1. Notification and Outreach
2. Community Meeting #1: Assess the Situation
3. Additional Outreach and Data-gathering
4. Community Meeting #2: Develop Recommendations and Action Plans
5. Implementation of Action Plan
6. Briefing to the Board of Trustees
7. Reassessment (Return to Step 1)

For under-enrolled schools with active community participation, a minimum of five years shall be allowed to work with the community to rebuild school enrollment or develop and consider alternatives. If the campus community at an under-enrolled school chooses not to participate in efforts to address the situation, AISD may move forward with a facility use decision before the end of five years.

Each of the steps in the decision-making process is explained in more detail below, and in graphic form on Page 30.

Step One: Notification and Outreach

When a school has reached a threshold point, AISD should work with the CAC to develop a letter that explains in simple language:

- The nature of the issue (e.g., enrollment, academic performance, interest in an innovative new program, etc.)
- The time and date of the initial public meeting to discuss the issue, plus any child care or transportation services available at that meeting (once the Ongoing Communication System is implemented, this initial public meeting should coincide with the State of the Campus event)
- The decision-making process that will be used to assess and respond to the issue
- Any legal rights that the campus community has with regard to the issue (such as tutoring under NCLB)

Notice shall be mailed to the school's principal, Campus Advisory Council, Parent Support Specialist, families of all enrolled students, and any other community partners identified by campus stakeholders. Other partners to be notified, either by U.S. or electronic mail, include but are not limited to: the Austin City Council; Travis County Commissioner's Court; Austin Independent Business Alliance; City of Austin Planning Commission; City of Austin Zoning and Platting Commission; City of Austin Transportation Commission; Austin Neighborhoods Council; Housing Authority of the City of Austin; local neighborhood associations identified in the City of Austin's Community Registry as serving the school's zip code; Austin Interfaith; Community Action Network; Education Austin; Liveable City; LULAC; NAACP; Urban League; Austin Area Interreligious Ministries; St. Johns Regular Baptist Association; Austin Latin Ministerial Association; Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Capital City African American Chamber of Commerce; Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Asian Chamber of Commerce; E3 Alliance; El Buen Samaritano; Communities in Schools; People Fund; HousingWorks; Foundation Communities; Partners in Education; and any other organizations that request notification. AISD should develop a standard e-mail or U.S. mail list of these community partners for campus use, and review and update this list annually to ensure the broadest possible representation.

The district shall also mail the notice letter to local media, including both English and Spanish-language television and radio stations and to any other community partners the affected school may identify as part of its own outreach plan.

In planning these events, campus leadership should consider the need for food and child care at meetings. Notification should include the telephone and e-mail addresses for at least one campus representative (such as a parent support specialist, CAC representative, or PTA leader) who can answer questions or take input from community members who are unable to attend the scheduled event.

The notice letter shall include a distinctive red banner on the envelope and letterhead designed to alert the recipient to the seriousness of the problem. Suggested banners are: “URGENT INFO ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL” or “IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED FOR YOUR SCHOOL” or similar phrase. This notice should be mailed out no less than two weeks before the event. The CCNS recommends campus leadership (both staff and CAC/PTA leaders) use the widest possible variety of notification methods, such as U.S. mail, e-mail, flyers and in-person networking.

The notice letter to the Campus Advisory Council shall include an additional page or sentence reiterating the CAC’s responsibility to communicate this issue as widely as possible to the school’s families and community partners through the means they have identified as most effective for their individual campus under CAC bylaws.

Step Two: Community Meeting #1 (Assess the Situation)

The purpose of the initial public meeting is:

- To inform the widest possible range of stakeholders of the threshold the school has reached.
- To prepare to assess the qualitative factors described in the Criteria section above.
- To build trust that AISD will take sufficient time for an authentic public process in any major decision affecting a public school.

If possible, a trusted member or members of the school community and the Trustee in whose district the affected campus is located should moderate the initial community meeting. The applicable Associate Superintendent should also be in attendance.

At the initial meeting, participants shall be provided with a clear description of the issue or problem, information about any legal issues or other parameters that may affect decision-making, any known timelines or deadlines for the decision and all relevant information provided to AISD staff, administrators or board members. Time shall be set aside for questions following the presentation of this information.

The moderator will explain the Decision-Making Process and expectations for an action plan. It will be emphasized that both the district and the community shape a campus’s future, and that any plans to rebuild enrollment (if desired) must include active community participation. Likewise, AISD should emphasize its willingness to participate and provide appropriate resources to aid a campus community. Participants in community meetings shall be given information about exemplary campus/community participation programs, to include the St. Johns Community/School Alliance as a successful model for increasing community involvement and strengthening public schools.

Participants shall also be invited to write down any additional questions or suggestions for either process or solutions so that AISD staff may provide answers or feedback at subsequent meetings. A single point of contact will be identified for additional questions

that arise after the Community Meeting #1. A date, time and location for the next meeting shall be announced.

AISD shall provide childcare. If possible, light refreshments shall also be provided for the initial meeting.

Step 3: Additional Community Outreach and Data Gathering

Between the two major community meetings, AISD will gather data to respond to community questions raised at the initial meeting. The CAC will continue to inform the community about the issue and recruit community partners, in formats such as focus groups, campus *cafecitos*, or presentations to local neighborhood associations. AISD staff will continue to provide support, suggestions, and resources to that campus community.

Step 4: Community Meeting #2 (Develop Recommendations and Action Plans)

At the next community meeting, participants shall hear responses to questions raised in Community Meeting #1, then break into smaller groups led by facilitators. These groups shall consider the criteria identified above and brainstorm ways to address the issue. The smaller groups shall then present their work to the larger group and, with the aid of a facilitator, develop ideas for the following two components:

A. **Campus Action Plan.** These are steps the community stakeholders can immediately take to increase attention and participation in the schools. Elements could include developing a marketing plan, working with local businesses to increase volunteers for an existing mentoring program, outreach to local neighborhood associations, and so on.

B. **Recommendations to AISD.** These are elements that have staffing, policy, or budgetary implications. Examples include developing innovative educational programs, boundary changes, or researching potential shared-use arrangements.

The group will select at least three representatives who will brief the Trustees on campus action plans and community recommendations to AISD.

The committee recognizes that the community may not develop an entire set of recommendations and a campus action plan in the second meeting. Additional meetings will continue as long as necessary. Campus leadership should consider the value of scheduling meetings at different times of day to accommodate different community members' work schedules.

We recommend the following specific steps for under-capacity and over-capacity campuses:

Under-Capacity Campuses

The community should consider the following options for campuses with declining enrollment.

- **Rebuilding.** Increasing enrollment without a change in programs, such as through a marketing program.
- **Revitalization through innovative AISD programs.** Using a specialty focus or themed program to aid in attracting new parents. For example, turning a general-purpose elementary school into an environmental-themed elementary school with the same neighborhood boundaries would be considered revitalization. For reasons of equity, such programs will ideally be budget-neutral, but AISD staff will provide support to campus communities that will need to seek grant funding or corporate support.
- **Shared-use arrangements.** Working with the City or other community partners to put unused space in AISD facilities to other community uses, such as senior or day care centers, or to compatible private uses, such as for cultural arts groups. (The committee recognizes that the primary cost of keeping smaller schools open comes from staffing costs and that shared-use arrangements will not fully address the per-student costs of staffing a given school; however, the committee believes AISD should explore ways that these arrangements could potentially offset the higher staffing costs of smaller schools.)
- **Repurposing.** Changing the fundamental educational mission of a facility, such as turning a general-purpose middle school into a district magnet school, or an elementary school into a pre-K center. This term could also apply to converting an AISD facility not currently used as a school into a school.
- **Closure.** Ceasing operations as a school.

If a community desire exists to rebuild enrollment on a given campus, AISD staff should provide resources and support to assist schools and communities in reversing that situation (while supporting the overall goal of district-wide equity). Staff should provide any available information about ways other schools have strengthened enrollment, such as developing unique programs or marketing their school to new neighborhood families. Community partners, such as local neighborhood associations or businesses, should be actively recruited to help with these efforts. If rebuilding is the chosen approach of a campus community, under-enrolled schools shall be given a minimum of five years to demonstrate rebuilding progress.

The CCNS recognizes that not every campus community may demonstrate an interest in developing action plans and recommendations; at such campuses, AISD may not wait five years to make a facility use decision.

Over-Capacity Campuses

In the case of over-enrollment, members of AISD's Facility Use and Boundaries Task Force and appropriate AISD staff shall be actively engaged in all discussions to explain available options and help evaluate possible alternatives recommended by community

members. If over-enrollment will affect other schools through transfers or boundary changes, those school communities shall also be notified and engaged in the decision-making process.

Failure to Meet State and Federal Accountability Standards

For schools that are failing to meet state and federal accountability targets, appropriate AISD staff shall be available to explain state and federal requirements and possible consequences. In these cases, it is especially important to recruit strong active community partners who will play an ongoing role through tutoring, organizing special school events, and developing truancy prevention programs or other initiatives designed to support students and teachers.

Step Five: Implementation of Campus Action Plans

The campus community will immediately move to implement any plans to increase attention, enrollment, participation, and achievement at their campus.

Step Six: Briefing to Board of Trustees

Each January, all campuses going through the Decision-Making Process will be given the opportunity to brief the Trustees on their campus action plans and make recommendations for AISD action. These briefings may be either written or oral. If campuses in the Decision-Making Process have not designated representatives to brief the Trustees, or if those representatives fail to prepare a briefing, campus staff will prepare a written report detailing the attendance and follow-up on Community Meeting #1 and #2.

The committee believes that regular January updates will help make the facility use decision a regular, expected part of the AISD calendar, further drawing attention to the demographic challenges AISD faces.

Step Seven: Reassessment

Campuses will use the annual State of the Campus event to reassess where the campus stands in relation to the threshold criteria and to assess progress on the AISD and campus activities.

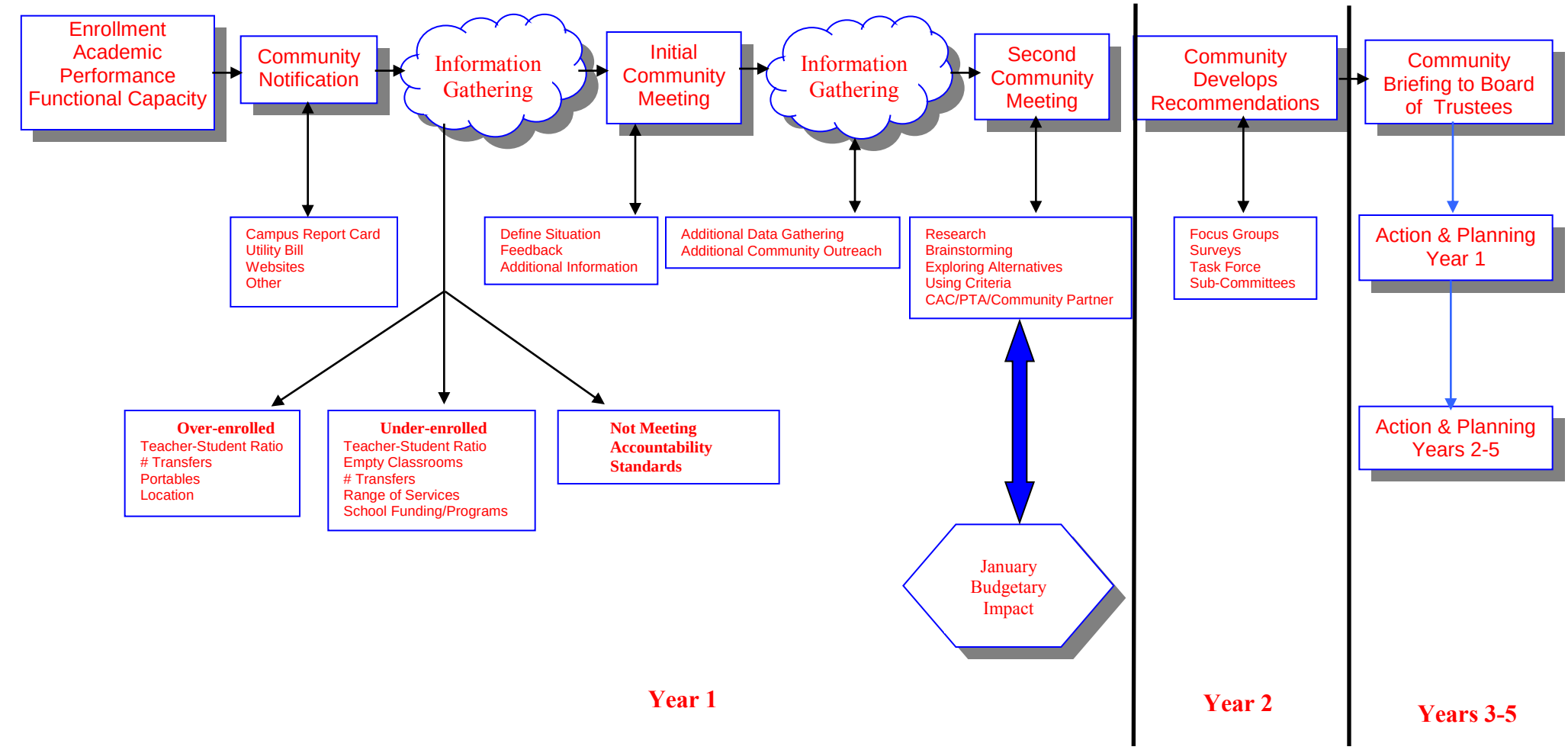
If a campus no longer meets the threshold criteria, this State of the Campus event will end the Decision-Making Process (i.e., no decision will be required.) The campus will revert to the normal Ongoing Communication System of annual checkups through the State of the Campus event.

If a campus still meets a threshold criteria, this State of the Campus event will kick off a second round of the Decision-Making Process, in that the steps outlined above will be repeated.

We recommend that a campus which is making active efforts to address under-capacity be given a minimum of five years to correct the situation. If a campus community is not actively pursuing an Action Plan to address the situation, AISD may consider a facility use decision after the third State of the Campus report after reaching a threshold point.

For decisions requiring a vote by the AISD Board of Trustees, the board shall hold a minimum of two public hearings before taking action. Public hearings shall be posted at least ten days in advance. AISD shall send mailed notice of the public hearings to all individuals and organizations that received the original notice letter.

Austin Independent School District
Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Process Flow Chart



Improved Interlocal Communication and Collaboration

Because the vitality of schools shapes city growth, and vice versa, the CCNS recommends AISD direct renewed energy and focus to its existing partnerships with the City of Austin, Travis County, and any other relevant entities in the following ways:

1. Establish formal policies promoting interlocal collaboration

The CCNS recommends that the AISD Board of Trustees formally adopt the following policies to serve as a foundation for more productive interlocal collaboration:

- AISD commits to act as a responsible partner in community planning by acknowledging the crucial role schools play in shaping our city, committing to reinvestment in our existing neighborhood schools, and recognizing that schools should only be closed as an extreme last resort after all other options have been exhausted.
- AISD will support existing partnerships with the City of Austin and Travis County by increasing opportunities for AISD, city, and county representatives to discuss policy and operations, share information and data on a regular basis at both board and staff levels, and coordinate capital planning efforts wherever possible.
- AISD will support efforts to increase affordable, family friendly housing throughout the district. Affordable housing is a key issue in reducing transience among our students and in ensuring that faculty and staff can continue to live in the community in which they work. AISD should provide a strong voice for increased affordability at the board, administrative, and staff levels.
- AISD will make a commitment to sustainable construction and will participate in a recognized rating system for all future school facilities, including materials, operations, and location. As the world grapples with climate change, AISD should set an example of responsible environmental stewardship in all its actions.

2. Clarify focus of the Joint Subcommittees

AISD, the City of Austin, and Travis County shall articulate several clear areas of focus for the Joint Subcommittees, including public safety, planning, affordable housing, and capital improvements. Presentations to the Joint Subcommittees shall be related to these areas of focus and shall include recommendations for action, where appropriate, and sufficient time for discussion by the members. AISD and the City of Austin should also review the City Charter provision that the AISD Board President serves as an *ex officio* member of the Planning Commission.[3]

[3] As one interviewee pointed out, although the City of Austin does not consider the AISD trustee a voting member of the Planning Commission, such a practice does not reflect an accurate interpretation of the word *"ex officio."* Several interviewees suggested that an AISD staff member might be a better choice for this role of *ex officio* member.

3. Create formal procedures for regular staff-level coordination and communication.

AISD facilities and planning staff should regularly meet with their counterparts at the city and county to ensure ongoing communication about development projects or other issues that may affect AISD. In addition, AISD, the City of Austin, and Travis County shall review the feasibility of creating a staff-level joint subcommittee.

Appropriate AISD Facilities Planning staff should also review weekly Planning Commission, Zoning and Platting Commission, and City Council agendas and provide comments on proposed items that may affect school enrollment or have other impacts on AISD. (The Educational Impact statement described below could be used as a guide for determining which projects could benefit from AISD feedback.) These comments will be made available to the public in advance of the scheduled hearing. Established guidelines will assist staff in identifying which projects require comment, and staff comments will respond to established criteria. AISD should also work with the city and county to develop procedures by which AISD staff can provide comment on the educational impact of decisions regarding affordable housing.

AISD staff will regularly attend Neighborhood Planning meetings to ensure that district projections reflect future land uses and that planning team members have sufficient information about the schools within their planning area. The City of Austin will provide information about schools within its overview of a planning area. AISD and the City of Austin will work together to explore other ways that Neighborhood Plans can integrate best strategies for supporting existing schools or making recommendations for future new schools.

4. Encourage the City of Austin to create an Educational Impact Assessment for development applications.

The AISD Board of Trustees should encourage the City of Austin to require an Educational Impact Assessment addressing the potential impact on enrollment, transportation, and infrastructure as part of the standard review process for large residential developments and redevelopments. At a minimum, this assessment would require applicants to list the elementary, middle, and high schools in the area and their current enrollment level, as well as the development's expected unit size and bedroom count, expected sales price, and amenities.

5. Develop clear policies and procedures to promote the exploration and implementation of shared-use facilities.

AISD and the City have already formed partnerships at facilities such Pickle Elementary. Shared facilities may provide community services such as libraries, police substations, health care, child care, social services, recreation or performing arts centers, or other appropriate services. Because the CCNS recommends that such partnerships are a way to improve the vitality of neighborhood schools, AISD and the City should develop clear processes through which campus communities can explore opportunities for shared use

on their campuses. The Joint Subcommittees is also encouraged to consider “sector level” planning to ensure that schools, city services, and social supports appropriately serve each area of the city. Finally, in some circumstances, a community desire exists to explore the repurposing of AISD facilities not used as schools into schools; these procedures should also accommodate the exploration of such ideas.

6. Coordinate capital planning efforts.

AISD shall coordinate capital planning efforts with city and county wherever possible to pursue shared planning goals and achieve fiscal efficiencies.

7. Support City planning goals with regard to affordable housing, environmental sustainability, and other community goals.

AISD should commit to sustainable construction for all future new schools and major renovations, including materials, methods, operations, and location. Such projects will participate and adhere to a recognized rating system. New schools and major additions will comply with all city and county environmental regulations, including the Save Our Springs Ordinance. AISD will explore modular design alternatives that permit flexibility as student populations expand or contract.

AISD should also support efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing. This support could include: working with other local government representatives to bring school enrollment to the attention of entities making site selections and other decisions regarding affordable housing; educating business and civic leaders about the connection between a stable home and student achievement; enlisting business support for developing and maintaining affordable, family friendly housing throughout the district; and supporting planning policies at the state and local level.

8. Commit to ongoing review of interlocal partnerships.

AISD and the City of Austin will review current interlocal and development agreements on an annual basis to ensure best practices are being met, specifically in terms of location, construction, materials, and other areas relevant to future school facilities.

Conclusion

The recommendations contained in this report are the synthesis of nearly a year of work by the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools. More important, they are a reflection of the thoughts and suggestions of countless AISD families, employees and community members who took time out of their busy lives to share with us their dreams and goals for better public education in Austin.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the committee's outreach phase was the genuine anguish of those who felt shut out of their public school system or gave voice to the conviction that the district "is not on our side." Families reported feeling alienated by a district that says it encourages parent involvement, yet seems to ignore public input in favor of top-down directives. As one frustrated mother put it, "They want me to serve pizza, but they don't care what I have to say about my child's education." Parents and the community want to be meaningfully involved in the future of their schools. This is a strength AISD should build on.

A good working relationship requires more than adopting a timeline or process for major school decisions; it requires a change in AISD's institutional culture. The AISD Trustees and central administration must make a genuine effort to dedicate themselves to open, collaborative decision-making with the public – to demonstrate by their actions and decisions that they are on the same side as the community. In no area is this more imperative than when approaching the question of facility use. It is the committee's conclusion that there is only one way to transform conversations about "change" – an inherently unsettling proposition – to one about opportunities to get more out of every AISD school. That is to create a genuinely welcoming environment for bottom-up collaboration.

Finally, the committee wishes to sincerely thank the board for the opportunity to provide recommendations on these important issues. Much work remains to develop the processes and culture that support collaboration. We hope the work of this committee will be an important first step in that process.

Appendix A
Charter

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools

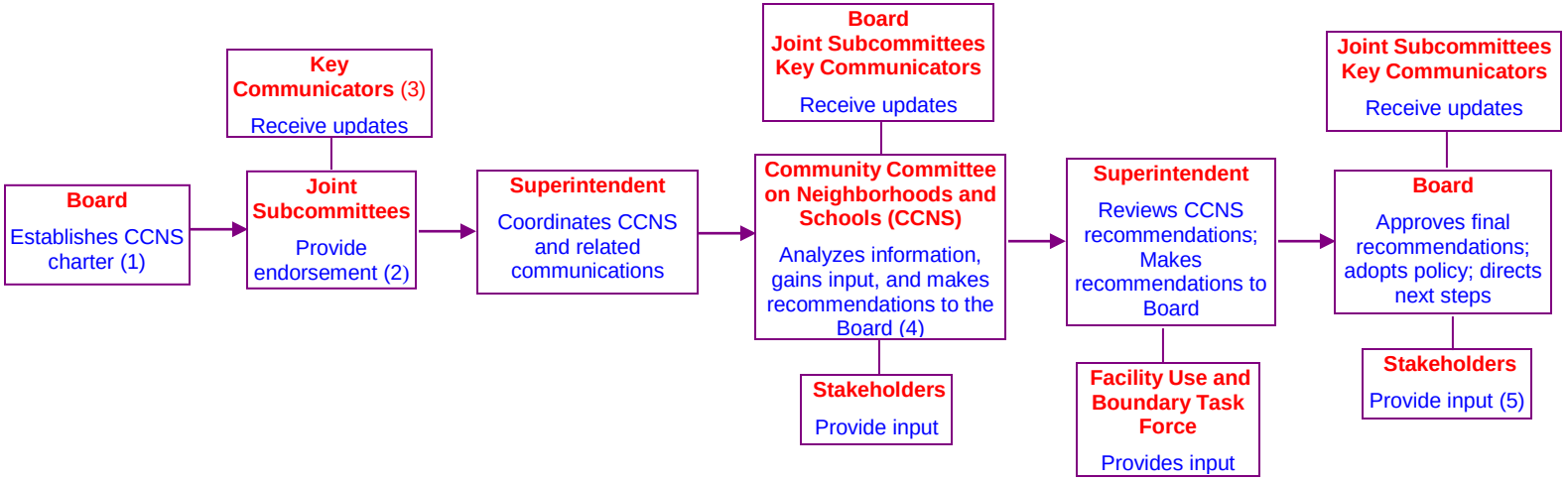
The Board of Trustees has formed the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools to develop, with broad stakeholder input, recommendations on standard policy and processes for identification and review of underutilized and overcrowded schools, and for ensuring ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation. Accordingly:

1. The Board will establish the charter for the Committee, including the following mission: *To underscore the importance of relationships between schools, neighborhoods, and community, and to ensure effective and fair solutions to utilization of school facilities through thorough assessment and active involvement of all stakeholders*.
2. The charter of the Committee will have the endorsement of the Joint Subcommittees of the Austin City Council, Travis County Commissioners Court, and Board of Trustees.
3. The membership of the Committee will be appointed by the Board and consist of representatives from a diverse number of stakeholder groups and experts:
   - School community members, neighborhood associations, and community groups
   - District Advisory Council and Austin Council of PTAs
   - City of Austin and Travis County
   - University of Texas
   - Business community
4. The Committee will review current data and research on best practices and successful models (e.g., facility utilization, neighborhood vitality, environmental issues).
5. The Committee will provide various opportunities for stakeholder input (e.g., community surveys, interviews, focus groups) and carefully consider the input received.
6. The Committee will make policy and process recommendations on:
   - Criteria for identifying underutilized and overcrowded schools
   - Criteria for assessing conditions (e.g., academic performance, environmental implications, use of resources, added value both quantitative and qualitative)
   - Criteria for assessing alternatives (e.g., revitalizing, repurposing, realigning, closing)
   - Opportunities for interlocal collaboration
   - Procedures for identifying and ensuring ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation (e.g., neighborhood surveys, input from parents, students, and teachers)
7. The Superintendent will coordinate the work of the Committee and ensure that regular updates are provided to the Board and key communicators within the community, and ensure transparency throughout the process.
8. The Superintendent will also ensure that recommendations of the Committee align appropriately with Board Results Policies and the Strategic Plan.
9. The Superintendent, with input from the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force, will review the recommendations of the Committee and make recommendations to the Board.
10. The Board will consider the recommendations of the Committee and the Superintendent, approve final recommendations, adopt appropriate policy, and direct next steps.
11. The Board may determine that certain exceptions or variances are necessary to any procedures that may be adopted.
12. The Committee will make periodic updates to the Board of Trustees.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on December 4, 2006

Appendix B
Process Framework

FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AND PROCESS TO ADDRESS OVERCROWDED AND UNDERUTILIZED SCHOOLS



NOTES

(1) See preceding page.

(2) Agreement with CCNS charter and support to proceed.

(3) In addition to media contacts, staff will maintain a database of "key communicators" to receive updates, announcements, and other important information. These key communicators will include the DAC, CACs, Principals, ACPTA, AARO, CAN, City of Austin, Neighborhood Associations, Education Austin, AAPSA, and others that will be identified.

(4) The CCNS will recommend: criteria for identifying underutilized and overcrowded schools; criteria for assessing alternatives (revitalizing, repurposing, realigning, closing); opportunities for interlocal collaboration; and procedures for ensuring ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation. The CCNS recommendations will also address responding to state and federal accountability mandates. Throughout the committee's deliberations, the community will be actively involved and the process will be transparent.

(5) In addition to open meetings and citizen communications, the Board may wish to hold one or more public hearings or community forums to gain stakeholder input.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on December 4, 2006

Appendix C
Meeting Summaries

The Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools began meeting on May 22, 2007 and met through April 8, 2008. The following pages include the meeting summaries from these dates:

May 22, 2007

June 12, 2007

June 26, 2007

August 14, 2007

August 28, 2007

September 11, 2007

September 25, 2007

October 23, 2007

November 13, 2007

November 27, 2007

December 4, 2007

January 8, 2008

January 29, 2008

February 12, 2008

February 26, 2008

April 8, 2008

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
May 22, 2007

Member Attendance:

Andy Anderson	Present
Sally Brackett	Present
Terry Clark	Present
Christiane Woodley Erwin	*Absent*
Chiquita Watt Eugene	*Absent*
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	Present
Linda Gibeaut	Present
Rev. Sterling Lands	Present
José Marrero	Present
Rachael Proctor May	Present
Susan Moffat	Present
Leroy Nellis	Present
Yolanda Pedraza	Present
Rev. Ivie Rich	Present
Paul Saldaña	Present
Alfredo Santos	Present
Kathie Tovo	Present
Jim Walker	Present

Others in Attendance:

Mark Williams, President, AISD Board of Trustees
Greg Guernsey, City of Austin, Neighborhood Planning & Zoning
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizen communications.
- After a welcome by Andy Anderson and introductions by committee members, Paul Saldaña went over the meeting guidelines.
- Andy Anderson reviewed the committee's charter and the framework for development of policy and process.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Clarifying that the committee will report to the Board, but that the Superintendent will have an opportunity to review the committee's recommendations and comment to the Board

- ☞ The importance of committee members, who all have a proven track record for outreach, actively soliciting input from a broad base of community stakeholders. This chance to make recommendations directly to the Board provides tremendous opportunity to open an unprecedented dialogue and create changes.
- ☞ The district and the city need to coordinate school location decisions.
- ☞ The committee will have a challenging job as the focus is on all of the district's schools instead of addressing any one particular area or individual school.

- The committee reviewed its work schedule, running through February of 2008. According to the schedule, committee members and the community learn about AISD's current status. Then members seek input from community members about the needs of their communities. Finally, a report is presented to the board about those needs.
- Discussion points on the work schedule included:
  - ☞ The August meetings will be about the accountability system and determining ways that committee members can engage the community to get feedback. August and September are reserved for obtaining community input. In December, the community will receive information at open houses and have the opportunity to provide feedback on draft recommendations before a final report is presented to the Board.
  - ☞ The possibility of forming subcommittees if needed was mentioned. Although subcommittees have not been discussed yet, they are not precluded from the process.
  - ☞ Recording the committee's process so that information is not lost is important. The public can follow the task force's progress through a website that lists the members, meeting times and agendas, and meeting summaries.
  - ☞ Committee meetings are scheduled at the same time as the City of Austin's Planning Commission meetings. This could result in some people having less opportunity to attend committee meetings.
  - ☞ The committee needs to find ways to hear from people who do not ordinarily get involved, as all community voices need to be heard; need to reach out to the different subcultures and in their languages. People need to feel that their input will actually have an impact on the report presented to the Board.
  - ☞ Try to provide information and background on recent school decisions.
- Mark Williams thanked committee members for their participation. He emphasized the need for the committee to engage the entire community and to be patient if the pace of progress seems too slow as it will all come together over time. The committee will use its expertise to establish a framework to allow things to move forward. This will not be an easy process as there are so many variables when viewing the district as a whole so the ability to compromise will be key to success. The Board is there to support the committee in its efforts. Because of the timeline of state accountability requirements, the Board may not be able to wait for the committee's final report before addressing an issue.
- Discussion points included:

- ☞ Learning why schools are overcrowded or underutilized may allow attention to be focused on an individual school at an earlier point in time if warning signs are seen.
- ☞ Need to see where all schools are currently located in the accountability process. Need to get neighborhood engagement at year one instead of waiting until year three to focus on the issues.
- ☞ Because of its overall growth, AISD is in a unique position as many other districts are being forced to close many schools due to shrinking enrollment district wide.
- ☞ AISD also faces different challenges than many other areas because of the state's stringent accountability system.
- ☞ Getting information on population trends and current school enrollment patterns could provide a snapshot of different neighborhoods and give a sense of future requirements. The committee hopes to get some type of benchmark to suggest where the incoming population might live.
- ☞ Demographic information and the annotated bibliography on measures other districts are taking to address these issues should be added to the committee's website.
- ☞ Because the proposed Young Men's Leadership Academy may require repurposing a school, the committee should be in communication with that group.
- ☞ A request was made for the definition of overcrowding and underutilization and for information on assessed valuation and future land use maps.
- ☞ Information on school vertical structure was requested so the committee can get a sense of where enrollment trends are going.
- ☞ Need to look at how many students are being educated in portables.

- Members discussed the need for more information about methods of encouraging community participation. This is currently being researched and will soon be available.
- Committee members need to look over their contact information for any errors. They also see if any names have been omitted that really should be part of the committee. Although the group is large, there is room for a few more people if necessary.
- The next meeting, focusing on demographic information, will be on June 12, 2007. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
June 12, 2007

Member Attendance:

Andy Anderson	Present
Sally Brackett	Present
Terry Clark	Present
Christiane Woodley Erwin	Present
Chiquita Watt Eugene	*Absent*
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	*Absent*
Linda Gibeaut	Present
Rev. Sterling Lands	*Absent*
José Marrero	Present
Rachael Proctor May	Present
Susan Moffat	Present
Leroy Nellis	Present
Yolanda Pedraza	Present
Rev. Ivie Rich	*Absent*
Paul Saldaña	Present
Alfredo Santos	Present
Kathie Tovo	Present
Jim Walker	*Absent*

Others in Attendance:

Lorraine Atherton
Lorie Barzano
Nan Clayton
DeCandice Crosure
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Mike Meier
Ryan Robinson, City Demographer
Joe Silva, AISD Facilities
Gardner Sumner

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizen communications.
- Joe Silva from AISD Office of Facilities explained methods to determine school capacity and presented demographic information on growth in the district.
- Discussion points included:

- Defining key terms regarding capacity
  - *Permanent Classrooms* are classrooms that are part of the school building.
  - *Portables* are outside, temporary, moveable rooms. Portables are not included when calculating school capacity.
  - *Ed Specs* are standards for core facility use, which encompasses the library, gym and cafeteria. Core capacity varies among schools due to different ed specs in use at the time of construction.
  - *Special Use Areas* are areas such as art and music rooms. These are included as part of the building design under the current ed specs.
  - *Capacity* refers to the number of students a campus is designed to hold if every classroom is used for classroom space. Capacity differs from utilization because classroom space may be used for other purposes.
- The formulas to determine capacity at the elementary, middle, and high school levels are generally straightforward calculations that do not vary much among districts. Because older students change classes during the day, the formula to determine capacity at the middle and high school levels differs from the elementary formula as it has been adjusted to reflect that all classrooms will not be used every period. Because of this adjustment and the need to provide space for special use areas, AISD's capacity determination differs slightly from TEA's. The calculation TEA uses assumes that every classroom is used every period of the day and no classroom space is used for other purposes. AISD's formulas for capacity calculation are guidelines and do not represent board approved policy.
- Computer labs fall under discretionary space for special use areas. This discretionary use can become an equity issue if one school has enough space to allow for labs when another school does not. Later this summer, AISD will determine what are appropriate discretionary uses of space.
- During the 2006-2007 school year, fourteen schools were at greater than 114% capacity and of those, six were at greater than 125% capacity. This overcrowding did not translate into larger class sizes but meant that more portable classrooms had to be used. When relieving overcrowded schools, the first course of action is to try to adjust school boundaries. If neighboring schools are underutilized, it is a more efficient use of resources to move students to those schools rather than construct new facilities. The 2004 bond program allowed for building classroom additions in some schools based on attendance projections and building three new schools to open in the fall. The efforts to address overcrowding resulted in reducing the number of schools at greater than 125% capacity from six schools to three.
- Along with overcrowded schools, those that are being underutilized need attention as they represent an inefficient use of resources. Currently, a handful of schools are at less than 50% capacity. The question is what to do with schools that do not have enough students to support them. This issue is being seen more frequently in mature neighborhoods that are not attracting families with school-age children. Those schools might be used to relieve

overcrowded schools or they may need to be closed. The board and community would have to discuss any plan to close a particular school.
    - ☞ This committee's purpose is to develop a model process for parent and stakeholder engagement that can be used for any kind of facilities change instead of focusing on changes to any one campus or expanding any educational program.
    - ☞ The school capacity discussion has not addressed transfer policy or represented a coordination of efforts with the city of Austin's neighborhood planning process.
    - ☞ The maps used in the presentation do not depict how many students at a school are transfer students. They show enrollment levels but do not reflect how many of the students attending live in the enrollment area. Some overcrowded schools have been frozen to transfer requests.
    - ☞ Current enrollment patterns conform to district projections made five years ago.
    - ☞ A number of factors have influenced district enrollment patterns. The current lack of affordable housing has resulted in apartment complexes that previously rented to students and people without children now being populated by families. New subdivision development and an increase in the immigrant population have brought in many new families. The impact on schools from housing changes in the city core, such as the new development at Mueller, remains to be seen as it is unknown how many families with school-age children will locate there.
    - ☞ Whether a relationship exists between school capacity and student performance has not been studied. Currently, school performance is not considered when making boundary adjustments to relieve overcrowding.
- Committee members requested copies of the capacity maps used in the presentation and asked that they be made available on the website.
- As a number of guests were present, committee members reviewed guidelines for citizens communications and visitor protocols. They did introductions and requested that nametags be made available for future meetings.
- City of Austin demographer Ryan Robinson presented information on demographic trends for the city of Austin.
- Discussion points included:
    - ☞ Austin is experiencing its fourth population boom in as many decades. During the past recession, despite a slowdown in domestic migration, population growth continued because of immigration from Latin America and Southeast Asia.
    - ☞ Even if inaccurate in the short-term, population projections tend to become more accurate when looking at the long-term picture.
    - ☞ The job creation rate is about 4%. The jobs created are high tech and service sector.
    - ☞ Although Central Texas residents see Austin as becoming less affordable, housing prices are well below the national median, which makes it an attractive location to people from more expensive markets. One effect of sprawl is to increase the desirability of the urban core.

- ☞ Austin is experiencing continued ethnic, cultural, social and employment diversification. It has become a majority-minority city. It is one of only a few large cities that still elect council members to at-large positions.
- ☞ Austin is becoming a more divided city along socio-economic rather than racial lines. This division can be seen by looking at location of Section 8 households, which have become concentrated in the eastern section of the city.
- ☞ Different ethnic groups are experiencing different population trends. The African-American population, which used to be concentrated in East Austin, has become more dispersed while the Latino population has continued to become more concentrated.
- ☞ Seven different school districts come into or intersect the City of Austin. This results in a complex relationship between the city and the school districts.
- ☞ The district is gentrifying across the board, which puts pressure on families as housing becomes less affordable. Because of economic pressure, families are moving into apartments that never used to have school-age children. This puts pressure on schools in neighborhoods that, because of a lack of new housing construction, might not have expected to see growth in student populations.
- ☞ The absolute number of families in Austin is slowly increasing but the share as compared to all households is decreasing. Austin is a destination for families but it is becoming more difficult to afford.
- ☞ East Austin residents are facing intense property tax pressure and low-income renters and senior citizens are being displaced.
- ☞ Clarified that it is difficult to determine what the district should bear responsibility for addressing when it comes to resolution of longstanding social issues.
- ☞ Some neighborhoods are looking at population capacity ceilings before deciding whether to add more new housing. Overall, Austin will continue to grow over a period of decades and it has the carrying capacity to do so. Water supplies will eventually become an issue but not for 30 to 40 years. The city will not become as big as Dallas or Houston but will become a powerhouse as the region develops.

- Committee members requested copies of the maps used in the demographic presentation. Much of the information is available on the web at *http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/.*
- The next meeting is June 26, 2007. This meeting will focus on a presentation of state and federal accountability systems. Committee members will also begin discussing planning for gathering community input. The August meetings will focus on more demographic information and discuss the neighborhood planning process.
- Committee members requested information on the percentage attendance capacity for schools and demographic information on specific schools that are in Spanish language dominant locations.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
June 26, 2007

Member Attendance:

Andy Anderson	Present
Sally Brackett	Present
Terry Clark	Present
Christiane Woodley Erwin	*Absent*
Chiquita Watt Eugene	*Absent*
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	Present
Linda Gibeaut	*Absent*
Rev. Sterling Lands	*Absent*
José Marrero	Present
Rachael Proctor May	*Absent*
Susan Moffat	Present
Leroy Nellis	Present
Yolanda Pedraza	*Absent*
Rev. Ivie Rich	Present
Paul Saldaña	*Absent*
Alfredo Santos	Present
Kathie Tovo	Present
Jim Walker	Present

Others in Attendance:

Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Zoe Griffith, AISD Student Services/Records
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Maria Whitsett, AISD Accountability

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizen communications.
- Andy Anderson opened the meeting by reviewing the Committee's charge. Discussion points included:
  - Clarifying that the Committee will focus on making broad-based policy recommendations rather than addressing issues unique to any particular campus.
  - The Committee will look at reports from other committees that may have addressed similar topics to see if they contain information useful to this committee's work.
  - Need to look at best practices and alternatives as well as developing processes.

- Dr. Maria Whitsett with AISD's Accountability Department presented information on the state and federal accountability systems. Highlights of the presentation included:

State Accountability System

- ☞ Previously, if students dropped out, returned to school, and dropped out again, they were only counted once in the dropout statistics. Under the new methodology, those same students would be counted both times.
- ☞ Schools that fail to meet standards face sanctions. Some of the sanctions being used were already in place but are now seen earlier in the process as standards have become more rigorous. The district has an increasingly intensive framework of supports in place to assist schools struggling to meet the standards.
- ☞ Technical Assistance Teams (TATs) were created to assist schools at risk of not meeting standards in the future. TATs ensure that activities targeting areas of academic need are being implemented. The district employees that make up the TAT are either from central office or are instructional specialists, not campus staff.
- ☞ At *Year 1 Academically Unacceptable (AU),* a Campus Intervention Team (CIT), with 50% external membership, has to be established.
- ☞ The School Leadership Pilot, funded by TEA and AISD, pays travel expenses for principals at *Year 1 AU* schools to attend training on school management.
- ☞ Under the *Year 2 AU* Reconstitution Plan, the state wants to retain core teachers whose classroom achievement levels have shown improvement. This allows reconstitution efforts to be focused on specific departments instead of implemented school-wide. Principals may also be removed at this point if they have been at the school for the entire two-year period.
- ☞ Factors outside of a principal's control may prevent adequate improvement in school achievement from occurring within the two-year timeframe. At *Year 3 AU*, a required hearing with the TEA Commissioner serves as a safety net for principals whose schools have failed to meet standards. This hearing allows for a discussion of methods that have been tried to raise scores and an evaluation of contextual information that might have resulted in a failure to meet standards.
- ☞ At *Year 4 AU*, the Commissioner may order closure or allow the school to pursue an alternative management entity. At *Year 5 AU*, the school must close or pursue alternative management.

Federal Accountability System (NCLB)

- ☞ At *Stage 1, Needs Improvement*, parents are offered the choice to transfer to other district schools that are not in improvement status.
- ☞ Title I Campuses enter *Stage 1, Needs Improvement* if they miss standards in the same subject for two years in a row.
- ☞ Title I is a federal pass-through program where supplemental dollars are used to target concentrated areas of economic need. It can take the form of either targeted assistance to individual students with recognized economic and academic needs or school-wide assistance where all students in the school

are allowed to participate. These funds do not transfer with students if they change schools.
    - ☞ AISD, which uses the school-wide assistance format, has 68 Title I schools. These are mostly at the elementary level.
    - ☞ At *Stage 2,* schools must make Supplemental Educational Services (SES), which are free tutoring services provided outside of the school day, available to students participating in the free or reduced lunch program.
    - ☞ Schools must develop a corrective action plan *at Stage 3* and a restructuring plan at *Stage 4*. At *Stage 5*, schools must implement the restructuring plan.
- Discussion points emerging from this presentation included:
    - Because principals provide stability to schools, preventing turnover is important. Two years in the position is not enough time for principals to become familiar with parents and establish good working relationships with them.
    - The focus cannot be just on having good principals. Because strong relationships are vital to the success of any school, dedicated teachers are necessary. Student behavior issues also have to be addressed. Disruptive students can prevent other students from learning.
    - In some districts, if adequate district-wide improvement is not seen, the superintendent is replaced more frequently than is the case with AISD.
    - The committee wanted clarification as to whether the process it develops should be geared to the federal or the state standard.
    - As much as academic concerns, the real issue is a breakdown in communication. Any process developed by the committee must address this component.
    - Because standards are becoming progressively more stringent, the community needs to be engaged at the first warning sign of difficulty in meeting standards rather than waiting until *Year 3* or *Year 4* to address problems.
    - The Superintendent is making efforts to reach out to the community earlier by making parents aware of school ratings by Back to School Night in September.
    - Community members and the faith community need to be included along with parents of school-age children. The time a student spends in any given school is relatively brief while school quality issues can impact neighborhood pride and property values.
    - Having the School Leadership training occur during the school year instead of over the summer may take principals out of schools during a time when their presence is needed.
    - That the prison system uses second-grade reading scores as a way to project future jail bed need suggests that academic deficiencies need to be resolved at the earliest possible level. The longer students struggle academically, the more difficult it becomes to keep them engaged in school.
    - Parents with limited English proficiency need to be provided with adequate information to allow them to understand the issues facing schools. They need leadership training to empower them to effect change in the schools. The district needs to remove barriers to participation by providing childcare at community meetings.

- The district understands the need for parental involvement and community engagement. The real challenge lies in turning that knowledge into on-going community-wide participation involving a wide spectrum of participants.

- The focus of the meeting then shifted to the upcoming community involvement process. Discussion points included:
  - As committee members prepare to meet with their networks, they should keep the following suggested guiding questions in mind:
    1. What process should the district use to identify and consider alternatives for underutilized and overcrowded schools?
    2. What process should the district follow to inform and engage the community and stakeholders when a school fails to meet state or federal accountability requirements?
    3. What can the district and community do together to ensure ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation?
    4. Who are your community partners? Who can support you?
  - Developing a unified set of questions will allow committee members to elicit similar types of information from community members. A request was made to include a question related to best practices, according to the committee charter. The questions will be finalized by the August 14, 2007, meeting.
  - Input will be gathered from the community at multiple points through the Committee's process. To keep the task of gathering community input at a manageable size, the suggestion was made to break the district into sections and give each Committee member responsibility for a given section.
- Committee members requested data on AISD's principal turnover rate and information on how individual schools are utilizing their Title I funds. The Title I information can be found in the CIP at each campus.
- The committee requested information on guidelines currently used by the district to communicate with parents as schools enter various levels of sanctions.
- Before the next meeting on August 14, 2007, which focuses on planning for gathering community input, committee members should have begun thinking about which community groups they will engage. Staff will put together a collection of resources for the group to use.
- The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
August 14, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Lorie Barzano
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joey Crumley presented information on: the revised AISD Strategic Plan and Strategic Plan website; a recent report on the Austin economy by Market Street Services, Inc; an example of an AISD Communications Plan used for Webb Middle School; a sample of a 2006-2007 Campus Profile; the 2006 AISD Balanced Scorecard; a map showing locations of predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods; and committee-requested reports on principal attrition rates, campus enrollment and permanent building capacity, Fall 2006 campus enrollment by ethnicity, and campuses located in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ The revised strategic plan contains the same vision and priorities as the original plan. Some changes have been made to the strategies and performance indicators. The information in the revised plan is the same as that already provided to the committee.
  - ☞ Campus Profiles, which include a glossary, present a one-page picture of a campus and serve as a campus-level communications tool.
  - ☞ Dr. Zoe Griffith in AISD's Student Services/Records department puts out a campus enrollment report every six weeks.
  - ☞ Joe Silva of AISD's Facilities department will address remaining questions on school capacity determinations in an upcoming meeting.
- Rachael Proctor May began discussion of strategies to gather community input by reviewing related components of the committee charter.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ An effective method of gathering community input is to meet with existing community groups.
  - ☞ Committee members may want to concentrate their efforts on the first weeks of school as that is a time when attention is focused on schools.
  - ☞ Committee members have been provided with a facilitator's kit, written in both English and Spanish, to help them in organizing their community involvement

activities. Members should review the kit to see if any modifications need to be made.

- Dr. Janis Guerrero reviewed methods used by prior AISD task forces to gather stakeholder input. These methods should not be considered an exhaustive list of possible ways to get input, but they do represent methods that have been used successfully in the past.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Because they involve school staff, parents, and students, CACs are often good sources of public input.
  - ☞ AISD has compiled an extensive "Key Communicators" list that can be customized to reach targeted groups.
  - ☞ Personal interviews are important because they can provide an in-depth look at the information behind data collected through more formal methods.
  - ☞ Telephone hotlines have been effective in reaching the Spanish speaking population.
  - ☞ In addition to using a variety of methods to collect input, committee members should plan to hold at least one public meeting as part of the public involvement process.
- Heather Dalrymple presented research findings on preferred practices for promoting and maintaining community engagement.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ The importance of allowing community members to voice concerns that may not have a direct bearing on the committee's work. Members need strategies to aid them in keeping discussions on topic.
  - ☞ The possibility of having a sub-group meeting to learn about the "Integrated Communications Network" used by the San Antonio school district to involve the community on school issues and evaluate its applicability to the Austin community.
  - ☞ Concern that the community does not perceive the issues being addressed by the committee as urgent enough to compel their involvement. The committee needs to frame its message in such a way that people become interested in getting involved.
  - ☞ The committee needs to recognize key cohorts and conduct rigorous focus groups.
  - ☞ The type and degree of resources available for the committee to use to conduct targeted focus groups.
  - ☞ Buy-in of campus principals is an important component of an effective process.
  - ☞ Whether the timetable for completing the committee's work should be maintained as it currently stands or if it should be extended. Keeping the original schedule would allow the Board to implement the recommendations in the next school year.
  - ☞ Because they serve as direct links between parents and schools, Parent Support Specialists should be targeted for involvement.

- ☞ Some community members may have difficulty trusting AISD and believing that their input will influence the outcome of the committee's recommendations..
- ☞ The committee needs to recognize that it is unlikely to involve 100% of the community, but it needs to reach the largest percentage possible.
- ☞ The committee needs to be concerned about economically disadvantaged parents because they will have the fewest options if their schools close.
- ☞ Using letters and fliers is an effective way to reach Hispanic community members.
- ☞ Committee members need to take advantage of any available opportunities to talk to community members.

- Current suggestions for effectively gathering community input include: talking to the San Antonio expert; conducting rigorous focus groups; reaching people who need child care; having Back to School Night presentations; involving Parent Support Specialists; using automated school messaging systems; meeting with neighborhood associations; having a booth at HEB; getting principal buy-in; giving low-income parents alternatives; having formal ID badges for committee members; sending invitation letters; and canvassing before and after school.
- Group discussion shifted to a closer look at the guiding questions that were developed in the last meeting to use in gathering community input.
- The current questions are: 1) What processes should the district use to identify and consider alternatives for underutilized and overcrowded schools? 2) What processes should the district use to inform and engage stakeholders about important school issues and concerns (e.g., when a campus fails to meet state or federal accountability standards, or when a campus continues to be significantly underutilized)? 3) Who are the stakeholders in important school issues and concerns? Who are our community partners? 4) What can the district and the community do together to ensure ongoing stakeholder participation? 5) What are some factors, values, or best practices that should be considered in the committee's deliberations on policy and process (e.g., in the areas of school facility utilization, stakeholder participation, neighborhood vitality)?
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ The committee needs to be very direct about the type of input that is being sought and should ask questions that get at the information that is really desired.
  - ☞ The questions being asked of the community need to be framed in an understandable way and avoid jargon.
  - ☞ The questions may need to be phrased in such a way that they present different options and allow people to comment on the preferences. Instead of using strictly open-ended questions, using a variety of hypothetical scenarios may prove more effective in gathering community input.
  - ☞ The committee needs to recognize that this is a potentially contentious process and conflict cannot be totally avoided.
  - ☞ The committee needs to ask if the current questions are appropriate for all sectors of the community. If people do not have children in the school system the questions may not apply to them.

- ☞ The answers provided by different groups should be expected to vary greatly as the issues faced by each are different.
- ☞ It is important to ask the same questions to each group so recurring themes and "golden threads" can be recognized.
- ☞ The committee needs to have ad hoc discussions as well as more "scientific" formal discussions. The information gained from the informal discussions needs to be documented so that it is not lost.
- ☞ One possible question to add is what motivates parents to send their kids to schools outside their attendance zones.

- By the end of the day on Friday, August 25, 2007, committee members should email any recommendations they have on the guiding questions to Joey Crumley or Dr. Janis Guerrero. They will compile the questions and send them back to the committee on Monday August 27, 2007. They will ask the members to select their three most preferred questions. At the next meeting on August 28, 2007, the group will discuss the results of this "poll."
- When considering conducting public involvement activities in September, committee members should ask themselves: 1) Are we asking the right questions? 2) Who should we talk to? 3) What do we need to do to make it easy for people to attend? 4) What are valid answers for the questions being asked of the community?
- Committee members requested information from staff as to the types of transfers being seen at each campus. How many are coded as performance based? Majority to minority? Academic? Diversity? etc. They also requested information on techniques for maintaining public focus on the scheduled agenda when conducting public meetings.
- Committee members should email Joey Crumley about which community groups they are meeting with so a master list can be compiled to prevent duplication of efforts.
- The next meeting will be held on August 28, 2007.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	√	√	√	√											
Sally Brackett	√	√	√	√											
Terry Clark	√	√	√	√											
Christiane Woodley Erwin		√		√											
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	√		√	√											
Linda Gibeaut	√	√		√											
Rev. Sterling Lands	√			√											
José Marrero	√	√	√												
Rachael Proctor May	√	√		√											
Susan Moffat	√	√	√												
Leroy Nellis	√	√	√	√											
Yolanda Pedraza	√	√		√											
Rev. Ivie Rich	√		√												
Paul Saldaña	√	√													
Alfredo Santos	√	√	√												
Kathie Tovo	√	√	√	√											
Jim Walker	√		√	√											

√ = Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
August 28, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Jennifer Bennett
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:45pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joey Crumley presented 2007-2008 data on schools offering NCLB Choice, receiving students under NCLB Choice, and on schools sending and receiving transfers. He also presented research findings on strategies for keeping meetings on track.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ On the NCLB Choice matrix, "withdrawn" means withdrawn from school.
  - ☞ The totals on the tables showing schools transferring and schools receiving students differ from each other because some students, typically children of AISD employees, transfer from schools outside the district.
- Paul Saldaña reviewed the proposed guiding questions committee members submitted last week and began discussion of how to best structure the final question format.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Committee members may want to start the public engagement process by asking a framing question to learn where school performance and enrollment issues are on the community radar. Beginning with this type of question would help to determine participants' awareness of the issues and shape the problem solving process.
  - ☞ Because they may have a different understanding of the issues than people with children in the AISD system, people without children in AISD may need a different approach to answering the guiding questions.
  - ☞ Committee members need to remember that questions that work well at one school may not work as well at another. They need to select questions that will work most effectively with the greatest number of people.
  - ☞ The number of questions needs to be held to a manageable number so as not to overwhelm people. The suggestion is to limit the questions to a total of five.

- The questions need to have a narrow enough scope that the committee is able to get the information from the community that it needs to meet its charge.
- Developing questions that lead naturally from one to the next would help to guide the focus of the discussion.
- The committee needs to be clear with community members about factors that can get a school closed and then talk openly with them about possible solutions.
- Instead of being gathered at formal focus group sessions, community input will mostly be obtained more informally as part of other scheduled events such as Back to School Night or neighborhood association meetings.
- This less formal public engagement process may attract more Hispanic participants who have a cultural preference for building relationships with trusted partners.
- As part of its charter, the committee is charged with developing definitions of overcrowded and under-enrolled that the board can use in decision-making.
- An underlying assumption of the committee's work on issues threatening schools is that all planning and policy stages will include a community involvement component.
- Austin is growing rapidly. The district has to adapt to that growth and build trust within the community at the same time.
- If presented with a selection of options instead of more open-ended questions, some people may feel that the decision of what to do has already been made. This may result in their not seeing any point in speaking up or becoming involved in meetings.
- Generally, the parents who will attend the meetings will already have some knowledge of the issues and formulated some opinions as to what should be done.
- In the guiding questions, the committee needs to develop a clearer definition of "opportunities for interlocal collaboration." Along with multi-purposing of school facilities, this phrase also incorporates school attendance, safety, and other issues.
- The guiding questions need to be linked to the committee's charge.
- Community ownership of school issues is important. The committee needs to find ways to get people's attention on the issues without unduly alarming them.
- Community involvement should begin as soon as a school shows the first signs of failing to meet academic performance indicators instead of waiting until it is further into the sanctions process and closure is imminent.
- Austin has a rapidly changing population. The people shaping policy decisions today may not be living here when the policy being developed is implemented.
- In its policies, the district wants to increase transparency and public participation.
- Both School Choice and NCLB can rapidly shift school enrollment figures.

- ☞ The district needs to inform parents of the capacity of their children's schools. Once that capacity is reached, the district may need to consider transfers.
- ☞ The committee may want to meet with the San Antonio school district to learn how they handle their transfer policy to see if it has applicability to Austin.
- ☞ The committee's goals include 1) improving communication with the community and 2) engaging the community in finding solutions to school performance challenges.

- The committee's finalized guiding questions, which are numbered for reference and are not presented in any particular order, are as follows:
  1. How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?
  2. What do "over-enrollment" and "under-enrollment" mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?
  3. How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?
  4. Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools increase enrollment and performance?
  5. Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider in making decisions about your school?
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Converting the finalized guiding questions into a survey, which will allow the committee to quantify the information it collects.
  - ☞ Collecting demographic information, including ZIP code, of survey respondents will help the committee become better informed as to which issues are important to different groups of respondents.
  - ☞ Because school closure is an engaging topic, the committee can probably anticipate many survey responses.
- Discussion then moved to strategies the committee might use to obtain stakeholder input both before and after drafting its recommendations to the board.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Reaching people without email access can be challenging. As many people have cell phones, one potentially effective method would be to use text messaging.
  - ☞ The finalized guiding questions can be distributed in fliers.
  - ☞ The committee needs to be sure to contact people connected to schools, such as Webb, that have already been affected by the prospect of closure to get their input.
  - ☞ If people have been given an opportunity to provide input to the committee, they may be more satisfied with the outcome because they knew their participation was an option, even if they did not choose to become directly involved in the process.
  - ☞ This initial public engagement process is only the first of two phases of community involvement. The second phase comes when the committee goes

back to the community to get input on the draft recommendations they formulated after the initial input process.
    - ☞ Committee information needs to be placed on the schools' websites and the AISD and Travis County TV channels. The committee web link and hotline number needs to be distributed.
- Discussion shifted to planning for the open house activity.
    - ☞ Holding an open house sends a message that the committee is truly interested in getting input from everyone that wants to be involved.
    - ☞ The open house, whose location remains to be determined, is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday September 25, 2007 from 6-8 pm.
    - ☞ A school would be a good location, as it would have rooms that could be used as breakout space for small group discussion. Whatever facility is used, the location should be geographically closest to the schools likely to be affected by closure decisions.
    - ☞ AISD will provide snacks, childcare activities, and interpretation services while committee members will lead the open house.
- Committee members requested information on the impacts of school overcrowding on student performance.
- Committee members were reminded to email Joey Crumley or Janis Guerrero with a list of the community groups they are meeting with so a master list can be compiled.
- The committee's work schedule has been pushed back two weeks from the original calendar. The ending date has not changed but some presentations have been combined in order to finish the work on schedule.
- The next meeting will be held on September 11, 2007. It will include presentations from the AISD Facilities and Boundaries department and the City of Austin Neighborhood Planning department.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	√	√	√	√	√										
Sally Brackett	√	√	√	√	√										
Terry Clark	√	√	√	√	√										
Christiane Woodley Erwin		√		√	√										
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	√		√	√	√										
Linda Gibeaut	√	√		√	√										
Rev. Sterling Lands	√			√	√										
José Marrero	√	√	√												
Rachael Proctor May	√	√		√	√										
Susan Moffat	√	√	√		√										
Leroy Nellis	√	√	√	√	√										
Yolanda Pedraza	√	√		√											
Rev. Ivie Rich	√		√												
Paul Saldaña	√	√			√										
Alfredo Santos	√	√	√		√										
Kathie Tovo	√	√	√	√											
Jim Walker	√		√	√	√										

√ = Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
September 11, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Sylvia Acevedo, Facility Use and Boundary Task Force
David Belknap, Facility Use and Boundary Task Force
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Joe Silva, AISD Facilities

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:50 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joe Silva with AISD's Facilities Office presented information on the district's formula for determining school capacity. This formula, first used in 1983, resulted from a need for a quantitative measure to justify using bond money for new school construction. Because of the huge variation in student program requirements, capacity determination cannot be made through a simple mathematical calculation. Initially, the district only addressed school design capacity. Now, the manner in which space is used is considered as well. In order to better understand school needs, the district is trying to separate design capacity from utilization through the use of two separate metrics. Design capacity calculations will assist in determining whether additional schools are needed while utilization measures will help to ascertain whether available space is being used efficiently. Principals currently have a great deal of discretion in determining how space is used at their schools.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ A district study focusing on design capacity and utilization is underway. Each school's enrollment is determined by the number of students in school at the end of the first six-weeks of class. For the utilization component, site visits to each school will be conducted so the district can better understand how space is being used at each campus. The study, which takes place over a two-year cycle, will focus first on those schools requesting portables or facing boundary changes.
  - ☞ Once a school reaches 115% capacity, the district needs to consider changing boundaries, adding onto the school or building a new school. To determine the appropriate course of action, the district first counts the number of students living in the attendance zone. Projections are used to decide whether the increase in student population is expected to continue. If the population is expected to drop, adding portables may be the best solution to tide the school over for a few years. Of the three options, changing

boundaries provides the cheapest and most immediate solution, but it is also potentially proves the most sensitive option for residents of the affected community. Adding onto an existing school or constructing a new school are multi-million dollar projects that take a much longer time to provide relief from overcrowding.

- ☞ AISD currently has about 600 portables. Most of these have two classrooms each, although a few have only one classroom. AISD is not planning to purchase more portables because all campuses are not being used to full efficiency. As the district must shift the existing portables around to different schools, it needs to ensure that schools utilize their space as efficiently as possible.
- ☞ Portable classrooms do not increase the amount of impervious cover on a campus because water is still able to reach the ground under them. Southwest Austin, because of the Edwards Aquifer, has restrictions on the allowable percentage of impervious cover. This area is fast growing so AISD will likely have to consider that factor in making school construction decisions.
- ☞ The Board puts a priority on co-locating its schools with other facilities, as is seen with Overton.
- ☞ Because some types of programs require lower student-teacher ratios, they do not fully occupy available classroom space.
- ☞ Schools serving lower-income students may need to have more support services in place than schools with more affluent students might. Although schools would continue to provide all necessary services, limits may have to be placed on services that could be considered discretionary if space is not available to house them.
- ☞ If a school needs to use portables for an extended number of years, that may be a signal that a more permanent solution to overcrowding is necessary.
- ☞ Building a school with enough space to house every program it might possibly need becomes a cost issue, as it is extremely expensive to build something that large.
- ☞ When a new large-scale subdivision project is being planned, AISD has not historically been part of the decision-making process, although it is kept informed about the project's progress. Because schools are neighborhood amenities, the developer often donates land for school construction.
- ☞ One possible policy recommendation for the committee to consider involves having AISD included in the approval process for future development.
- ☞ Construction of high-end apartment complexes does not have much impact on enrollment in area schools since families with children do not usually occupy these apartments. The district does focus on new three- and four-bedroom apartment complexes that are affordable since they bring children into the school system.
- ☞ Metrostudy collects data on projects that are breaking ground as well as those that are in the planning stage. AISD purchases this information for its demographer to use in making school attendance projections.
- ☞ When looking at school capacity data, a distinction must be made between projections and actual membership. Projections only count the number of

students living in an attendance zone and do not take into account the number of students attending a school under its transfer policy.
    - ☞ When making school attendance projections, a 5% margin of error is considered acceptable and a margin of error of 3% or less is considered good.
    - ☞ The higher margin of error seen in the north and south central demographic projections results from changes in immigration patterns after 9/11.
    - ☞ School attendance projections only consider students enrolled in AISD. Private school students are not included in these figures.
    - ☞ Improving a school's academic performance or increasing its available amenities could potentially increase the enrollment figures if some students are drawn back to the public school from a private school.
- Sylvia Acevedo and David Belknap, co-chairs of the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force, presented information on that task force's work. Their process began by looking at large amounts of data going to the block group level of detail. After looking at the data and the issues unique to each area being studied, they discussed possibilities and developed possible scenarios. Next, they met with the CACs and solicited public input. Area representatives held community meetings to discuss options and gather more input. By involving a large number of different groups, the task force was able to reach more people and get the greatest amount of input.
- Discussion points included:
    - ☞ Generally, the district tries not to relocate students. If students must be moved, it tries to move them as few times as possible. The district also tries to draw school boundary lines wisely so that students are not asked to cross busy highways or deal with other conditions posing a hazard. Finding a solution that works as effectively in practice as it does on paper is a challenging process.
    - ☞ Through its work, the task force learned some important points about demographics: 1) The general population has a high degree of mobility; 2) A huge baby boom in an area can rapidly increase pressure on a school's capacity; 3) Austin's lack of affordable housing has caused more families to double up which can cause an unanticipated increase in the number of students in a neighborhood; 4) People usually have a strong affinity for the neighborhood schools they have traditionally attended or where other members of their ethnic group attend.
    - ☞ In the last few years, the challenges presented by poverty and housing have been intense.
    - ☞ Need to look at bus routes when considering boundary changes. Parents do not want their children to attend a school that is inaccessible to them.
    - ☞ The number of students in east Austin schools could decrease over the next few years as the city permits former multi-family apartment complexes to be redeveloped as condos in response to gentrification.
    - ☞ Texas has the highest birth rate in the United States. It exceeds California, which has a higher population.

- ☞ The district only counts the number of students that attend a school under its transfer policy. It does not do follow-up studies of children who have transferred to evaluate the effect of the transfer.
- ☞ Two groups tend to be underrepresented at community meetings involving school issues: 1) parents who cannot attend the meeting or choose not to become involved in the issue; and 2) residents who do not want to pay for building new schools and instead want to bus kids in order to use tax money more efficiently.
- ☞ One policy recommendation for the committee to consider involves studying the current transfer policy and searching for ways to tighten it up. The committee could also look at increasing the efficiency of classroom use by increasing the number of teachers, especially at the secondary level, that move between classrooms instead of being assigned to one permanent classroom.

- Discussion shifted to the open house activity scheduled for September 25, 2007 at Pearce Middle School. Committee members needed to decide whether to plan for the activity in a subcommittee or move the date back and do the planning during a regular meeting.
  - ☞ The committee decided to reschedule the open house. It is now tentatively scheduled for Tuesday October 9, 2007, from 6-8 pm. The new date also leaves time for the finalization of the community survey, allowing it to be distributed in conjunction with the open house.
- Committee members need to wait to distribute surveys through the schools until the documents have received the associate superintendent's approval.
- In addition to a list of the community groups they are meeting with, committee members were reminded to email Joey Crumley the dates and times of those meetings.
- The committee will present information on its progress to the Board on December 10, 2007 and to the Joint Subcommittees on December 14, 2007.
- The next meeting, which will focus on planning for the open house activity, will be held on September 25, 2007.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓									
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓									
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓										
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓										
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓									
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓									
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓									
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓											
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓												
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓									
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓										
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓									
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓										

√ = Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
September 25, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:50 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- The meeting began with discussion of the proposed work plan for the open house activity scheduled for October 9, 2007 from 6-8pm at Pearce Middle School.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ The number of attendees at the open house, as well as the number of committee members available to serve as facilitators, will determine the number and size of the breakout groups. Groups of eight to twelve people would be ideal, but groups of up to twenty people would still be workable. Each group will need to have a facilitator and a recorder. A larger turnout will mean larger group sizes. Because accurately predicting the turnout for this type of activity is difficult, flexibility will be important.
  - ☞ The members of Pearce's CAC are planning to attend.
  - ☞ The format of the open house is more of a stakeholder input session than a formal focus group.
  - ☞ The committee finalized an agenda that would allow the activity to be run as efficiently as possible. The agenda is as follows: *6:00-6:15* Registration and Dinner, *6:15-6:30* Introductory Session, *6:30-6:40* Breakout Group Deployment, *6:40-6:50* Survey Administration, *6:50-7:40* Breakout Sessions, *7:40-7:45* Return to Large Group, *7:45-8:00* Wrap-up Activity, and *8:00* Dismissal
  - ☞ The committee needs to have handouts available for attendees; consider placing a large map near the handout area to allow people to see where their school lies on the continuum of underutilized and overcrowded schools.
  - ☞ The committee also needs to put together facilitator packets for the breakout groups.
  - ☞ Each breakout group's facilitator will need to be sure to address all of the guiding questions and encourage participation from all group members.
  - ☞ At the end of the activity, the breakout groups should reconvene in a large group so they can share the ideas developed in the smaller groups.
- After completing the work plan, the committee began discussing the communications plan to spread the word about the survey and the open house. Every possible method to inform people should be used. Current strategies include: press releases

through the media, public service announcements on TV and radio, announcements to principals that can be included in school newsletters or placed on school marquees, emails, and phone calls.

- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ The open house activity should be referred to as a community forum rather than a town hall meeting or an open house.
  - ☞ Using the slogan "Tell AISD what you really think" as a call to action is a good idea since everyone has an opinion to share.
  - ☞ Having a focus group with the principals to get their input would be useful.
  - ☞ Having a press event before the community forum is important for getting the word out and encouraging greater attendance. Letting the community know that refreshments will be served and childcare will be available also help to promote attendance.
  - ☞ Members of the faith community should be informed about the community forum as church groups have been very active in addressing the challenges faced by the schools in their neighborhoods.
  - ☞ The committee will form a small subcommittee to work on finalizing the plan for media coverage.
- Attention shifted to discussion of the survey that is currently being finalized.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ The committee members who developed the survey did a great job. Thanks for the good work!
  - ☞ The survey, which should be online no later than the beginning of next week, addresses the guiding questions and is structured in a way that will allow it to aid the committee in meeting its charge.
  - ☞ The survey, available in both English and Spanish, will be on AISD's website at www.austinisd.org. A link on the homepage will lead to the survey.
  - ☞ The committee will investigate the feasibility of developing a link that goes directly to the survey instead of having to use multiple clicks to reach it through AISD's homepage. This may make the survey easier for people to find.
  - ☞ The committee will investigate the feasibility of using a company like Answer Austin Inc. to allow people to take the survey over the telephone. This would provide another option for those people without Internet access to take the survey.
  - ☞ The committee wants to encourage people to take either the online or telephone survey instead of the paper version. Having to enter a large number of paper copies of the survey into the computer could prove logistically difficult and could require extra staff. A possible solution is to have committee members input the surveys they collect into the computer.
  - ☞ The goal is to complete the community outreach efforts and data collection by the end of October. After the community forum, the committee will have three meetings remaining to discuss the information gathered through the forum and the survey and begin drafting recommendations. By December 10, 2007, the committee should be ready to present its preliminary findings to the Board. The timeline for completing the committee's work was structured so

the Board could have a policy in place to help with decision making for the next school year after district report cards came out in February.
    - ☞ The community will have another opportunity to comment on the process after the committee drafts it preliminary recommendations and makes them available for public review.
- The meeting then moved to a status report on outreach activities being conducted by committee members.
- Discussion points included:
    - ☞ The committee may want to meet with someone involved with the San Antonio school system's effort to develop a plan for connecting with the community. This network, called the Integrated Communications Network, involves schools, parents, and businesses in a systematic way.
    - ☞ The committee may want to hold this meeting about the Integrated Communications Network on a night other than a regular committee meeting night and make it open to the public. It could investigate whether this could be done as part of a speaker's series with the UT College of Education. The meeting should be scheduled after the initial stakeholder input process is completed as available time right now is filled with preparations for that.
    - ☞ One concern with the CCNS meetings is that there are so many presentations and such good information being presented but so little time for discussion about the topics being presented.
    - ☞ The committee needs to address the part of the charge regarding researching best practices. Some of this has been done but more research needs to be conducted on best practices and models for utilization. It may want to have almost a whole meeting devoted to best practices.
- Committee members need to look at the draft template for summarizing the outreach activities and provide feedback on suggested changes. It is important that committee members use the same format for recording input so that it will be easier to compile all the gathered information.
- The next committee meeting, after the community forum activity at Pearce Middle School on October 9, 2007, will be on October 23, 2007. This meeting will focus on compiling the input received from the community and starting to develop draft recommendations.
- The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓								
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓									
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓										
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓										
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓								
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓								
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓								
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓								
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓											
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓												
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓								
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓								
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓								
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
October 23, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:50 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- The meeting focused on a debriefing about stakeholder input gathered by committee members through their various outreach activities. In this first step toward developing draft recommendations, members presented the most compelling ideas and recurring themes they heard at focus groups, interviews and/or the community forum. These ideas were grouped under three categories: 1) *Communication*-how AISD can better let stakeholders know about important school issues in a timely manner; 2) *Procedure/Policy*-for handling important school issues and potential changes in facility use; and 3) *Engagement*-developing an authentic process for AISD stakeholders to shape and own the decision-making process. (*See attached list for recurring themes resulting from community outreach efforts*)
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Clarifying the definition of "neighborhood school." A neighborhood school typically is one that is associated with a particular community, can be walked to, and serves as a center of community.
  - ☞ A major topic emerging from these discussions is school choice versus neighborhood schools.
  - ☞ The Mueller development provides an excellent case study for ways to accommodate new types of growth, such as infill development, that have not been extensively seen before in Austin.
  - ☞ Concepts and terminology that are understandable to people who are unfamiliar with the district need to be used throughout this process.
- Discussion focus shifted to the online survey, which continues running until the end of October. Staff provided the committee with a preliminary report of overall survey results as well as a sample template showing the format of the completed analysis. That analysis will break survey results out by 1) race/ethnicity of respondent and 2) connection of respondents to AISD (teacher, parent, community member, etc.)
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Tabling discussion of the survey results until the committee's next meeting. Doing this allows more time for staff to complete a detailed analysis after the survey period closes.

- ☞ The need for a final email blast to encourage/remind those who have not yet taken the survey to do so.
- ☞ The need to remember that the survey is only one of many tools being used to gather stakeholder input. The focus groups, interviews, and community forum have all provided the committee with a wealth of information.
- ☞ The extent to which committee members could have access to raw survey data rather than being provided with a summary report of recurring themes.

- Committee members were encouraged to email any remaining focus group notes and/or comments that were not voiced during the meeting to either Joey Crumley or Dr. Janis Guerrero as soon as possible.
- Committee members were encouraged to attend a focus group being held at Linder Elementary School on November 28, 2007.
- The next committee meeting will be Tuesday November 13, 2007 from 5:30-7:30 pm. This meeting will focus on: 1) discussion of the literature review on other districts' experiences and 2) continued discussion of the information received through the community outreach efforts. A special meeting will be held from 5:30-7:00 pm on Wednesday November 14, 2007. At that time, Sylvia Reyna of San Antonio ISD will speak about that district's Integrated Communications Network.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Recurring Themes from Community Outreach Efforts
October 23, 2007

✓ = *Point repeated in discussion*

Communication

- Not the message, but how communicated ✓✓
- Open and honest
- Provide information at the earliest possible point ✓✓✓✓
- Continue guerilla marketing; expand all kinds of communication (e.g. city's community registry) ✓✓
- Notes home don't inform all in the community; everybody is a stakeholder
- Post notices in local businesses; get on various list serves; get connected with various communities
- Annual state of the district address
- Get authentic communication and dialogue
- More communication between AISD and COA
- General frustration…not communicating enough (e.g. Mueller community's school and boundaries)
- Schools seem to think they're doing ok, but could tap into certain networks better
- Hispanics not all the same, but generally need more advocates
- Need to know where to go with questions
- Uniform translation is important but challenging
- Better/more orientations for Hispanic parents
- Develop a pipeline to get information out to folks
- PSSs may be over-worked ✓
- Need to feel that AISD and school communities are on the same side → develop trust ✓ and sense of true public voice
- More active listening by district → authentic communication
- Make important things at schools <u>stand out</u>
- Make sure communications are in various languages
- Sufficient advance notice
- Who are our community partners?
- District personnel need to communicate thoroughly
- Public needs same information as district/decision makers
- Be school-specific as needed, with sufficient opportunities for input/information <u>at schools</u>
- Perception of district is low; district seems to have already made up its mind on important matters
- Transportation to meetings → coincide with bus stops and pick-up points
- Communicate with clergy; send individuals to communicate with faith groups
- Based on respect; don't talk down ✓

- Don't schedule meetings on traditional church nights; schedule meetings at churches
- Develop personal communication networks; get out to where community members are; just be at events
- More likely to notice information from a teacher → trust level
- Advertise achievements/successes
- Communicating with trustees; more advance notice of board agendas (and language in agendas)
- Need a plan to notify/manage crisis situations
- Need consistent terms/definitions

Engagement

- At the beginning/all along. This includes both community and staff
- If people are engaged consistently with their schools, they will already be engaged when a 'crisis' emerges
- Get community involved before setting policy
- Interest in authentic engagement; not informing people of decisions already made
- Interest in preserving neighborhood schools can be met in various ways; need to explore things like multi-use campuses
- Possibly have trustee on Planning Commission have a more active role
- Need to have a sense of what is meant by 'neighborhood school'
- Retail- relationship-based engagement
- 'Seeding' leadership in the community ✓
- Use parent support specialists to create networks/ ensure they're not overworked to do so ✓✓
- Create mentoring programs as a way to get parents involved in the schools
- Create parent-mentoring programs to develop new leaders
- Develop trust so that people feel "AISD is on our side" ✓
- Address perception of a "culture of secrecy"
- Bring parent involvement from level of "serving pizza" to decision-making empowerment
- Develop strong relationships with non-AISD community partners (like businesses) so they can help engage people
- Engage stakeholders throughout entire process of addressing and considering alternatives through multi-year process (3 years- 5 years suggested)
- "Mentoring ministers" program
- Provide bus transportation on night of important meetings, with normal bus stops
- Communicate through churches- develop church communication policies
- Open communication begins with respect- don't talk down to people
- Utilize teachers to improve engagement (training opportunities for teacher to maximize engagement)
- Multi-variant approach to assessing enrollment issues

Procedure/Policy

- Distinct, different policies for over/under enrolled school ✓✓
- Commit to central neighborhood schools concept ✓✓
- Dedicated staff to support neighborhood schools/communicate with city
- More alignment in planning between city and AISD ✓✓
- Provide information at the earliest possible point ✓✓✓
- Widely publicize school report cards
- Process needs to be systematic, frequent, sustainable
- Stakeholders (parents, staff, community) should be a part of examining problems and formulating solutions/alternatives all along the way ✓
- Assume a leadership role in community (urban) planning that includes a commitment to central city neighborhood schools
- Improving middle schools
- Re-examining benchmark testing and field test and work together with community to change state/federal laws regarding acct
- Equitable and rich education for all students ✓
- Clear timeline, sufficient for alternatives to be discussed and considered
- May need a different policy for smaller, central schools to determine status
- Reassess capacity formulas ✓
- Re-invest in central city schools
- Provide resources to identify/address problems with under enrollment
- Opening doors to mentoring ministers
- Smaller learning communities/class sizes
- Staff diversity/advancement
- Take preventative measures to avoid crises
- Clear, consistent use of terminology (e.g. under enrolled, overenrolled, over/under capacity)

Parking lot

- Use Mueller development to test new policy on boundaries
- FAQ for issues outside the charge but germane
- What do we mean by central/city/neighborhood schools
- ‘Capacity’ vs. ‘utilization’
- Support for district African-American professionals
- Utilization of parent support specialists
- Choice and transfer issues

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓							
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓										
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓						
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓						
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓							
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓											
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓												
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓						
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓						

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
November 13, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:54 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Janis Guerrero reported on a session focusing on the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools recently hosted by her and Joey Crumley at the annual conference of the Council of Great City Schools in Nashville. She referred to information provided on school closure processes in Detroit and Milwaukee. She said most of the session attendees were from locations experiencing economic depression and significant population losses. Detroit, for example, was currently closing 51 schools, a quarter of its facilities. She said the session attendees were particularly interested in the extent to which Austin was engaging the community and ultimately aiming to implement formal district policy.
- The committee initiated discussion of possible best practices applicable to Austin. Reference was made to an extensive literature review previously provided to members. Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Chicago Public Schools has a "neighborhood office" that may offer a model for interlocal collaboration
  - ☞ The Family Resource Center at Allan Elementary School seems to be working well
  - ☞ Promoting neighborhood schools as one-stop-shops for community information sounds like a good idea
  - ☞ Neighborhood schools need a critical mass to be successful, and people need to promote the positive aspects of their neighborhoods and schools
  - ☞ Partnerships between schools can be beneficial, as well as partnerships between schools and businesses
  - ☞ More neighborhood association representatives should be on Campus Advisory Councils
  - ☞ AISD needs to provide a stronger commitment to its existing schools
  - ☞ Need to have more school and community groups going out into the neighborhoods where parents are
  - ☞ Perhaps look into Denver's Beacon School
  - ☞ Multi-purposing of facilities is an alternative that can help address the ebbs and flows in population

- ☞ A successful example in Florida has a dance company using part of a school, not only paying rent to the district but also providing instruction to students
- ☞ A list of all the facility-use interlocal agreements with AISD would be interesting information to have

- Joey Crumley summarized the final results of the online survey. He said members were being provided several materials: an executive summary, a printout of the overall results, the names of schools of attendance identified by parents, the names of schools identified by non-parents as their neighborhood schools, and a cross-tabulation of survey results by respondent ethnicity and category (i.e., parent, AISD employee, community member, student). Mr. Crumley made several points:
  - ☞ Almost 1,500 total respondents, with 24 responses in Spanish
  - ☞ Most of the respondents were parents, White, female, and English-speaking
  - ☞ Respondents indicating "other" by category were actually "community members"
  - ☞ Due to the small number of Asian Americans, Native Americans, and students responding to the survey, these groups were not included in the analysis
  - ☞ Results were being summarized in broad topics such as community awareness, community involvement, and informing the community
  - ☞ Geographic representation of the respondents was not equal; although quite a few schools were identified by multiple respondents, just as many schools were identified only a very few times or not at all
  - ☞ Although there was no tremendous variance in most of the results based on respondent ethnicity and category, some significant variances were noted
  - ☞ The open-ended comments provided by respondents were many and had not yet been evaluated
- Dr. Guerrero said there were two options for evaluating the open-ended comments – either hire a temporary, which would be expensive, or have a subcommittee of members do the work. Members said they would like to see the data first before deciding; they said it might suffice to just go through the comments to find good ideas rather than doing a detailed analysis. Dr. Guerrero said the data would be ready to provide to members in just a few days. She explained that Program Evaluation staff were reviewing the data to ensure the privacy of respondents.
- Members then continued their analysis of input received from various stakeholder sources. The brainstorming points from the previous meeting was now arranged by policy and process recommendation topics outlined in the committee's charter. Most of the points fell under the topic of ensuring ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation, and members recognized that more points may be needed under the other headings.
- Rachel Proctor May said that the co-chairs were scheduled to provide preliminary findings and recommendations to the Board of Trustees on December 10, meaning that there would be only one more regular committee meeting before that date. Some concern was expressed over the time constraint, with emphasis placed on the need to take enough time to do things right.
- Dr. Guerrero explained that a full report was not expected until February, and that the full report would include several appendices to provide documentation and

details of committee work. In regard to preparing for the December 10 Board meeting, she said that recommendations usually flow from findings.

- Terry Clark suggested that members be thinking of preliminary findings and recommendations on their own and email them to staff for compilation and subsequent consideration by the committee, and members agreed that this was a good idea.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓							
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓										
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓						
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓							
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓											
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓												
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓						
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓						

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Special Called Meeting
November 14, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:40 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- Terry Clark introduced Sylvia Reyna from the San Antonio Independent School District. He commented that policies need to be sustainable and systematic or they will languish.
- Ms. Reyna provided an overview of SAISD's Integrated Communications Network (ICN). She said the ICN was initiated about four year ago. She described the ICN as a means of institutionalized engagement, built on two-way communications. She said communications worked from both top-down and bottom-up, but aimed at the middle where over 400 "key communicators" were included in various advisory committees of parents, community members, and district employees.
- Ms. Reyna described three means of written communication. One was a "NewsFlash" released to the community the day after important events or announcements. Two others were monthly newsletters aimed at parents and district employees.
- Ms. Reyna explained that the various stakeholder groups met monthly following a plenary session with the superintendent. She said the superintendent was very active in these sessions, which contributed to their success.
- Ms. Reyna also explained that the ICN was not written into district policy, which tended to affect its sustainability when a new superintendent came on board. She said that now the advisory groups were not meeting as frequently, and associated failure to pass a local tax initiative with this change. She also said that closure plans for certain schools were developed by the district rather than by the advisory groups, and that the plans were not well received as a result.
- Committee members were generally impressed with the ICN, particularly as it was originally developed and implemented, and felt that there could be applications for Austin's situation.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008			
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								
Chiquita Watt Eugene																
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓											
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓							
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓								
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓												
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓													
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓					
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓					

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
November 27, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:37 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- Joey Crumley provided printouts of open-ended comments from the public survey. Members generally felt that the comments largely supported other input they had received, and did not think it was necessary to provide a detailed analysis of the comments. Members felt it might be good to include a few representative comments in the final committee report, but felt the Board should probably receive all of the comments for information.
- Members then took turns stating their top priorities for findings and recommendations based on the following topics in the committee charter:
  - Criteria for identifying underutilized and overcrowded schools
  - Criteria for assessing conditions
  - Criteria for assessing alternatives
  - Opportunities for interlocal collaboration
  - Ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation
- Members also identified several other things outside of these topics that they felt should be relayed to the Board.
- *Attached are the detailed notes of the discussion.*
- Members decided to continue their prioritization of findings and recommendations at the next meeting.
- The co-chairs reminded members that the December 11 meeting had been changed to December 4. They also said that they would be providing an update to the Board on December 10 and an update to the Joint Subcommittees of the Board, City Council, and County Commissioners Court on December 14.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Discussion Notes from Meeting of November 27, 2007

▶ *Criteria for identifying underutilized and overcrowded schools*

Findings

- We have a problem with how capacity is calculated
- Process and policy is needed that clearly defines and is inclusive of all variables, including but not limited to:
  - ✓ enrollment
  - ✓ when kids are eating lunch
  - ✓ academic performance and state/federal accountability status
  - ✓ current utilization of the campus
  - ✓ possible other uses of the campus
  - ✓ number of high-need kids and the nature of their needs
  - ✓ transportation
  - ✓ school location
  - ✓ demographic trends and projections
  - ✓ range of services provided by school
  - ✓ transfer policies
  - ✓ age of facility

Recommendations

- Have clear and consistent criteria and have ongoing conversations with the public
- Determine if overcrowding has negative effects on students
- Make sure all programs are included in consideration of facility utilization
- Investigate reasons for under-enrollment at schools
- Include community in consideration of criteria
- Develop policy that clearly defines and is inclusive of all variables
- Change capacity calculation
- Make sure that capacity calculations are available to the public
- Look at test scores and lunch schedules
- Look at the positives of schools and what they have to offer
- In addition to looking at quantitative data, look at qualitative factors
- Weigh other factors besides enrollment … look beyond the numbers
- Look at AYP status

▶ *Criteria for assessing conditions*

Findings

- Assessing conditions overlaps with assessing alternatives and identifying overcrowded and underutilized schools

Recommendations

- Develop a campus report card that provides needed information and can market the school – a "rock star" campus report card – a prospectus that includes enrollment information
- Look at existing processes that the district already has in place for dealing with over- and under-utilized schools

▶ ***Criteria for assessing alternatives***

Findings

- Assessing alternatives overlaps with assessing conditions and identifying overcrowded and underutilized schools
- Need a better way of managing information and making it readily accessible

Recommendations

- Encourage data sharing between the district and the city on a regular basis (e.g., school status, neighborhood plans)
- Make an explicit commitment to neighborhood schools model and central city schools
- Consider resources and transfer policies
- Take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to dealing with schools that are failing
- Collaborate with the community – conduct an authentic collaborative process

▶ ***Opportunities for interlocal collaboration***

Findings

- AISD needs to commit to act as a partner in community and regional planning

Recommendations

- Develop policies for campuses to provide space to the city, non-profits, child care centers, and senior centers
- Work with others to market positive attributes of schools and neighborhoods with city-specific information
- Become an active partner in community and regional planning
- Build on partnerships with the city and county
- Take an active interest in major local development plans – be more involved in the development process
- Be involved in efforts to increase affordable housing

- Encourage businesses to adopt schools to provide financial support, mentoring, tutoring, etc.
- Encourage multi-purposing of school facilities
- Increase opportunities for AISD, city, and county to meet together to discuss policy and operations and to share information and data
- Commit to sustainability
- Review Planning Commission agendas and provide comments on items as appropriate

▶ ***Ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation***

Findings

- Surveys show stronger trust at the campus level than at the district level
- Need to be more creative in engaging the community and getting out to where they are
- Each school community is different in how it prefers to receive information

Recommendations

- Implement an integrated communications system for the district and community that:
  - ✓ takes advantage of existing infrastructure
  - ✓ facilitates communications on important issues
  - ✓ is sensitive to timing
  - ✓ is sustainable in the face of change
  - ✓ has broad stakeholder representation
- Build a team of stakeholders to be trusted communicators between campuses and the district
- Empower principals to work with parents and the community to seek innovative and creative approaches to learning
- Expand infrastructure if needed
- Train CACs to better communicate with their own school communities; build CAC leadership
- Provide early notice to key community partners on important school issues; maintain a list of contacts
- Build an institutional culture within the district based on community trust
- Build stronger partnerships with PTAs and the ACPTA
- Provide orientation for community members serving on district committees and task forces
- Provide better notification of meetings and events
- Provide a direct communications link to Trustees
- Do a better job in bringing the community into meetings, processes, and decision-making
- Post Board agendas sooner

▶ ***Other things we want to relay to the Board***

- Include fiscal impact assessment along with recommendations
- As much as possible, use what's already there
- Evaluate how easy or difficult it would be to change an existing policy or process
- Whatever communications systems is used, it should be inviting
- Provide an annual state of AISD report, as well as Trustee district reports
- Consider sunset provisions for transfer policies to encourage community engagement and dialogue
- Provide staff person so that Trustees can be more responsive

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008			
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								
Chiquita Watt Eugene																
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓				
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓							
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓								
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓												
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓													
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓					
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓				

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
December 4, 2007

Member Attendance:
(see attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:44 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- Andy Anderson debriefed members on a recent meeting held with Trustees Mark Williams and Vincent Torres. Comments made by the trustees included:
  - Pleased with the work done thus far by the committee
  - Not necessarily expecting to see recommendations at this point, rather an update on findings to date
  - End of February deadline for committee work may be extended, but need to identify things with budgetary implications pretty soon
- Joey Crumley provided information previously requested by members, including a description of Denver's Beacon Schools and a list of the AISD's interlocal agreements with the City of Austin and Travis County.
- Members discussed findings to be presented to the Board of Trustees on December 10 and to the Joint Subcommittees of the Board, City Council, and County Commissioners Court on December 14. Initial discussion points included:
  - Need both established criteria and flexibility to address individual campus situations
  - Need to be creative in gaining community and business partnerships, and some schools may need more assistance than others
  - Need to reach out the broader community, not just parents
  - Need to make schools more marketable
- Members then focused on their major findings to date and possible review criteria *(see attached summary)*.
- Andy Anderson and Rachel Proctor May said they would be meeting with staff later in the week to prepare for their presentations to the Board of Trustees and the Joint Subcommittees.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Major Findings
December 4, 2007

Criteria for identifying underutilized and overcrowded schools

- Current school capacity calculations need revision:
  - School capacity and use determinations need to be consistent, clearly defined, and reflective of variables and considerations identified by the community as important.
  - School capacity and use determinations, and the criteria upon which these are based, should be communicated regularly to all community stakeholders.
  - Community stakeholders should be informed and actively engaged in ongoing dialogues about criteria, process, and school capacity and use.

Criteria for assessing alternatives (e.g., revitalizing, repurposing, realigning, closing)

- Parents, students, community members, and all possible stakeholders, including other governmental entities, should be involved as early as possible in an authentic process to identify root causes, assess the situation, and collaborate on developing alternatives.
- The community has an overwhelming interest in revitalization; closing a neighborhood school should be considered as a last resort, only when viable alternatives have been exhausted.

Criteria for assessing conditions (e.g., academic performance, environmental implications, use of resources, added value both quantitative and qualitative)

- Assessment considerations should include the criteria noted above for identifying overcrowded and underutilized schools and assessing alternatives, as well as any additional factors identified by the community.

Opportunities for interlocal collaboration

- AISD would benefit from more active engagement in community and regional planning efforts. Possible avenues of engagement could include:
  - Assigning staff to review Planning Commission agendas and providing comments on items as appropriate;
  - Developing policies to encourage multi-purposing of school facilities and to enable campuses to provide space to the city, non-profits, child care centers, and senior centers;
  - Coordinating capital planning efforts; and,
  - Holding more frequent Joint Subcommittees meetings.

Procedures for identifying and ensuring ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation (e.g., neighborhood surveys, input from parents, students, and teachers)

- Survey respondents and focus group participants showed a much higher level of trust with campus staff than with district administration and the Board of Trustees. This trust at the campus level is a strength to build on, such as through improved Campus Advisory Council leadership training.
- Each school community is different in how it prefers to receive information.
- AISD needs to expand its communication with stakeholders who may not have direct connections to schools (e.g., neighborhood associations, churches, businesses, non-parents, retirees).
- AISD needs to regularly inform the community of criteria and timelines through which major decisions are made and where each campus stands in relation to them.

Possible Review Criteria

Process and policy is needed that clearly defines and is inclusive of all variables, including but not limited to:

- Enrollment
- When kids are eating lunch
- Academic performance and state/federal accountability status
- Current utilization of the campus
- Possible other uses of the campus
- Number of high-need kids and the nature of their needs
- Transportation
- School location
- Demographic trends and projections
- Range of services provided by school
- Transfer policies
- Age of facility

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008			
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/4**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								
Chiquita Watt Eugene																
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓				
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓							
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓			
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓												
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓													
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓					
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
January 8, 2008

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Jennifer Bennett, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Alberto Gonzalez, District Advisory Council
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Rachel Proctor May debriefed members on the updates provided to the Board of Trustees on December 10, and to the Joint Subcommittees on December 14. Comments made during the updates included:
    - The finding that the there is more community trust at the campus level than at the district level is interesting
    - The committee may have more time to finish its final work, but any recommendations with budgetary implications for next year should be provided soon
    - More interaction with the city could be helpful, but Trustees are volunteers, and suggested that the committee look more at the staff level
    - In general, need to see more specific policy recommendations
    - Marketing campuses is a good idea, especially for underutilized campuses
    - Emphasis on defining terms that the committee has been using, such as "repurposing" or "underutilized" – a glossary would be helpful for the final report
    - Look more into opportunities or special programs, such as the Ann Richards school, for schools that are underutilized
    - Form an educational subcommittee for the bond process
    - What would "revitalization" look like
    - Attending Planning Commission meetings is a good idea
    - The Superintendent and administration will have more to say once the committee makes its final recommendations
- Members continued their discussion on possible recommendations. Discussion points included:
    - One budgetary issue may be providing staff to allow Trustees to more directly communicate with constituents
    - There are probably no issues related to the upcoming bond, but revitalization efforts could affect certain campuses in the future

- Because there has been so much feedback on communications, this may be the easiest part of the recommendations to put together at this point
- Place emphasis on using ”pre-emptive” measures and early communication
- Collaboration and communication are closely related and perhaps should be considered together
- San Antonio ISD’s communications model could be applied to address Austin’s needs
- Place emphasis on addressing alternatives for underutilized schools
- May need to redefine “underutilization”
- Need to really work on specific criteria
- What are the “indicators” or “thresholds” that “trigger” the need for the community to be notified that a school is underutilized, low performing, or under capacity?
  - Demographics within a particular area
  - District report card
  - Enrollment
  - Overcrowding/underutilization
  - “Watch lists”
- The Accountability Office produces district and campus report cards, which are presented in public hearings and placed online
- District and campus enrollment reports are generated by Student Services every six weeks
- Performance indicators are monitored routinely by the Superintendent and Cabinet and a school “watch list” is developed
- Parents and community members should be informed about watch lists and have input
- Although there is an expectation that principals share information related to their schools, there is also concern that principals may in some cases be discouraged not to share certain information
- Community members often do not feel comfortable in stepping up and taking leadership roles in school issues

- Members then discussed the organization and schedule for their final product. Discussion points included:
  - The “sticky note” process has been helpful
  - Look at previous findings and minutes
  - Begin with communications recommendations
  - Final recommendations could be divided into communications and collaboration, review criteria, and decision making process
  - The co-chairs will meet to further discuss the schedule and possible subcommittees
  - Need to factor in the time necessary for public review and comment of recommendations before taking a final product to the Board
- Committee members agreed to personally contact those members who have not been attending meetings lately to encourage their participation at this important point in the committee’s work.
- The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008			
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/4**	**1/8**	**1/29**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								
Chiquita Watt Eugene																
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓		✓		
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓							
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓		
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓												
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓													
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓					
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
January 29, 2008

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:47 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joey Crumley briefly went over informational items provided in member packets, including: district-generated campus report cards; third six-weeks attendance report; elementary, middle, and high school level reports; final recommendations of the Citizens Bond Advisory Committee; and notes from previous meetings.
- Janis Guerrero drew member's attention to a revised schedule for the remaining work of the committee, which is now targeted to conclude at the end of April.
- Susan Moffat summarized draft recommendations of the subcommittee addressing ongoing communications and community collaboration. The recommendations for communications and collaboration were separated out and each included a preamble, policy recommendations, and process recommendations.
- Discussion points on community collaboration included:
    - Show alignments with the Strategic Plan, and with City of Austin Charter
    - Include a recommendation for a staff-level version of the Joint Subcommittees
    - Include regional as well as local opportunities for collaboration
    - Need to have a school impact assessment for proposed developments; consider using the tax credit process as a model
    - Need to note any funding, staffing, facility, or regulatory implications
    - Should probably consider multi-purposing of facilities beyond local governments to include business and other partners
    - The Joint Subcommittees is not a decision making or directing body; it is probably best not to identify them as the responsible party for recommended actions
- Discussion points on ongoing communication included:
    - Need to define "authentic" stakeholder process
    - District-generated campus report cards need comparative information (i.e., to other schools and the state) and some kind of analysis of "what does this all mean" (e.g., could my school be forced to close)
    - Give campuses more responsibility, along with more latitude, for engaging parents and the community

    - Need to make sure campuses get information out consistently and regularly; perhaps consider a designated staff person at each campus for communications and marketing
    - CAC members can better be used to help get information out, as well as vertical teams
    - State law requires each campus to have an annual public hearing on the TEA-issued campus report card; not sure if every campus is actually doing this
- Paul Saldaña asked members to send him any suggested revisions to the draft recommendations by the end of the week. He said that at the next committee meeting on February 12 members would finalize these recommendations and proceed to discussing recommendations of the subcommittee addressing review criteria.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008			
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/4**	**1/8**	**1/29**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								
Chiquita Watt Eugene																
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓		✓	✓	
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓							
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓												
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓													
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓					
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
February 12, 2008

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Jennifer Bennett, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Rachel Hirsch

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:48 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Andy Anderson opened up discussion on draft recommendations of the subcommittee addressing review criteria. The recommendations for review criteria were separated out into a chart format which described over-crowded, under-utilized, and schools not meeting state or federal standards. The chart followed with a more detailed document also addressing review criteria.
- Discussion points on review criteria included:
    - Transportation criteria should also include the evaluation of major transportation arteries and other physical barriers.
    - Enrollment criteria for over-crowded schools should be based on the number of students over 105% capacity and a gain of 5% or more per year for 2 consecutive years
    - Enrollment criteria for under-utilized schools should be based on the number of schools below 85% capacity and a decrease of 5% or more per year for 2 consecutive years.
    - The committee wants to have a threshold that would trigger an early communication process for the possibility of being over- or under-capacity.
    - "Over-crowded" and "under-utilized" terminology should be changed to more neutral terms such as "over-capacity" and "under-capacity".
    - Issues of subjective versus objective criteria. Example: when children are eating lunch
    - Criteria for "current utilization of campus"
        - Could also include criteria for "range of services provided by school"
        - Should take into account special campuses
        - Should take into account utilization both during and not during school hours. For instance, classrooms could be empty, but they may be filled by offices for programs
    - Criteria for "possible other uses of the campus" could include opportunities for external programs and may also need to be considered in the overall decision-making process.

    - Criteria should also include community and regional planning goals
    - "Age of facility" criteria should be changed to "condition" of facility to address condition and adaptability of a facility.
    - Concerns about using "functional" versus "design" capacity. The committee would like to see the draft formula for functional capacity from Joe Silva in the Facilities Office.
    - Demographic criteria should be based on a minimum of 2 years, but may also need to include up to five years for bond program planning and construction considerations.
    - The use of the CACs at each school are very important and perhaps need more training to reach out to the school community.
    - The Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) should also include a communications plan.
    - Dr. Guerrero suggested that the review criteria could be addressed in an overall decision-making process where each criteria would be considered at different stages in the process. The committee should also think about a flowchart, tiers of criteria, and definitions of the criteria.
    - Committee members felt that it may be helpful for the Board to have all the review criteria in a simple "at a glance" format.
- Members then focused on a decision-making process to address different stages.
- Discussion points on the decision-making process included:
    - Using enrollment, academic performance, and capacity criteria as initial indicators for early notification.
    - The other criteria would then be addressed at subsequent community meetings.
    - The community should look at the criteria and determine the problem and how to address it. The district should just provide support in the process.
    - Ongoing communication is required throughout the whole process.
    - The process should begin in August or September and end in January or February so a school can address problems immediately and implement changes for the following school year.
- Kathie Tovo said she would look more in detail at the lengthier document to determine if any major review criteria are missing from the chart.
- Joey Crumley said that he would obtain functional capacity calculations for the committee to review at the next meeting.
- Andy Anderson said he would make changes to the review criteria chart and provide a process flow chart. Also, he indicated that at the next committee meeting on February 26, members would continue to look at the decision-making process and finalize review criteria.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008			
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/4**	**1/8**	**1/29**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								
Chiquita Watt Eugene																
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓		✓	✓	✓
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓							
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓												
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓													
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓					
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
February 26, 2008

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Jennifer Bennett, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:43 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joey Crumley drew attention to upcoming scheduled events including briefing the Joint Subcommittees on March 7th, the joint meeting with the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force on March 6th, and the community meeting on March 25th. Also, he reminded members that recommendations need to be ready by the beginning of next week in order to post them online for public comment and to receive input from the Joint Subcommittees and the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force. Lastly, he asked the committee if they wanted to have a planning meeting next week for the upcoming public meeting on March 25th. The committee decided to let staff propose some options, and they would correspond through email to plan the meeting.
- Rachel Proctor May then provided a brief overview of the draft recommendations. The committee focused first on the Action Plan for Involving School Communities in Major Decisions.
- Discussion points on the decision-making process included:
    - The process flow chart that was created at the last meeting should be aligned with the written decision-making steps.
    - The review criteria should also be aligned with the decision-making process.
    - The committee is recommending a minimum of three years for major decisions affecting under-utilized or over-crowded schools.
    - There was some concern that the timeline on the existing flow chart (which illustrates the decision-making process) is too short and may not provide enough time for the community to be involved.
    - Because the review criteria indicators will change each year, a new process may be needed to address each year's circumstances.
    - Committee members determined that, although the overall process will take at a minimum three years, a new process to address each year's indicators would recur every year.
    - By January of each year, the community should brief the Board of Trustees on the status of the process and with preliminary recommendations. This brief should also include any budgetary implications for the next budget cycle.

    - The briefing to the Board of Trustees in the process should include at least three community members.
    - There is a process for ongoing communication and a process if changes are needed.
    - The second information gathering stage should be divided into “additional data gathering” and “additional community outreach.”
    - The second meeting would involve the community coming back together to determine preliminary recommendations and action plans.
    - Some members emphasized action that a community can do on its own to address facility issues.
    - The initial community meeting should be co-moderated by a trusted community member and the corresponding Board member that represents that area. Also, an Associate Superintendent should be in attendance.
    - The Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) for each school should have a communications plan component. A template of a recommended communication plan for Campus Advisory Councils could be included in the appendices of the report.
- Members and Joey Crumley then commented on certain phrases that could be changed in the existing draft recommendations.
- Members then briefly discussed the review criteria chart.
- Discussion points on the review criteria included:
    - There should be no blanks in the chart.
    - Some members expressed concerns over using the maximum student to teacher ratio under state law. The ideal teaching environment is somewhere less than the maximum capacity, and criteria should instead be based on an optimal amount of students in each classroom.
    - Certain members said they would look at the criteria again to finalize the list.
- Andy Anderson said he would make changes to the review criteria chart and process flow chart and send it Rachel Proctor May to include in the recommendations.
- Rachel Proctor May said she would format and clean up the document in general to be ready by the beginning of next week.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007													2008				
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/4**	**1/8**	**1/29**	**2/12**	**2/26**	**3/25**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓										
Chiquita Watt Eugene																		
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓		✓	✓	✓		
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓									
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓														
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓															
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓							
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	

✓= Present

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
April 8, 2008

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Jennifer Bennett, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 5:41 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens' communications.
- Rachel Proctor May began discussion with details relating to the draft report. Discussion points included:
    - The City of Austin's Families and Children Task Force shared the same thoughts regarding affordable housing as the representatives from Ortega
    - A developer felt that having a required Educational Impact Assessment would just be another reason to delay or even prohibit a project
    - Affordable housing does not fall within the direct charge of the committee nor is it within the authority of AISD, although the district should advocate for affordable housing
- Joey Crumley provided an overview of the input received on the committee's draft recommendations. He also explained the standard format used for district committee and task force reports.
- The committee discussed the deadline for the final report. Mr. Crumley said that the report would need to be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the April 28 Board presentation.
- Rachel Proctor May directed discussion to address finalizing the committee's report. Discussion points included:
    - Including a "best practices" section
    - Rewording the translation section to say "Spanish with other languages as needed"
    - The process for repurposing an under-utilized school should also be applied to repurposing a former school building back into a regular school (e.g., Baker)
    - Clarify in the report that a timeframe of five years is only for schools that are rebuilding with strong community participation
    - There should be a minimum of two weeks for announcements and notifications
    - Regular, predictable meetings are useful for parents
    - Do not de-emphasize the importance of meetings, but provide other means of providing input

    - The existing “findings” section is confusing and should be redone
- The committee then discussed in more detail how affordable housing should be address in the report. Highlights of the discussion included:
    - Affordable housing affects enrollment, and thus the over-crowding and under-utilization of schools
    - There should be multiple statements for AISD support of efforts to increase affordable housing in the report
    - But still need to make sure the district does not appear to have authority in affordable housing
    - The report should contain a bolder statement in support of affordable housing, and perhaps use the Ortega community as an example
    - The district should sit down with the city and county, especially the housing authorities, to discuss what is going on with East Austin schools
    - Property owners, non-profit agencies, and developers affect affordable housing, and efforts to provide affordable housing should include them
    - The findings section could also include information about the effects of affordable housing in Austin and the general effect on student experiences
- The committee then moved discussion to issues affecting future implementation of the report. Highlights of the discussion included:
    - This type of project has the possibility to fail unless there are steps for implementation
    - Someone has to be guiding the implementation of the report after it goes to the Board for review:
        - The Facilities Use and Boundaries Task Force could be responsible
        - Staff could be hired to address this
        - The leadership style of the superintendent is especially important
        - Some members felt there should be a joint city and school district task force
    - School-neighborhood liaisons in the district would be useful:
        - This should be someone that would support community efforts to create innovative programs
        - Parent Support Specialists might act in this capacity
    - Budget recommendations have been made for 2008-2009 to include some new employees as well as additional funding to provide support for communication, collaboration, and translation services
    - The committee may want to think about listing budgetary implications in the report
    - It is important to emphasize that there are different levels of commitment, such as simply making better use of existing resources
- The committee then addressed other issues regarding the draft report. Discussion points included:
    - The best practices section should also include innovative ideas to boost enrollment in under-utilized schools
    - The district should share resources with individual campuses to support them in their marketing efforts

    - The report should have language about making the capacity formula clear and having staff available to respond to specific questions
    - Concern over having citizen communications at the beginning of Board meetings instead of corresponding with specific agenda items
    - Perhaps the district should have a “State of the District” public meeting
- Dr. Guerrero then asked whose names should appear on the report, given that several members had poor attendance and had not provided input into the committee’s recommendations. It was agreed that members would be contacted to determine if they wanted their names to appear on the report.
- Deadlines for the final report were determined to be April 14 for providing text to staff, April 17 for sending the final report to the Board, April 21 for presenting the final report to Cabinet, and April 28 for presenting the final report to the Board.
- The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007													2008					
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/4**	**1/8**	**1/29**	**2/12**	**2/26**	**3/25**	**4/8**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓											
Chiquita Watt Eugene																			
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓											✓
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓		✓	✓	✓			
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓										
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓															
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓																
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓				
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓								
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	

✓= Present

Appendix D
Terms Related to Neighborhoods and Schools

Note: Italicized terms are defined further under separate headings.

Adaptive Reuse
See *Redevelopment*.

Alignment
See *Zoning*.

Brownfield
Technically, a brownfield is a parcel of property previously used for industrial or commercial purposes with relatively low levels of contamination that, with some degree of environmental remediation, can be made suitable for *redevelopment*. However, in more generally applied usage, a brownfield is any parcel of previously developed property. A brownfield may be compared to a *greyfield* or a *greenfield*.

Capital Improvement Program
A capital improvement program (CIP) is a local government's plan for matching the cost of large-scale improvements to anticipated revenues.

Closure
The closure of a school facility results in discontinuing its use, either mothballing the facility or divesting of the property. In some cases, when a facility is no longer used for a school, the district may choose *repurposing* it rather than closing it entirely.

Collocation
Collocation (or multi-purposing, or joint use) is the location of two or more different functions at one facility, such as an elementary school and a community health center.

Conditional Use
Conditional use is a land use that is inconsistent with current *zoning* for the location but is allowed on a discretionary or conditional basis by a *local government*.

Consolidation
School consolidation is the combination or merger of one or more schools, usually related to low enrollments and/or cost savings.

Density
Density refers to the ratio of dwellers or occupants to a specific land area, or to the ratio of construction units to a specific land area. In many cases, density may be related to *floor-to-area ratio*.

Floor-to-Area Ratio
Floor-to-area ratio (FAR) is the total square footage of a building on all floors (building area) divided by the square footage of the property (site area). For example, an FAR of 2.0 would indicate that the total floor area of a building is two times the area of the plot on which it is constructed. In many cases, FAR may be related to *density*.

Future Land Use Map
A future land use map (FLUM) is a graphic representation of recommendations for future growth patterns, depicting where certain types of land use or development should occur.

Gentrification
Gentrification is a process whereby parcels of land owned or occupied by persons of relatively low income are purchased by wealthier individuals and renovated, resulting in an often marked increase in property values. Gentrification may result in *revitalization*, but negative effects of gentrification may include the displacement of certain populations and the loss of traditional neighborhood character.

Greenfield
A greenfield is a parcel of agricultural or previously undeveloped land. Greenfield development may be a major factor in *urban sprawl*. A greenfield may be compared to a *brownfield* or a *greyfield*.

Greyfield
A greyfield is a parcel of property previously used for retail or commercial purposes consisting largely of asphalt or other paved surfaces, usually requiring no environmental remediation to be made suitable for *redevelopment*. A greyfield may be compared to a *brownfield* or a *greenfield*.

Impervious Cover
Impervious cover is any type of surface that will not allow rainfall or runoff to soak into the ground (e.g., pavement or buildings). Local ordinances may limit impervious cover in developments for environmental protection or runoff control purposes.

Infrastructure
In land use planning, infrastructure refers to basic development needs such as streets, drainage, and water, wastewater, and electrical utilities. In school planning, infrastructure refers to basic service supports such as buildings, technology, and transportation.

Interlocal
Interlocal refers to conditions or agreements between two or more *local governments*.

Joint Use
See *Collocation*.

Leapfrog Development
Leapfrog development is a type of development associated with *urban sprawl* that leaves large tracts of undeveloped or relatively undeveloped land in a scattered pattern.

Livability
See *Sustainability*.

Local Government
A local government is a governmental entity ranking below a national or state government. Local governments usually refer to cities and counties, but may also include school districts and other special districts or authorities.

Mixed-Use Development
Mixed-use development is generally *zoning* that allows more than one category of land use in a given area. A *planned unit development* is a specific type of mixed-use development.

Multi-Purposing
See *Collocation*.

Neighborhood School
A neighborhood school is a public school that is typically identified with a certain neighborhood and is within comfortable walking distance from dwellings in that neighborhood. These schools often serve as centers for various neighborhood activities.

Neo-Traditional Planning
See *New Urbanism*.

New Urbanism
New Urbanism (or Neo-Traditional Planning) is an approach to building neighborhoods with a strong sense of place, aiming to reduce traffic congestion, increase affordable housing supply, and curb *urban sprawl*. Typical characteristics of New Urbanism neighborhoods include:

- A discernible neighborhood center, with a transit stop located at the center, and most dwellings located within a five-minute walk of the center (i.e., *transit-oriented development* or *pedestrian-scaled development*)
- A variety of housing types, such that younger and older people, singles and families, and various income levels can find places to live
- A variety of support services and offices located within each neighborhood
- *Zoning* to permit garage apartments and home businesses
- Schools close enough so that most children can walk or bike
- Small playgrounds accessible to every dwelling
- Neighborhood streets forming a connected network, dispersing traffic by providing a variety of pedestrian and vehicular routes to any destination
- Relatively narrow and tree-shaded streets to slow traffic and create a suitable environment for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Parking usually in the rear or to the side of buildings, utilizing alleyways

- Prominent sites at the termination of street vistas or in the neighborhood center reserved for civic buildings
- Active neighborhood associations and other civic groups

Pedestrian-Oriented Development

See *Pedestrian-Scaled Development*.

Pedestrian-Scaled Development

Pedestrian-scaled development is designed such that a person can walk comfortably from one point to another, encouraging strolling, window-shopping, and other pedestrian activities. Pedestrian-scaled development is characterized by a compatible mixture of land uses, visually aesthetic features, and convenient access to public transit. Pedestrian-scaled development and *transit-oriented development* have very similar characteristics.

Plat

A plat is a map showing tracts of land, boundaries, and thoroughfares. A plat is also a map of a *subdivision* or a *site plan*.

Planned Unit Development

A planned unit development (PUD) is a type of *mixed-use development* that it is a distinct departure from traditional *zoning* patterns. A PUD is specifically designed to integrate a grouping of varied yet compatible land uses, such as housing, open space and recreation, offices and commercial centers, and industrial parks, all within one contained development or subdivision.

Reconfiguration

Reconfiguration (or restructuring) of a school results in changes to its programmatic offerings and/or grade level structure.

Redevelopment

Redevelopment (or adaptive reuse) is changing the use of a previously developed parcel of property, or restoring a previously developed parcel of property to its prior use. Redevelopment is usually associated with the improvement or renovation of property that is in disuse or disrepair.

Relocation

School relocation results in moving all or part of a school to a new or different facility.

Repurposing

Repurposing (or reuse) results in some other function at a school facility. The facility may still house a school, but a different kind of school; or the facility may house some non-school function such as an administrative center.

Restructuring

See *Reconfiguration*.

Reuse

See *Repurposing*.

Revitalization

In community planning terms, revitalization generally refers to bringing businesses, residents, and community activities into or back into a declining area. In school planning terms, revitalization particularly refers to increasing enrollment in schools losing that are enrollment by making them more attractive, through enhancements to facilities and/or programmatic offerings.

School Choice

School choice refers to any number of programs allowing parents to send their children to a variety of primary and secondary schools. School choice may be based on several factors, including the academic standing or rating of schools, or the curriculum and program offerings of schools. To some, school choice is seen as a possible threat to the success or vitality of *neighborhood schools*.

Setback

A setback is the minimum distance between construction and a lot line. A setback may also be a minimum distance between any type of development and a protected feature.

Site Plan

A site plan is a map or drawing of a land parcel depicting property lines and current and proposed land uses, as well as a variety of other property features as may be necessary to demonstrate compliance with applicable ordinances.

Smart Growth

Smart Growth is very similar to *New Urbanism*, but provides a distinct focus on economic concerns. As such, the term it is often seen written as *$*mart Growth. Smart Growth principles include:

- Creating a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Creating walkable neighborhoods
- Encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration
- Fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Making development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective
- Encouraging mixed but compatible land uses
- Preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Providing a variety of transportation choices
- Directing growth to existing urban areas
- Promoting compact urban design

Smart Growth provides economic incentives to cities; namely, preventing *urban sprawl* cuts down on *infrastructure* expansions, and helps protect the tax base by not losing taxpayers to suburban areas. Smart Growth also provides economic incentives to developers; namely, rewarding them for achieving Smart Growth goals by expediting development processes, reducing development impact fees, and providing *transfers of development rights*.

Subdivision

As a verb, subdivision is the act of dividing a piece of land into smaller pieces or lots, usually to make them easier to sell or develop. As a noun, subdivision refers to a number of lots collectively targeted for development, usually depicted on a *plat*. Subdivision ordinances may require minimum lot sizes and a variety of other restrictions or conditions, such as provision of infrastructure or dedicated open space.

Sustainability

> "A sustainable society meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" – United Nations

Sustainability (or livability) is concerned with achieving a high quality of life for all citizens. It is a means of shaping human activity so that members of society are able to meet their needs and express their greatest potential both in the present and over the long term, while preserving both cultural and natural diversity. The major goals of sustainability include:

- Conserving natural resources and ecosystems
- Providing equitable access to education and economic gain
- Building social harmony and justice
- Promoting wise, well-planned capital investments
- Encouraging public participation in all levels of government and planning

Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is *mixed-use development* designed to maximize access to public transport, and often incorporates features to encourage transit ridership. TOD neighborhoods typically include areas of high *density* near transportation centers. TOD and *pedestrian-scaled development* have very similar characteristics.

Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of development rights (TDR) are *zoning* programs that allow landowners to transfer certain development allowances from one parcel of land to another. The intent of such programs is to shift development to preferred growth areas. When rights are transferred, additional land use restrictions are imposed on the "sending" parcel, but the owner may then develop the "receiving" parcel with fewer land use restrictions than ordinarily allowed, usually resulting in a greater *density*.

Urban Infill

Urban infill refers to the development or *redevelopment* of parcels of land already in urbanized areas as opposed to contributing to *urban sprawl*. Urban infill often results in mixed but compatible land uses and a variety of housing options. Urban infill projects may also be part of community or neighborhood *revitalization* efforts.

Urban Sprawl

Urban sprawl is the spreading out of a city and its suburbs over rural or relatively undeveloped land at the fringe of an urban area. Residents of sprawling neighborhoods

tend to live in single-family homes and commute by automobile to work. Urban sprawl is often characterized by scattered or *leapfrog development*.

Zoning

In community planning terms, zoning refers to the specification of permissible land uses. However, in school planning terms, zoning (or alignment) refers to the determination of school attendance boundaries.

Zoning Overlay

A zoning overlay is a set of *zoning* requirements that places additional land use restrictions in a specified area, usually to achieve certain community goals stated in an adopted plan.

Appendix E
Literature Review

Summary of Research

(Numbers in parentheses refer to entries in the attached annotated bibliography)

AISD's Situation

- AISD is in a relatively unusual situation, in that its overall enrollment is steadily increasing, while certain campuses are experiencing enrollment declines. As such, the literature review did not yield many resources *directly applicable* to AISD's particular situation; however, helpful information may still be drawn from the experiences of other districts and general studies. In a large sense, this committee will be conducting groundbreaking work, and its findings and recommendations will certainly augment the available literature. (A15, A17, A18)

Closing Schools

- Closing a school can be a very difficult and emotional decision, yet many school districts across the country are finding themselves having to make such tough decisions due to significantly declining enrollments, major economic downturns, and aging facilities. Also, some schools are being closed due to continued poor academic performance. (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A8, A9, A11, A12, A16, A17, B14)

Alternatives to Closing Schools

- Alternatives to closing schools may be school repurposing/reuse, multi-purposing, consolidation, relocation, reconfiguration/restructuring, or rezoning/realignment; but, these alternatives may also be controversial, as many school districts are experiencing. (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A15, A18, B12)

Stakeholder Involvement

- Most school districts that are considering closures and other major decisions affecting schools realize the importance of stakeholder involvement. Often a variety of methods are used to gain community input and to keep stakeholders informed. (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A9, A12, A15, A16, A17, A18, B6, B12, B13, B14)

Connection to Strengthening Educational Value

- Saving money and maximizing use of resources is usually not enough to fully assuage community concerns over closing schools and other major decisions affecting schools; a direct connection to strengthening educational value must be clearly demonstrated. (A1, A5, A7, A10, A11, A12, A16, A17, B14)

Review Criteria

- Many school districts utilize specific criteria or standards for evaluating schools and considering closures and other major decisions affecting schools. These criteria

usually cover a wide range of factors, some of which include: enrollment versus capacity; academic and other program offerings; age and condition of buildings; student transportation; implications to receiving schools; estimated savings; equity concerns; and neighborhood impacts. (A2, A3, A5, A8, A9, A11, A12, A14, A16)

Neighborhoods and Schools

- Schools, particularly elementary schools, are important to the fabric of the neighborhoods they serve and lend to a sense of place. Schools often serve as community centers or neighborhood anchors. Yet, school planning and community planning rarely work in synch. Small, neighborhood schools have been identified as an integral part of sustainable neighborhoods. Schools that are walkable, successful, and well-maintained help attract middle-income families to, and keep them in, urban neighborhoods. (A6, A7, A13, A18, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11, B12)

Plan Alignments

- Decisions affecting schools are guided by master education and facilities plans in some districts. (A1, A13, A16, B14)

Equity

- In decisions affecting the status of a school, some districts state the importance of demonstrating a sense of equity in both involvement and outcomes. (A5, A6, A7, A11, A15, A18)

Transition Plans

- If a decision is made to change the status of a school, some districts develop transition plans with stakeholder input. (A1, A5, A8, A9)

Other Topics

- If a school is closed, in addition to alternative district uses of the property, some districts consider cooperative use by other local governments and rental to private activities. (A1, A3, B12)
- If a school is closed for academic reasons, some districts ensure that students are reassigned to higher performing schools. (A10, A11)
- Positive alternative strategies may be considered for increasing enrollment at schools with low enrollment. (A14)

Annotated Bibliography

Note: Entries in the annotated bibliography are presented by "What Other School Districts Are Doing" (A), and "Additional Resources" (B) that are not specific to any particular school district. Due to subcategorization of the entries, the reference numbers are not listed in sequence.

A. What Other School Districts Are Doing

Closest Parallels to AISD's Situation

A15. *School Consolidation Study*
http://www.dublin.k12.ca.us/ddo/files/School_Consolidation_Study_ver_3.pdf

Dublin Unified School District (Oakland Area) is experiencing growth in part of its district, while seeing some declining enrollment in other parts of its district. The school board formed a district optimization committee consisting of various stakeholders to make recommendations on possible consolidation of elementary schools. The committee looked at existing and optimal enrollments, facility conditions, and equity concerns and unanimously voted to recommend consolidation of two schools. The committee is continuing to look at other possible facility decisions for the district.

A17. *Possible School Closures*
http://www.9news.com/news/education/article.aspx?storyid=62887

Denver Public Schools is experiencing growth in part of its district, while seeing some declining enrollment in other parts of its district. Looking at efficiencies and budgetary demands, the superintendent recently announced that he is considering closing some schools, but he pointed out that closures may create opportunities for enriched smaller classroom learning experiences. The announcement is causing concerns to be raised in the community, and the superintendent has assured that he wants the community to have a conversation about closing schools and what to do with struggling schools.

A18. *Educational Opportunity Proposal*
http://www.iowa-city.k12.ia.us/board/01-02/0219/boundary.htm

Iowa City Community School District is experiencing growth in part of its district, while seeing some declining enrollment in other parts of its district. The school board considered closing some underutilized schools, but after numerous, well-attended meetings, the board clearly heard from citizens a strong desire to maintain neighborhood schools and school communities. As a result, the Board is combining the construction of new schools with renovations and additions to existing neighborhood schools. The board will also rely on long-term boundary adjustments to minimize disruptions.

Closing Schools

A10. *Closing of Schools*
http://policy.cps.k12.il.us/documents/index_to_policies.pdf

Chicago Public Schools adopted a policy on the closing of schools. The policy distinguishes between closures based on academic and non-academic reasons, the latter including space utilization, physical condition, alternative use, and conversion to charter school. The policy also includes provisions for impact analyses and public input prior to any final decisions being made. If a school is closed for academic reasons, students will be reassigned to higher performing schools.

School Rightsizing

A1. *Delivering More Effective Education through School Rightsizing*
http://www.k12.dc.us/DCPS/rightsizing/rightsizehome.html

District of Columbia Public Schools, experiencing declining enrollment and underutilized schools, is undergoing a "rightsizing" initiative. Transition plans for consolidations and collocations focus on optimum school size for education and space utilization. Transition plans look at expanding and strengthening educational value, enhancing resources, providing a safe and healthy physical environment, and creating new school communities.

A11. *Rightsizing Plan*
http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/rightsizingplan.asp

Pittsburgh Pubic Schools has developed a "rightsizing" plan. After conducting an in-depth consultant study and extensive public input, the district approved the plan, which includes the closure, moving, or reconfiguration of several schools. The plan also states several criteria of rightsizing decisions, including moving students from closed schools to higher-performing schools.

School Repurposing/Reuse

A2. *Closing Schools/Repurposing Buildings*
http://www.moundsviewschools.org/news.asp?DocID=618

Mounds View Public Schools (St. Paul area) is facing declining enrollment, declining revenue, and available space. The district's current strategy includes developing facility review criteria and scenarios, analyzing the effects of closing/ repurposing, and gaining community input.

A3. *Facility Reuse Plan*
http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/Facility_Reuse_Plan_Information.html

Facing declining enrollment, **Minneapolis Public Schools** initiated a reuse planning process, resulting in the proposed reuse of several school facilities as identified by a facilities utilization planning team. The team developed several criteria for targeting specific facilities. The district also conducted a broad community engagement process based on "listening and learning."

School Consolidation

A4. *School Consolidation*
http://www.tacoma.k12.wa.us/consolidation/index.asp

Facing a continuing decline in enrollment, **Tacoma Public Schools** established a school consolidation advisory committee to examine current school conditions and to make consolidation recommendations. The district is currently considering the consolidation of certain schools.

A5. *School Consolidation*
http://www.seattleschools.org/area/06consolidation/index.dxml

Facing a continuing decline in enrollment, **Seattle Public Schools** established a community advisory committee on school facilities and programs guided by three principles: improving and sustaining academic effectiveness; equity; and minimizing disruption to students, families, and staff. The committee assed data on current conditions, developed facility review criteria, and gained public input in making consolidation/closure recommendations.

Neighborhoods and Schools

A6. *Neighborhood Vitality and Holland's Elementary Schools*
http://holland.portfoliocms.com/cihollandmius/assets/CNS_NISC9-19-03.pdf

After the **Holland Public Schools** decided to restructure or repurpose several elementary schools, the City of Holland, Michigan formed a neighborhood impact study committee that reviewed a considerable amount of related literature and made recommendations on strategies to deal with possible neighborhood impacts, including physical, desirability, social, and neighborhood priority impacts.

A7. *Neighborhood Schools Initiative*
http://www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/supt/temp/NeighborhoodSchoolsInitiative/NSI_Background.html

Milwaukee Public Schools has launched a Neighborhood Schools Initiative (INS), a state-funded effort to reduce over-crowding and create more neighborhood school choices for parents and children. The district conducted an extensive parent and community outreach program to gain input in developing a detailed neighborhood schools plan. Through new buildings, renovations, school relocations, and community partnerships, more capacity has been added so that students may go to schools closer to where they live.

A13. *Neighborhood Schools*
http://www.ci.richland.wa.us/RICHLAND/planning/docs/11/docs/CF_Section_3_Schools.pdf?CFID=2532721&CFTOKEN=62080152

The City of Richland, Washington works closely with the **Richland School District** to make investments in improving schools, as evidenced in the city's comprehensive land use plan. The city and school district recognize and support the importance of neighborhood schools, which are also neighborhood centers and provide a sense of community to the families they serve. Students who attend these schools acquire a

sense of belonging and stability, and their educational progress is enhanced. In support of neighborhood schools, the district has defined attendance zones based on following existing neighborhood and natural boundaries, maximizing safe walking and minimizing busing, increasing the ability to provide diversity and equity in education, and maximizing the potential for students within a neighborhood to progress together from elementary to middle and high school.

Multiple or Other Topics

A8. *School Closures, Mergers, and Relocations*
http://portal.sfusd.edu/template/default.cfm?page=home.Consolidations

After developing facility review criteria and gaining public input, **San Francisco Unified School District** recently announced that it would close, merge, or relocate several schools. The district is continuing to experience declining enrollment and financial demands.

A9. *School Restructuring*
http://www.rapidscc.com/artman/publish/index.shtml

Facing declining enrollment and financial challenges, **Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools** established a district restructuring task force to assess current conditions and to make recommendations on possible school reconfigurations and school closures. The task force conducted several "listening sessions" to gain public input, and developed a set of criteria for closing schools.

A12. *Realigning Schools*
http://www.detroit.k12.mi.us/admin/bs/bss/fm/realignment.htm

Detroit Public Schools, like many large urban districts, is experiencing declines in enrollment based on economic downturns. The district established a facilities realignment committee that looked at considerable data on current conditions and developed facility review criteria. The committee produced a preliminary facilities realignment plan, involving the closing, reconfiguration, repurposing, or relocation of several schools. Goals include keeping students close to home, managing transportation costs, increasing operational efficiency, and maximizing resources. The district is currently seeking extensive public input.

A14. *Adequate Educational Facilities*
http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/sbbcpolicies/docs/P5000.000.pdf

Broward County Public Schools has established policies on adequate school facilities that include providing positive alternative strategies to be implemented within a designated timeframe for under-enrolled schools to increase their enrollment, and providing for the elimination of school centers and for the repurposing or consolidation of schools whenever the needs of pupils can better and more economically be served. These polices also include standards for overcrowded schools, standards for closing schools, and guidelines for the use of closed schools.

A16. *School Closure, Consolidation, and Replacement*
http://web4j1.lane.edu/superintendent/closure/closureinfo.html

Eugene School District 4J, facing declining enrollment and inadequate funding, is looking at the closure or consolidation of several schools over the next ten years. The school board formed a broad-based stakeholder committee to look not at the option of closing or consolidating schools, but which schools to close or consolidate. The committee looked at factors such as transportation, community impact, enrollment projections, program and facility considerations, and fiscal impact and savings. The work of the committee was often emotional and difficult, but after many meetings and consideration of input from a number of parents and community members, recommendations were made impacting several schools.

B. Additional Resources

Schools and Community and Economic Development

B1. *Public Schools as Community and Economic Development Tools*
http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/communitydevelopment/W02-9_Chung.pdf

As an integral part of the community fabric, neighborhood schools can have a profound impact on the social, economic, and physical character of a neighborhood. Reinforcing the link between public schools and neighborhoods is not only good educational policy, but also good community development policy. Specific strategies include: coordinating the development of affordable housing and public schools; building capacity of public schools to support community functions, particularly in disinvested urban areas; and supporting economic development efforts through relationships with local businesses and improving transitions for school to college or work.

B8. *Schools as Catalysts for Community Development*
http://www.aia.org/cae_a_20050622_catalysts

“Smart Growth” schools significantly enhance quality of life and economic opportunity in America’s cities and promote environmental and social sustainability. Population trends show more and more people preferring to live in urban rather than suburban communities, with shorter commute times being a major factor. Areas with lively downtowns and neighborhoods attract growth and jobs. But many urban neighborhoods have lost their schools, removing an important source of neighborhood cohesiveness and pride. There is a definite need to bring more schools into urban neighborhoods and to keep the remaining ones. There is no public or private building type as important to a community as a school. School district and municipal planners need to work more in unison to ensure that schools are both educational infrastructure and community infrastructure.

B11. *Relationship between Schools and Neighborhood Revitalization*
http://www.abtassoc.com/reports/Schools_and_Neighborhoods.pdf

Simultaneous investment in mixed-income housing and school reform may have more potential to reverse declining urban neighborhoods than investment in either housing or schools alone. Creating an excellent public elementary school can be a powerful

marketing tool to attract families to a neighborhood or persuade those already living there to stay. Having a good school in the neighborhood is a source of neighborhood pride and can help to foster a culture of excellence that has spillover effects into other aspects of family and neighborhood health. Not having to bus or transport children long distances is also an important factor. In fostering a relationship between schools and neighborhood revitalization, consulting with the community is important, particularly in developing an integrated vision for the neighborhood and the school and in building diverse, strong partnerships. In creating an effective urban school, selecting the right principal and developing a structure for local control is essential. It is also important to carry over strong expectations for children to the home, and encourage parents to get involved in the school and neighborhood.

Neighborhoods and Schools

B2. *Small Neighborhood Schools: A Community Asset Worth Keeping*
http://www.lgc.org/freepub/land_use/cv_liv_places_news/2001fall/index.html

We are gradually losing our small, walkable, neighborhood schools. Policies today encourage or even require that schools be big because of economies of scale. Unfortunately, these larger schools are often more dangerous, have lower performance and parent participation rates, and contribute to urban sprawl. A particular model can be found in Bakersfield, California, where the school superintendent resisted building a large, new school on the growing edge of the city and established a new, smaller school in a declining area of downtown that was within walking distance of older neighborhoods. As a result, downtown businesses have adopted classrooms, parents are more involved, and student achievement levels outpace those of any other school in the city.

B3. *Don't Destroy Neighborhoods to Educate Them*
http://www.planetizen.com/node/39

It is becoming more difficult to build, or retain, schools that people love – small schools, schools that kids can walk to, schools that tie neighborhoods together, and well-designed schools that inspire community pride. Specific problems include: acreage standards applied to schools; policies restricting the amount of money school districts may invest in the renovation of older schools; and a sharp disconnect between local land use planning and school facility planning. A particular model can be found in Maine, where the state's planning and education offices have teamed up to encourage local planning agencies and school districts to work together.

B5. *Good Schools, Good Neighborhoods*
http://www.mrsc.org/ArtDocMisc/goodschoolsreport2.pdf

Not long ago, schools were found at the cornerstones of communities; today, many schools are located far from the neighborhoods they serve. Newer schools also tend to be larger, not like smaller, older schools that were built for a less auto-dependent age. The modernization of schools has come at a price – the loss of walkable, neighborhood-scale schools, in favor of larger, more remote campuses accessible primarily by school bus or chauffeuring parents. Forty years ago, half of all students walked or biked to

school; today, only one in ten students walk or bike to school. But a stronger connection between school planning and neighborhood planning is necessary to ensure walkable schools. Finding ways to save existing schools and integrating new schools into neighborhoods has payoffs for both students and the community.

B6. *Great Schools by Design*
http://www.archfoundation.org/aaf/documents/nssd.report.pdf

It is important to seek strategies to preserve neighborhood schools whenever possible. Neighborhood schools allow many students to walk to school; smaller schools reinforce student achievement; and strong neighborhood schools bolster property values. Preserving neighborhood schools provides the basis for nurturing the link between the school and the larger community. Successful schools often are ones with great support and involvement from the community and ones that serve as centers for a variety of community services as well. Decisions affecting schools should be made with the full input of the community. Public processes need to start early, allowing for community input long before final decisions are made, and involving all school and community stakeholders.

B9. *Schools Cycle Back into the Heart of the Neighborhood*
http://www.osba.org/hotopics/imprvmnt/neighborhoodschools/cineighborhood.pdf

The Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative is seeing signs of schools returning to the hearts of communities. Countering decades of urban sprawl and schools more and more distant from the populations they serve, some school boards and communities are pushing back. They're challenging "big box" designs for new schools and moving toward more sustainable facilities, and they're upgrading existing neighborhood schools and making them parts of walkable communities. A major component of success is building community support. School boards are encouraged to bring all stakeholders to the table, give planning committees adequate time, question "rules" that don't make sense, push for good design, and build, maintain, or rehabilitate community centered schools. Schools are great examples of interconnected systems to which the principles of sustainability can be applied with wide ranging benefits.

B10. *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School*
http://www.nationaltrust.org/issues/downloads/schools_why_johnny.pdf

Although this report focuses on the preservation and renovation of historic school buildings, it also speaks to the general implications of losing neighborhood schools. Smaller, neighborhood schools serve as the centers of communities and tend to provide anchorage to neighborhoods. They also provide a greater sense of independence for young people, allowing them options to walk or bike to school and to be more identifiable in a more cordial environment. Several factors tend to undermine the sustainability of neighborhood schools, including acreage standards, standards requiring facility replacement over renovation, and disconnects between community planning and school planning. However, more and more communities are speaking out to keep smaller, neighborhood schools vital.

Schools and Smart Growth

B4. *Education and Smart Growth*
http://www.fundersnetwork.org/usr_doc/education_paper.pdf

The trend toward building new schools on large sites far from centers of population – called "school sprawl" or "school giantism" – can have far reaching impacts on school children, school districts, and the larger community. Large schools reduce educational outcomes, particularly for at-risk youth. Schools that are more distant diminish student participation in extracurricular activities, walking to school, parental involvement, and taxpayer support. Many suggest that the growing physical disconnect between schools and community helps create a level of student anonymity and social alienation that sets the stage for tragic events like Columbine. Smart Growth advocates encourage the continued use of existing schools and the construction of new schools on infill sites within existing neighborhoods. This interest dovetails with education reform interested in smaller schools.

B7. *Smart Growth Schools*
http://www.nationaltrust.org/issues/downloads/schools_smartgrowth_facts.pdf

The trend toward abandoning smaller, neighborhood schools in favor of larger campuses farther away from the communities they serve has resulted in fewer children walking or biking to school, increased vehicular traffic, fewer schools serving as community centers, and fewer children feeling a sense of belonging in their schools. "Smart Growth" schools have several benefits, including: involving the community in school planning; making good use of existing resources; locating schools within neighborhoods and fitting them into the scale and design of the neighborhood; and acting as a neighborhood anchor. In addition, Smart Growth schools inspire community involvement, improve academic achievement, save money, improve student health, and improve environmental quality. One of the biggest barriers to Smart Growth Schools is the lack of cooperation and understanding between local planning and development authorities and school districts.

Closing Schools

B12. *Closing Public Schools: Criteria, Community Engagement, and Alternatives*
http://visc.sis.pitt.edu/aplus/slides/BESTPresentation.pdf

School closures may be triggered by economics, declining enrollment, and other demands for school land and/or buildings. Closing schools can create a number of concerns, including ability of other schools to receive displaced students, student transportation, and neighborhood impacts. Community criteria include relation to land use, transportation, and housing plans, safety, parental involvement and connection to schools, and potential for facility reuse. In terms of excess capacity, having too much space is not the same as having too many schools. Buildings may need to be down-sized, or space can be shared with non-school, paying tenants. Also, schools can have more than one campus (i.e., they can be multi-purposed). Decisions affecting schools must be made with community engagement, including comprehensive and current information, transparent processes, and sufficient time.

B13. *School Closures in Ontario: Who Has the Final Say?*
http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/pdf%20files/kwarteng.pdf

Since 1999, over 300 schools have been closed in Ontario, primarily based on the economics of keeping them open. The provincial government established new guidelines on school closure. Each school board, with the assistance of a public committee, must develop a valuation tool for considering school closure, including the school's value to students, the community, the school system, and the local economy. If a school is marked for closure, at least one year's notice must be given to the community. A task force with broad representation must gain community input. If a school board decides to close a school, its decision can be appealed through petition, triggering a review by an independent party. But these new guidelines do not diminish the fact that school boards still have considerable authority to make school closure decisions. Unfortunately, public participation is often used to create the impression that school closure decisions are community business; consequently, when community members feel their voices have been marginalized, they may construe school closure decisions to be unfair.

B14. *The Hardest Choice*
http://www.asbj.com/specialreports/1206SpecialReports/S1.html

Closing schools is one of the most difficult, but sometimes necessary, decisions a district can face. Schools hold more than learning opportunities; shutting one down can snuff out the vitality of a neighborhood. Yet scores of districts across the country are forging ahead into one of the least desirable territories of school management. This is often related to declining enrollment and falling revenues, but may also be related to decrepit building conditions and history of academic performance. Deciding that school closures are necessary is only half the battle; choosing which schools to close, determining the criteria, and involving all the right people are land mines that districts must navigate carefully. Sufficient time must be allowed to public discussion. The public must be convinced that closing a school is more than about saving money – the connection to improved academics must be proven.

Appendix F
Review of Community Engagement Best Practices

Community Engagement:

Promoting And Maintaining Public Participation

People are not there to be planned for; they are to be worked with…. There must be one golden rule- we all need to be involved together- planning and architecture are much too important to be left to the professionals.

(Charles, Prince of Wales, 1989)

Part One: *The Public Participation Process*

Active citizen participation leads to the development of true democratic processes, higher rates of resource acquisition and use, better results, higher levels of volunteerism, and a brighter community spirit. Because a high degree of public participation is vital to an empowered community, agencies should strive to:

- Provide the public with information so they can understand the process, issues, and values, and can participate effectively.
- Provide full opportunities for the public to share their views and to influence the outcome of the planning process.
- Build consensus and public support for the vision and goals of the plan and of the entity charged with developing and implementing the plan.
- Ensure that the planning effort addresses issues of importance to those affected by the plan.

In public participation activities, simply counting numbers of people attending meetings or visiting websites are inadequate methods of evaluating such efforts' success. The quality of the input received and the ways in which community opinions and concerns become incorporated into the plan are more important factors to consider. The five main points in the process where community voices can be heard, deliberations done, and/or power exerted include:

- Framing the issue (articulation, selection, analysis, prioritization)
- Establishing guidelines to address the problem (values, principles, design criteria, etc.)
- Creating, evaluating, and selecting options or solutions
- Implementing selected solutions
- Reviewing and evaluating results.

Although doing so is an important aspect of the democratic process, increasing public participation levels can pose many challenges to agencies. In developing a public participation program, they may quickly realize the following:

- **Establishing credibility is difficult.** Agencies lacking a track record in participatory planning sometimes have difficulty establishing a process and convincing the public of the sincerity of their efforts. Agencies that have previously made "token" efforts without using the input to improve the plan or project may find it doubly hard to engage the community. A reputation for an honest commitment to public involvement is only built over time.
- **Preparations to increase meeting attendance are time-consuming.** Personnel who are savvy about engaging the community in public involvement may be scarce. A trial-and-error period is sometimes needed to determine what works. Agency inaction, errors, and poor planning compound the difficulties of establishing credibility.
- **Groups not traditionally involved in meetings are often hard to reach.** Ethnic, minority, and low-income communities may need extra contact and encouragement to maintain involvement. People who have been put off by agency insensitivity to their cultural heritage may be reluctant to participate again.
- **A larger number of participants increase the challenge of building consensus.** Success in attracting more people places extra demands on staff because more information must be prepared and transmitted. A wider array of

opinion sometimes creates polarization or prolongs the process of narrowing down alternatives to reach consensus.

Planning for public participation

Advance planning for community involvement is essential to its success. Officials need to be committed to using a community involvement approach; recognize the principles underlying the involvement process; and understand the processes and consequences of this approach.

Good organization, with room for openness and flexibility as needed, is an especially crucial trait in community engagement processes, as it establishes a systematic, planned approach to working with people. Organization, coupled with a strong vision statement, helps an agency to access the kinds of information it needs at the time when it is needed. It assures people that their time is not being wasted and that the agency has a strong handle on what it intends to accomplish.

Determining how the public will be involved in the planning process is also important as this decision affects techniques, formats, and scheduling of specific public participation activities. The following questions can help an agency to determine an appropriate role for public involvement:

1. What does the agency want from the public?
2. What will the agency give to the public?
3. What level of public involvement does the agency want and need?
    - What role should the public play?
    - How much is "too much" public involvement?
4. When is public involvement appropriate and most effective?
    - What kind of involvement at what times?
    - Are there any conflicts in scheduling meetings, release of reports, events?

Identifying the public

When considering public participation activities, it is important to remember that "the public" is not a single group or organization whose members share common interests and concerns or speak with one voice but rather is comprised of diverse groups with varying, often competing, interests and responsibilities. To identify a range of viewpoints and issues, it is necessary to reach out to a wide array of groups. Since it is usually impractical to involve everyone in the planning effort, the most relevant participants can be determined by asking what the consequences would be if any group or individual were to be **excluded** from the process.

Potential participants can generally be found through:

- Self-identification – they have made contact by telephone, letter, prior involvement, complaints, petitions, etc.
- Lists of special interest groups.
- Suggestions from well-informed persons, organization officers, etc.

Asking the following can also help in identifying the public:

- What groups, organizations, agencies have an interest, or are already involved, in the issue?
- Who has a vested interest, a stake in the outcome of the planning process?
- Who are the opinion leaders, the power elite?
- Who would be affected by the outcome of the planning process?
- What elected officials have an interest or could make a difference?

Organizations and individuals who are especially important to include are those that are key sources of information and feedback, representatives of various interest groups, and opinion leaders or power brokers. Opinion leaders, who play a key role in shaping public reaction to programs and proposals, can be identified by a combination of three approaches:

- Listing individuals who hold formal leadership positions in various private and public organizations.
- Listing individuals who have been active and have taken advocacy positions on important planning issues.
- Interviewing people on the first two lists about individuals whose opinions carry weight if a decision had to be made on an issue of the type being studied; then listing those mentioned by at least three of the interviewees.

In successful public engagement processes, the people who are involved, whether from agencies or community groups, are those who want to be involved; have knowledge of the issues; have skills or a commitment to developing skills to play their role; show commitment to taking part in discussions, decisions, and actions; attend consistently; have legitimacy in the eyes of those they represent; have the authority of those they represent to make decisions and take actions; and maintain a continuing dialogue with those that they represent.

Organizing effective public engagement activities

When planning for public involvement activities, an agency needs to clearly determine the activity's purpose, the needs it will fill, its relation to the larger project, and how the results will be used. The type of activity, as well as its style, is based on this strategic assessment. Agencies first decide whether the activity will emphasize information or interaction and then explore the menu of options within these approaches. They need to estimate the number of participants and consider breakout groups if a larger audience is expected.

Successful activities have clear agendas, including the purpose, discussion topics, types of activities, names of speakers and overall schedule. Agencies need to select times and locations that optimize people's ability to participate. Participants can be consulted beforehand as to preferable times, dates, and locations. Providing sufficient notice well in advance of the activity helps people to set aside time in their schedules for preparation and attendance. Thoughtfully prepared and coordinated materials should be used to convey the appropriate level and kind of information. Presentation materials are particularly important. Good visuals convey principal points, aid audience understanding, and encourage people to ask questions.

Getting the public involved

Whether the public actually becomes involved in a planning effort depends on at least three factors:

- The degree to which individuals and organization leaders are aware of the issues being decided by the planning process and whether they perceive their interests to be affected by the types of decisions being made.
- The extent to which people believe they can influence the development of the plan on their own behalf.
- A balancing of the time and energy costs of participation against potential benefits resulting from involvement.

Residents may also choose to get involved in order to obtain training and personal development because of their participation; receive publicity and public recognition; build friendships and networks; and access local resources.

Widely announcing opportunities for participation helps to ensure that the maximum number of agencies, groups, organizations, and individuals learn how, when, and where they can get involved. The goal should not be merely to publicize that a public meeting is scheduled to occur or a report is available for review but to encourage participation. Increasing attendance is desirable because:

- It helps to ensure a broader range of input, which enables staff to identify additional issues and see new perspectives. The more inclusive the process, the greater its credibility and the more likely it is to produce usable input.
- Widespread participation enhances public awareness about plans or projects. People who get involved in a meaningful exchange of ideas about an issue are likely to spread the word to friends and neighbors.
- Broad participation from the beginning of a process aids consensus building at its end. When people are instrumental in shaping the vision for a project or plan and have been involved in working through issues and alternatives, they are more likely to be supportive of the final results.
- All community segments benefit from increased attendance because their interest and viewpoints have a greater probability of being voiced.

Developing a public participation strategy

Public participation strategies should be tailored to the needs of each planning effort. No single technique or format is appropriate to all situations throughout the plan development, implementation, and revision process or for all types of planning efforts. Using a variety of strategies and techniques helps to provide the most opportunities for the public to learn about an issue, share their views, and help shape the outcome. Strategies that have proven effective in smoothing work with communities include:

- Understanding the community's needs
- Assessing what the community can contribute
- Appreciating the community
- Establishing a line of authority
- Developing a communications network
- Making realistic promises

A public participation strategy needs to have clear objectives for community participation and specify the process for selecting community representatives. Creating multiple opportunities for the public to actively contribute to the planning effort and to shape the outcome ensures that the plan addresses diverse needs. The unique roles, responsibilities, rights and privileges of participating members must be well defined, explained and understood. The use of professional facilitators can help in creating a fair and neutral atmosphere. With complex or controversial issues, using facilitators can help attract people who doubt they will otherwise be heard.

All ideas that are presented must be treated with respect and welcomed as a source of inspiration with potential value for the entire community. If people believe that their ideas are really being heard, defensiveness, assertiveness and withdrawal are all minimized. They are better able to ease up on their certainties and boundaries and to open up to people and ideas around them. The more diversity (of people, perspectives, information, etc.) an agency engages with and fully hears, the wiser its results will be, the more people will view its process as fair and legitimate, and the more cooperation it will get. The sooner and longer people are engaged and honored in the process, the greater the sense of ownership they will have in the outcomes.

Confining public involvement to a review of decisions already made rarely encourages the public to support such decisions. Additionally, limiting public participation solely to the

activities of a "planning advisory committee" or a "planning task force" may not be an adequate level of public participation. Such an "elite" group may be viewed as exclusionary, and may not express the diversity of public opinion and concern across the planning area. Community leaders or elected officials can suggest what works best in their communities. Having a community leader conduct a meeting or introduce agency staff may improve the public's perception of the agency's credibility.

Strategies for successful public participation include:

- A positive and responsive agency attitude, reflected in the level of care, attention, clarity, sincerity, and honesty its staff displays in contacts with the public, is essential. Outreach efforts before, during and after meetings are opportunities to assert a positive attitude and improve rapport with the public.
- It is important to stress that an agency involves people because their input is valued and useful. The public quickly detects when an agency is engaging in public involvement simply because it is required to do so- and will stay away.
- Equally important is an agency's record on translating community input into real decisions. People will not attend activities if they do not believe their views will be heard.
- Involving the community in planning an activity enhances its chances for success. Agencies can ask community groups about what issues to raise and what dates and places are likely to draw people to participate. This consultation also helps determine an appropriate format, depending on the community's traditions or preferences. This is particularly crucial when the community involves minorities and ethnic groups whose cultural attitudes strongly influence how they see and participate in a public process.
- Offering a variety of formats increases the chances of attracting participants and demonstrates an agency's intent to make it easy for the community to take part.

A broad range of additional strategies and approaches exist to attract greater participation and make the public involvement process more meaningful and productive. They include:

- Following up an activity notice by mail, phone, or FAX to make sure it has been received and to stress the importance of attendance and input.
- Focusing each activity around a special issue. If community members clearly see how the specific issue affects their lives, they more readily attend.
- Doing the legwork. Know your constituents and work the phones before activities.
- Using other groups' publications to announce activities. Sharing resources helps agencies reach a variety of potential participants cost-effectively.
- Stirring interest through name recognition tactics. The more people see an attractive logo, identifiable symbol, or slogan the more likely they are to be curious about what's behind it.
- Establishing information networks. Word of mouth is a powerful tool.
- Offering low-cost perks, ranging from food and transportation to day care and entertainment for children.
- Offering alternative modes of participating for individuals constrained by time or distance. Technology increases opportunities for participating via teleconference or computer.
- Sparking interest by featuring well-known experts or political candidates. If well publicized, the presence of prominent people enhances attendance.
- Featuring agency board or staff members as guest speakers. The active interest of high-level staff demonstrates the value an agency places on public input and shows residents that staffers are not "filtering" their comments.

- Evaluating outreach efforts after an activity. Determining what worked helps the effectiveness of future activities. When participants see that an agency has improved its process, it renews their enthusiasm.
- Maintaining interest through follow-up, which includes thank-you letters, reports, phone calls, surveys, and distribution of new information. Invited participants should be sent a thank-you note. Thanking participants for their contributions lets them know that their opinions were heard and considered. When people feel appreciated, they are more inclined to continue with the process. Written responses can also be used to address unanswered questions or unresolved issues.
- Targeting key individuals for special invitation to the next activity. Participants who are active in the community should be encouraged to attend and bring neighbors. This generates good will by showing respect for their role in the community and also has a rippling effect within their sphere of influence.
- Courting press coverage and establishing good media relations. Radio coverage can be a cost-effective way to reach broad segments of the public.

Attracting people who do not usually participate

Public involvement programs should aim to include the largest possible segment of the population however; traditional methods such as meetings and hearings often interest only a small group of people. Capturing the attention of a larger, more representative group requires careful planning and substantial effort. Maintaining that attention level is even more challenging. Gradually declining attendance or static membership among participants signals an agency to enhance its public involvement program. A dearth of questions from participants or expressions of concern that progress is not being made are additional warning signs.

Recognizing Barriers to Participation

A first step in improving attendance at activities is to understand why people do not participate. Some reasons for a lack of participation are:

- The public is unaware that a meeting is taking place;
- They receive inadequate notice;
- They have other commitments;
- They have a negative perception of the sponsoring agency/
- Public comments are not taken seriously;
- Decisions have already been made behind closed doors;
- Meetings are too time-consuming or boring; and/or
- Meeting sites are too far away, inconvenient, or inaccessible.

Underneath these real and valid reasons may be a deep-seated cynicism: that people do not believe their input makes a difference. An agency's fundamental weapon in countering such cynicism is to make public input count in decision-making and to let people know that expressing their opinions has a real tangible effect. Good attendance is closely linked to an agency's responsiveness and receptivity, commitment to the process of public involvement, careful advance planning, and good communication strategies.

Agencies may find it challenging to get active involvement from groups that do not typically become involved in public policy development and decision-making. These groups, which may include recent immigrants and people from traditional cultures that rely on different processes of group decision-making, may need to be the focus of special attention in order to ensure that their views are incorporated into the planning process. Other barriers to successful public involvement initiatives can include:

- **Parent/resident availability**. Individuals may have little time to participate in planning initiatives if they are juggling responsibilities for work, family and/or school. A lack of transportation and/or childcare may prevent participation.
- **Professional social service culture.** Terminology, including unfamiliar acronyms and meeting procedures, can inhibit participation.
- **Power and authority.** When individuals come together from different backgrounds, representing different communities and organizations, unspoken power dynamics may emerge.
- **Language and culture.** Engaging residents in decision-making when their primary language is not spoken can limit their willingness to participate. Cultural norms may also dictate the degree to which individuals feel comfortable expressing their views in public meetings.
- **Trust and mutual respect.** Building trust among people who have not traditionally worked together takes time. People's willingness to continue to participate can be influenced by the level of perceived trust and respect they feel others have for their input.
- **Leadership.** Initiators of the planning effort may have difficulty honoring and supporting the leadership competencies of residents.

Building a participatory network

In the face of disengagement, a network-building strategy valuing change, flexibility, choice and relationships may be more helpful than a traditional institution-building strategy that engages fewer people in a more narrow set of roles and a more rigid organizational structure. Some elements of effective network organizing include:

- **Creating choice**. Create an environment that recognizes the demands on people's lives by offering multiple opportunities for differing levels of involvement. Participants should be able to opt out for a period of time and still feel welcome to return to the group.
- **Providing many entry points**. These multiple entry points need to be accessible and interesting to a wide range of people. Forging linkages across groups builds networks by opening up new opportunities for people and providing safer ways for them to step out of their comfort zone.
- **Developing "Weavers**." Networks need agents who actively engage and connect people to the network. The Weaver's job is to be intentionally curious about people, their interests and connections and connect them to the organization.
- **Creating provisional positions.** Programs and committees should be viewed as provisional- useful only in getting an agency to where it needs to go. Creating an environment where no one becomes too comfortable in positions of power is an important precondition to creating accessible and accountable groups. New people should be able to enter at any point and be engaged in shared activity.
- **Encouraging resonance**. Resonant ideas attract the enthusiasm of people from many disparate parts of the network. Responding to this resonance is central to developing programs with broad-based support.
- **Broadcasting information**. The ability to broadcast information quickly to the right places determines a network's effectiveness. Developing a "Communication Compact," an internal document that the board and staff use to support honesty and ownership in verbal communication, can allow "word of mouth" transmission to be an effective method of moving accurate information through the network.
- **Having multiple hubs and nodes**. A well-functioning network has multiple hubs and nodes- institutions and forums that connect people to each other and that can also take on distinct projects that further network goals.

Maintaining public involvement

Much like the planning process itself, public participation levels are dependant on many factors, including the amount and allocation of time, human resources, and budget. Although sustained participation may be a goal, agencies need to understand that community involvement levels are frequently not uniform throughout all phases of a project's life cycle. Higher involvement is most often seen in the planning stage and sometimes in the delivery and evaluation stages. This fluctuation in participation can result from many factors, including lack of time, resources, motivation, and know-how.

Providing adequate resources to stimulate and sustain effective community involvement is important. Individuals playing representative roles on more formal bodies require very focused support to maximize their effectiveness, including help in understanding policy jargon, discussion of agenda items prior to formal meetings, and the development of strategies for intervention at meetings. Community representatives can take a long time to find their feet and feel able to perform effectively, which sometimes coincides with a growing sense of disillusionment with the pace and scope of change in the locality.

Involving people, organizations, and agencies in community activities is often handled in a piecemeal fashion that lacks continuity. This approach, which frequently demoralizes the public if positive results are not seen quickly, often results in lowered aspirations and an overwhelming focus on problems instead of building on successes. While it is usually not possible for the same people or agencies to participate in every aspect of community life, some level of community involvement should be seen in all stages of a project's life cycle.

The resources for community involvement need to be sustained over time. Sometimes, too much emphasis in policy and practice is devoted to encouraging community involvement in the early stages of an initiative and not enough to ensuring its sustainability, which may leave the frequently small pool of committed individuals prone to feeling exploited or burned out.

Measures to help keep people involved in local activities

- Residents have to be convinced that getting involved is worthwhile and that doing so will improve their quality of life.
- Agencies need to recognize that the community building process is time consuming but essential. Community based solutions need considerable investment as consultation, preparation and training all take time.
- The key to success is to move at a pace matching residents' understanding and ability to participate. Good communication, that provides maximum rather than minimum information, is essential.

Developing measures for assessing the success of public participation and for ensuring that public views are incorporated into the preservation plan allows planners to keep track of how well the public participation program is working and serving the needs of both the planners and the public.

Techniques to Attract Participants or Jump-start Lackluster Programs

The US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration has found available techniques to attract new and existing participants or jump-start a lackluster public participation program. These techniques, which are best used occasionally rather than regularly, may not guarantee continued interest, but they do hold promise for more interesting and varied participation and feedback. They include (1) holding special events, (2) changing a meeting approach, and (3) finding new ways to communicate.

Holding Special Events

People enjoy special events, as these unique occasions are intended to be fun for participants. They give community people opportunities to meet others in a friendly, non-threatening setting and share their ideas. People like the freedom and openness of pleasurable events that do not demand immediate action or response. Special events reach new participants and help current participants recruit neighbors to the process and demonstrate why it can be fun.

Changing a Meeting Approach

People are often "too busy" to attend meetings even when agencies have made heroic efforts to get people involved. Yet meetings remain a basic, low-cost way for agencies to involve people in planning decisions. Modest shake-ups can inject new life into dying public involvement programs. For instance, a change in meeting place often changes people's perspectives as well—and may attract new participants because the new setting is more convenient or interesting. Changing the dynamics of the way people interact at meetings allows different viewpoints to emerge. Alternating group leadership or assuming different roles also helps spark new enthusiasm and fresh thinking. Novelty, however, becomes routine if repeated, and change for the sake of change is seldom effective. Diverse meeting approaches should be purposeful elements of an overall plan or a response to identified problems.

Some other options for changing a meeting approach and getting more people involved in meaningful ways include (1) role-playing, (2) site visits, and (3) non-traditional meeting places and events.

- **Role-playing**, which is more effective with informed participants who already have some knowledge of the issues and positions of the various parties, allows people to take risk-free positions by acting out characters in hypothetical situations. Its helps participants understand the range of concerns, values, and positions held by other people by having them step into a role that opposes their own goals, values, and beliefs and encourages *active* participation in confronting a situation. Since statements made while playing a character are not binding on any participant, role-playing facilitates involvement by engaging participants in a non-threatening process. A role-playing session should be followed by an evaluation of the interaction.

  Effective role-playing, which requires a trained facilitator, is helpful when interaction among participants is needed to break down barriers or reduce conflict or tension. It jumpstarts a lifeless group or helps people get to know each other at meetings. Role-playing exercises are particularly useful when groups have clearly defined positions that draw battle lines and limit communication. They can assist in negotiation and coalition building, where participants can test potential consensus points. Role-playing can also be used to train staff in facilitation skills and responding to questions and comments.

- **Site visits** are trips taken by community residents, officials, agencies and consultants to proposed or actual project areas or affected properties. They are useful in that they show the physical environment of a proposal; give participants a common frame of reference by allowing them to see conditions at the same time and under the same circumstances; help people understand each other's point-of-view by letting them understand how agency plans translate into reality; allow agency staff to hear the perspectives of others; improve media coverage and accuracy of reporting; help

dispel the notion that agencies do not understand the area or people they will affect; and may get people to participate who normally would not get involved.

- **Non-traditional meeting places and events** are locations that are not the usual meeting hall or public building where many participation events are traditionally held. To reach people who typically don't participate, an agency may need to go where they congregate and feel comfortable- in other words, to their own turf. Also, by going to where people congregate in large numbers, an agency takes advantage of a pre-existing audience. Options for such meeting places include shopping centers, drop-in centers, fairs and block parties, and sporting events. Many of these non-traditional meeting places are within the local community and enable an agency to achieve a wider range of public contact. By choosing non-traditional locations and events, an agency shows its sincere interest in involving community people and tailoring participation opportunities to their needs.

Finding new ways to communicate

Increased communication – especially interactive communication – is a major goal of public involvement. Face-to-face meetings offer a traditional method of contact, but changing technologies allow other options for people to get information and provide input, comment, or support. People can participate in meetings via phone, modem or fax without leaving their homes, saving in travel time, cost, and childcare concerns. Interactive technology does not replace traditional direct contact techniques rather; it should be integrated with them in an overall public involvement program. A majority of people will still prefer to talk on the phone to a live voice or present their views in their own handwriting or face-to-face. Some minority, ethnic, low-income or poorly educated individuals may feel particularly uncomfortable with newer technology.

A couple of techniques for improving communication in public involvement include:

- **Interactive television**, as seen in electronic town meetings, is a technique enabling viewers to respond to broadcasts by telephone. This may engage "couch potatoes" who would not otherwise participate in civic affairs. Electronic town meetings are useful in increasing awareness about a project or program and in developing consensus across a broad range of participants. They provide large segments of the population with direct, timely access to key decision-makers. This is most effective at important junctures when focused, relevant public input is needed.

  Interactive TV is also useful for conducting informal surveys. Viewer comments can help agencies gauge levels of community interest and concern about issues. Viewer feedback can help agencies to identify community perceptions about critical issues, preferred alternatives, and ways to improve plans and make decisions. Some drawbacks to using this technique are that (1) imbalance is magnified by live TV- that only one or a few interests will participate and that the dialogue will not accurately reflect the full array or relative strength of community opinions; (2) broadcast adds community pressure for quick decisions; and (3) input from interactive TV, like that from informal surveys, is not statistically representative.

- **Interactive displays and kiosks,** which should be designed to be accessible to people at a variety of education or computer-literacy levels, offer menus for interaction between a person and a computer. Information is provided through a presentation that invites viewers to ask questions or direct the information flow. Interactive programs are useful because, if sited in places where large numbers of people gather, they can reach people who do not normally attend meetings. The

displays are used to collect comments and public input and are useful for disseminating detailed information, generating interest in planning issues, and expanding mailing list databases.

Part Two*: *Resources

Toolkits for Community Organizers

Planning for Community Involvement: *Guidebook for Citizens and Local Planners.*
http://www.dca.state.ga.us/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/downloads/guidebooks/PlanningCommunityInvolvement.pdf

This guidebook covers numerous community involvement topics including how to determine who to involve, how much involvement is needed, and how to make meetings successful and effective. It provides a toolbox of techniques necessary to create a community participation plan. The appendices provide samples of forms, checklists, agendas, letters and a community participation plan.

The Community Tool Box (CTB)
http://ctb.ku.edu/

CTB resources are organized by type of information desired, including:

- ***Learn a Skill-*** contains links to 46 chapters and over 250 sections that provide training in specific skills of community work.
- ***Plan the Work-*** toolkits provide outlines for tasks, examples, and links information for 16 core competencies in community engagement.
- ***Solve a Problem-*** "trouble-shooting guides" list common dilemmas faced in this work, questions for analysis and links to supports for solving them.
- ***Explore Best Processes and Practices-*** evidence, examples and links to tools that make the case for a set of key mechanisms to advance the work.
- ***Connect with Others-*** learn with others in on-line forums, ask questions of an advisor and find links to other on-line resources.

Links within this site that may prove especially useful include:
Increasing Participation and Membership
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/tk/en/tools_tk_8.jsp
Promoting Interest in Community Issues
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/chapter_1005.htm
Encouraging Involvement in Community Work
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/chapter_1006.htm

Annotated Bibliography

National Standards for Community Engagement
http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/lccs_008411.pdf

This report's Standards are intended to help develop and support better working relationships between communities and public agencies. They are measurable performance statements, with accompanying indicators, which can be used by everyone involved in community engagement to improve the quality and process of the process. They set out key principles, behaviors, and practical measures that underpin effective engagement,

which can be of real benefit to building community planning partnerships that achieve real and sustained results.

Principles of Public Participation
http://www.co-intelligence.org/CIPol_publicparticipation.html

This site presents guidelines for core values and principles of good practice in public participation from the International Association for Public Participation, the Community Development Society, and the Co-intelligence Institute. The guidelines provide criteria for evaluating or improving the status of public participation in any community.

Public Participation in Historic Preservation Planning.
http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/pad/PlanCompan/PublicPartic/

The National Park Service, which incorporates public participation into historic preservation planning, explains public participation goals; discusses methods to identify "the public" that must be included in a participatory process; provides questions that agencies can use to determine the appropriate role for the public in the planning process; explains factors affecting public involvement; provides strategies to elicit and maintain public participation; and explains techniques to aid in dealing with hostile audiences.

How to Sustain Community Involvement.
http://www.renewal.net/Documents/RNET/Toolkit/Howsustaincommunity.doc
This document offers guidelines for sustaining community involvement at the macro project management level, with links to case studies, and at the micro level, by describing activities that encourage people to get involved and support growth and development. Strategies to maintain community involvement include convincing residents that involvement is worthwhile and improves quality of life; understanding that considerable investment is necessary with this approach as consultation, preparation and training take time; moving at a pace that matches residents' understanding and ability to participate; and recognizing that good communication is essential and residents need maximum rather than minimum information.

Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-making
Chapter 1: Informing People Through Organization and Outreach
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/bridge1.htm
Chapter 2: Involving People Face-to-Face Through Meetings
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/bridge2c.htm
Chapter 4: Using Special Techniques to Enhance Participation
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/bridge4.htm

Chapter 1- In initiating public involvement, agencies begin with clearly defined, project-related goals focused on specific issues, specific kinds of needed input, and the specific "public" that needs to be involved. Staff needs ways to contact people, provide information, hear their views, respond to comments, and incorporate concerns into plans and decisions. As organization and outreach are project-specific, this chapter provides a guide to several ways to structure an approach.

Chapter 2-This focuses on steps agencies can take to involve people in face-to-face meetings including meeting with community groups to discuss and set up meeting schedules; considering the scope and substance of meetings; selecting organizing principles for the meeting; placing the meeting in the context of the whole plan (including decision-making); and evaluating the approach with participant advisors.

Chapter 4- Public involvement programs aim to involve the largest possible segment of the population however; traditional methods such as meetings and hearings frequently interest only a small group of people. Capturing the attention of a larger, more representative group requires careful planning and substantial effort while maintaining that attention level is even more of a challenge. This chapter helps agencies decide on and employ techniques to increase or maintain participation.

Chapter 5 Public Participation Activities: How to do them
http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/permit/pubpart/chp_5.pdf

Written for the EPA, this is a "how-to" for a broad range of activities that agencies, public interest groups, and facility owners can use to promote public participation. Public participation is a dialogue, which involves both getting information out to other stakeholders and receiving feedback in the form of ideas, issues and concerns. The chapter has been divided to reflect this dual role of public participation. The first group of activities involves techniques to disseminate information while the second involves techniques useful for gathering and exchanging information. Stakeholders are encouraged to combine techniques so as to encourage two-way communication.

What Works in Community Involvement in Area-based initiatives? A systematic review of the literature.
http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr5304.pdf
This reviews the effectiveness of community involvement in Area Based Initiatives (publicly funded activities to improve quality of life by targeting areas of social or economic disadvantage). Among the findings is the understanding that effective policy is developed with community input; clearly articulates the community's role; incorporates a wide spectrum of community views; shows evidence of advance planning; and possesses flexibility. Involved officials need to be committed to utilizing a community involvement approach and understand how the process works. Adequate resources to stimulate and sustain effective community involvement over the entire course of the process are needed.

Community Involvement: a win-win approach to school facility planning.
http://asbointl.org/ASBO/files/CCPAGECONTENT/DOCFILENAME/0000006314/April04_SBA_Community_Involvement.pdf

This approach, based on principles of recognition, respect and trust intends for both district and community to come out as winners. The district should establish a policy outlining the rationale and procedures for its planning approach and develop a clear plan to include community involvement in the various planning phases. The approach includes four main elements: information, feedback, involvement, and mobilization. The extent to which each is applied depends on a district's unique needs. Effective strategies include: understanding the community's needs; assessing what the community can contribute; appreciating the community; establishing a line of authority; developing a communications network; and making realistic promises. An evaluation component is essential to accurately assess the success of the outcome.

Community Participation: How people power brings sustainable benefits to communities.
http://www.ezec.gov/Pubs/commparticrept.pdf

Communities can increase citizen participation by welcoming it, creating valuable roles for people to play, actively seeking inclusive participation, and creating and supporting meaningful volunteer opportunities. Of all the empowerment principles, active citizen

participation is perhaps the most important. Not only does it lead to developing true democratic processes, but it also leads to higher rates of resource acquisition and use, better results, higher levels of volunteerism, and a brighter community spirit. In short, participation is the soul of an empowered community.

Building Community Support for School Readiness: A Prop 10 Opportunity
http://www.chipolicy.org/pdf/venturafinal.pdf

Along with providing characteristics of community decision-making, this article explains challenges to effective neighborhood level decision-making, including parent/resident availability, existence of a professional social service culture, power dynamics, language and culture, trust and mutual respect, leadership, the "process versus product" challenge, and sustained and meaningful community ownership.

Network Organizing: A Strategy for Building Community Engagement.
http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/140/LCW.html
As the community may view public life as a hostile environment, the National Housing Institute uses a "network organizing" strategy to connect people to each other and also to opportunities allowing them to enter public life in safe, fun and productive ways. It values a strategy incorporating change, flexibility, choice and relationships over an institution-building strategy that engages fewer people in a narrow set of leadership roles and rigid organizational structure. Elements of network organizing include creating choices; providing multiple points of entry; developing agents to engage and connect people; using provisional committees so no one gets too comfortable in power positions; developing programs with a broad base of support; broadcasting information quickly and to the right places; and creating multiple hubs and nodes.

Outcomes of Public Participation
http://www.co-intelligence.org/DD-PubParticipOutcomes.html

This site provides a list of desired public participation outcomes. The means should be selected to serve the desired ends. As we become more conscious and intentional about the outcomes of public participation programs, we can choose the processes and approaches that best serve those ends. By first considering outcomes, it is more likely that multiple process programs will be recognized as necessary to satisfy the range of possibilities.

Building Partnerships: Community Voices in Planning and Developing New York City School Facilities.
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/iesp/publications/pubs/FullFinalReportwithCaseStudies.pdf

In spring 2003, the Rockefeller Foundation initiated a study of community engagement in school facilities issues in New York City in order to understand how parents, students, local residents and community organizations were involved in the planning and development of school facilities and to identify ways that participation might be expanded. It looked at current practices and made recommendations for actions the City Council and the Department of Education could take to improve participation in the system's facilities planning process.

Designing for Community Intelligence: Embracing and transcending the usual logic of public participation
http://www.co-intelligence.org/DD-CommunityIntelligence.html

The widely used "spectrum" or "ladder" of public participation is illustrated here and the existence of a further stage, called "community intelligence," is explained. The community intelligence approach focuses on society itself and seeks to improve the capacity of the whole social organism. While including many functions addressed in public participation and empowerment, it is not the isolated functions themselves that make the focus on community intelligence unique, but the recognition that these functions need to be addressed together and in service to this larger community. Some basic principles, assumptions and considerations for designing community intelligence systems and programs are provided. Strengths and weaknesses of various participatory groups are outlined.

Appendix G
FAQs

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Who formed the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools (CCNS)?

A1. The Austin Independent School District (AISD) Board of Trustees formed the CCNS on December 4, 2006. The Joint Subcommittees of the AISD Board of Trustees, Austin City Council, and Travis County Commissioners Court endorsed the formation of the CCNS on December 8, 2006.

Q2. Why was the CCNS formed?

A2. The CCNS was formed to underscore the importance of relationships between schools, neighborhoods, and community, and to ensure effective and fair solutions to utilization of school facilities through thorough assessment and active involvement of all stakeholders.

Q3. What are the responsibilities of the CCNS?

A3. The CCNS is charged with developing recommendations to the AISD Board of Trustees on standard policy and processes for identification and review of underutilized and overcrowded schools, and for ensuring ongoing stakeholder engagement and participation. The complete Charter for the CCNS may be found on the CCNS website at:

http://www.austinisd.org/inside/initiatives/ccns/

Q4. Who serves on the CCNS?

A4. The CCNS consists of a diverse membership appointed by the AISD Board of Trustees, including representatives of neighborhood and community groups, business, District Advisory Council, Austin Council of PTAs, University of Texas, City of Austin, and Travis County. The complete membership of the CCNS may be found on the CCNS website at:

http://www.austinisd.org/inside/initiatives/ccns/

Q5. When and where does the CCNS meet?

A5. The CCNS normally meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month in Conference Room 230, Building A, of the AISD Carruth Administration Center, located at 1111 W. 6th Street. The meeting schedule for the CCNS may be found on the CCNS website at:

http://www.austinisd.org/inside/initiatives/ccns/

Q6. Are CCNS meetings open to the public?

A6. Yes, all CCNS meetings are open to the public. Visitor protocols and guidelines for citizens communications may found on the CCNS website at:

http://www.austinisd.org/inside/initiatives/ccns/

Q7. Are summaries of CCNS meetings available to the public?

A7. Yes, summaries of all CCNS meetings, along with many of the materials distributed at meetings, are posted on the CCNS website at:

http://www.austinisd.org/inside/initiatives/ccns/

Q8. How will the CCNS be gathering stakeholder input?

A8. In addition to accepting citizens communications at its meetings, the CCNS will utilize an array of means to gather stakeholder input, including but not limited to: surveys; individual interviews; online, telephone, and written comments; open houses; public meetings; and focus group discussions.

Q9. How will the CCNS use the stakeholder input it gathers?

A9. The CCNS will carefully consider the various sources of stakeholder input it gathers, along with the results of considerable data analysis and research, to develop its recommendations to the AISD Board of Trustees.

Q10. To what extent does the CCNS distribute information?

A9. In addition to the information available on the CCNS website, the CCNS maintains a special database of “key communicators” consisting of contacts for a number of community groups and organizations which is used for email distribution of information and announcements. Messages to campus principals are also used to help distribute information to Campus Advisory Councils, campus staff, students, and parents. For special events, media advisories are released and ads are placed in local newspapers. Also, individuals who provide their email or home addresses when signing in at meetings are placed on a distribution list to receive information and announcements.

Q11. When is the CCNS expected to complete its work?

A11. The CCNS is expected to complete its work by the end of February 2008, at which time complete recommendations will be presented to the AISD Board of Trustees for consideration and further public discussion.

Appendix H
Guiding Questions

The following questions are numbered for reference and are not presented in any particular order of importance:

1. What processes should the district use to identify and consider alternatives for underutilized and overcrowded schools?

2. What processes should the district use to inform and engage stakeholders about important school issues and concerns (e.g., when a campus fails to meet state or federal accountability standards, or when a campus continues to be significantly underutilized)?

3. Who are the stakeholders in important school issues and concerns? Who are our community partners?

4. What can the district and the community do together to ensure ongoing stakeholder participation?

5. What are some factors, values, or best practices that should be considered in the committee's deliberations on policy and process (e.g., in the areas of school facility utilization, stakeholder participation, neighborhood vitality)?

Appendix I
Summaries of Focus Group Discussions and Interviews

The members of the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools conducted a series of focus group discussions, individual interviews, and email communications with stakeholders in the Austin community. The following pages include the summaries of these outreach efforts in the following order:

Anonymous Downtown Resident	Email	
Jeff Jack, architect & neighborhood representative	Email	
District Advisory Council	Focus Group	August 21, 2007
Windsor Park Toddlers Group	Focus Group	September 2007
Webb Representatives	Focus Group	September 13, 2007
Maplewood Representatives	Focus Group	September 19, 2007
Greg Guernsey & Carol Barnett, COA Planning	Interview	September 20, 200
Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC)	Focus Group	September 26, 2007
Dale Henry, Brentwood Neighborhood	Email	October 1, 2007
Sarah Baker, Save Our Springs	Email	October 1, 2007
Bouldin Creek. N.A. Executive Committee	Focus Group	October 3, 2007
Dave Sullivan, Chair of COA Planning Commission	Interview	October 3, 2007
Travis Heights parents	Focus Group	October 3, 2007
Gavin Wilson, parent & Bouldin Creek N.A. officer	Email	October 4, 2007
Oak Springs parents	Focus Group	October 4, 2007
Chris Riley, downtown resident, former chair of the COA Planning Commission	Interview	October 5, 2007
Representatives of Becker Action Committee	Focus Group	October 5, 2007
South Central Coalition of Neighborhoods	Focus Group	October 6, 2007
Travis Heights parents	Focus Group	October 7, 2007
Sara Clark, parent & Bouldin Creek N.A. officer	Email	October 8 and 16, 2007
Capital Idea parents	Focus Group	October 10, 2007
McCallum Vertical Team Elem. Schools	Focus Group	October 10, 2007
Rich MacKinnon, Urban Trans. Commission	Email	October 11, 2007
Bouldin Creek N. A. General Meeting	Focus Group	October 16, 2007
Mark Haller, parent & member of Bouldin Creek N.A.	Email	October 16, 2007
Sally King, resident of Bouldin Creek neighborhood	Email	October 17, 2007
Representatives of Becker Campus Advisory Council	Focus Group	October 18, 2007
South Lamar Neighborhood Assoc.	Focus Group	October 18, 2007
Meadowbrook Apts., Housing Authority of the COA	Focus Group	October 26, 2007
Liveable City	Report	October 31, 2007
Allen Elementary: Parent/Family Adv. Council	Focus Group	November 7, 2007
Lori Renteria, neighborhood leader	Email	November 8, 2007
Urban Transportation Commission	Focus Group	November 13, 2007
John Donisi, parent and civic leader	Interview	November 20, 2007
Linder Elementary	Focus Group	November 28, 2007
Additional Comments		

At the end of each of these summaries, key points are provided for convenience to the reader. These key points are not actual statements from participants, rather synopses prepared for this report by staff.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Anonymous Downtown Resident

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity:

Number of People Reached: 1

- Follow up to discussion at Austin Neighborhoods Council meeting.

Input Provided:

- How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?
    - I would hope, as a prime avenue, through the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools. Also, through the AISD website, newsletter, PTA's, Campus Advisory Committees, and AISD Board Meetings.

- What do "over-enrollment" and "under-enrollment" mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?
    - "Over-enrollment" to me means either the classrooms/instructional areas or the common areas (cafeterias, kitchens, gymnasiums), or both, are over their designed (and even State mandated) capacities in terms of the number of students in them during a typical school day; "under-enrollment" to me means these same areas have many fewer students than they are designed for or State mandated, to the point that the District thinks it is detrimental to the whole District's functioning or the individual school in question. Both conditions can affect a school's educational mission; both conditions should be considered in determining attendance boundaries. The most obvious affect on a neighborhood, in terms of under-enrollment, is the proposed closing of that school.

- How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?
    - In conjunction with the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools; and with imagination and perhaps "thinking outside of the box." There should be publicly conducted meetings, with AISD staff (including the Superintendent) and Committee members in attendance, at the school in question. I would think a year or two is a reasonable length of time to identify and consider alternatives.

- Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools

increase enrollment and performance?
    - AISD staff (including the Superintendent and his office), the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools, the school, the neighborhood around the school or that the school serves, organizations such as the school PTA, and non-profits in the Austin community that have a mission of helping such schools.

- Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider in making decisions about your school?
    - I would recommend consideration of the importance of the school as a neighborhood "center" (whether or not the school is one of the few, or perhaps the only, places the community comes together for interaction).
    - A "strategy" for an under-enrolled school I'd like to suggest is considering making an existing school a "joint-use" facility, in partnership with the City of Austin or another organization that might be seen to have a complimentary, perhaps public, mission and need of space (either short or long term) in the neighborhood or community the school is located in. Joint-use schools exist within AISD, but all, I believe, have been planned for since the opening day of the schools. The strategy I suggest is for existing schools, that experience under-enrollment; as a way for the unused space at that school to serve a function that isn't detrimental to the educational mission of the school (as it continues functioning) until the condition of under-enrollment is reversed.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Jeff Jack

Type of Activity: Email

Date of Activity:

Number of People Reached: 1

- Architect and neighborhood representative

Input Provided:

- How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?
    - The question is backward. AISD should ask who will be impacted by the decisions that are made by the district (stakeholders) and then determine the best way to engage (not "inform") them in the decision making process
    - AISD's actions are not taken in a vacuum, they are a major factor in shaping our city, not just responsible for the education of our children.
        - AISD is the largest portion of property taxes, How does it decision impact the increasing cost of living in our community
        - AISD placement of schools is a major driver of growth, How is AISD working with the COA, ACC, CAP Metro, Travis County to appropriately manage growth for the benefit of the entire community?

- What do "over-enrollment" and "under-enrollment" mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?
    - These terms are often used to justify school district decision made on other grounds. What is needed on a move away from a purely bean counting approach to accountability. What we need to do is understand that AISD can play an important role in building a strong safe community. And a major aspect of this is keeping neighborhood viable and places where families want to live. And that means successful local schools that often become the heart of a neighborhood.
    - So the issue should be what level of support for education can AISD provide with the context of building viable communities. The schools that AISD run have to have the flexibility to reflect the changing character of our neighborhoods as opposed to having a static image of what "capacity" a school has and then trying to deal with the life cycle of a neighborhood and ending up with too few student and then too many. And then these shift being used to decide to close or open new schools

- How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?
    - We have to get away from the idea that schools have to work on the economic principle of the industrial revolution, economy of scale, specialization, and bottom line decision making. This may have worked for making cars, but it does not work for making well educated students within viable sustainable communities

- Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools increase enrollment and performance?
    - Again this question is built on the assumption that because we have a fix capital cost for a school that we have to maintain enrollment to match that capacity. This model does not work with the natural life cycle of neighborhoods. And when that life cycle occurs, when we either have too many or too few students then we have to go to a lot of trouble to try to "fix" the problem. Searching for alternative programs, busing, separating grades and so forth. Instead we should be designing an education system that acknowledges the basic nature of neighborhoods and responses accordingly.
    - But as long as we measure success by short-term economics instead of the long-term development of community, we will continually be faced with zero sum game.

- Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider in making decisions about your school?
    - It should be about community not numbers. If AISD does not accept that it has a major influence on how Austin grows and steps up to the plate to work with all other governmental authorities to build a strong viable and sustainable community, the fact that is has full schools is meaningless.

Summary of Key Points:

- AISD should first determine the stakeholders, and then the best way to engage them in the decision making process.

- AISD's actions have important implications for a city. For instance, increasing property taxes can increase the cost of living, and the placement of schools can drive growth in the community. Also, successful schools are important for keeping neighborhoods viable.

- Enrollment issues should not be the main driving force as the life cycle of a neighborhood or community is continually evolving. Instead, the district should focus on what level of support for education they can provide within the context of building viable communities.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: District Advisory Council

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: August 21, 2007

Number of People Reached: approximately 14

- CCNS representatives present were Lulu Flores, Joey Crumley, and Andy Anderson. Ten DAC members participated, including Trustee Johna Edwards. The discussion started at 5:40 p.m. and concluded at 7:00 p.m.

Input Provided:

- Reasons why people may not come forward with concerns include: not citizens; don't speak English or maybe even their native language very well; working multiple jobs; don't feel knowledgeable enough; don't feel welcome.

- Need to quit making excuses for parents who don't participate; they need to make the effort; parents need to make other parents accountable; parents need to do their homework and ask questions.

- More teachers need to attend PTA meetings.

- Who are important stakeholders (e.g., in the case of an under-utilized school): parents, neighborhood associations, property owners, and teachers.

- Definitions of words like under-utilized need to be clear and consistent.

- Defining overcrowded as 125% of capacity needs to be reconsidered.

- Transfers can be tough decisions, but parents do what's best for their children.

- How should we inform parents: inform them first, not after it's already in the newspaper; be honest and thorough, don't hide ideas or plans already developed; inform them often and on an ongoing basis.

- Need a trigger mechanism or flag to know when to start looking closely at a campus; when does detailed review kick in.

- Should consider shared uses and collocation of service at under-utilized campuses.

- Need more vertical team collaboration

- Need to duplicate our successes; look at what works, not just at what's not working.

- The district has obligation to use tax dollars effectively and efficiently.

- Food, childcare services, and transportation help bring people to meetings.

- The district needs to do more projections and long-range planning.

- The committee will be doing a variety of public engagement activities.

- Advertise the committee more widely.

- "Closing" is not "repurposing"; closure should be a last resort.

- Need a formula for dealing with low-performing schools.

- Students need to be more involved.

- Kids who fail TAKS feel like it's their fault if a school has to close.
  Schools should announce meetings on their marquees and in other ways.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication issues:
  - Stakeholders should include students, parents, neighborhood associations, property owners, teachers
  - Early and ongoing communication about school closures
  - Reach out to different types of people including Spanish speakers
  - Provide people with the information they need to stay informed
  - Schools should announce meetings on their marquees and in other ways
  - Food, childcare services, and transportation help bring people to meetings.
  - Advertise the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools more widely; will use a variety of public engagement activities
  - More teachers need to attend PTA meetings.
  - Need more vertical team collaboration

- School concerns:
  - Definitions of under/over-enrollment and under/over-capacity need to be clear and consistent
    - Defining overcrowded as 125% of capacity needs to be reconsidered
  - The district needs to do more projections and long-range planning.

        - Need a trigger mechanism to know when to start looking closely at a school
    - School closure should be the last resort
        - Should consider co-location of services at under-utilized campuses
    - Need a strategy or formula for dealing with low-performing schools

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Windsor Park Toddlers Group

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: September 2007

Number of People Reached: 12

- This is a monthly group of young parents. Most of the parents have recently moved to the neighborhood. One had an older son who transferred out of Harris to Maplewood; one transferred from Maplewood to Gullett. The rest were not in school yet but definitely planned to shop around for schools, including Sri Atmananda, UT Charter, and Children's Discovery Center.

Input Provided:

- AISD needs to use multiple channels
  - "Room parents" could send e-mails to everyone
  - Do a better job of using technology in general (although they recognize that it won't reach everyone)
  - Make announcements when people are at the school for other reasons, such as performances or award ceremonies.
  - Flyers
  - The Wednesday Packet, although they're aware that not all the information gets home to kids.

- What they're looking for when they shop for schools:
  - There was a general sense that in schools with large high-needs populations, children with educational advantages will not be given the attention they need.
  - "My child comes from a home where we read books and I know not all children have that privilege."
  - One parent was worried by the fact that Blanton's information on the marquee was bilingual – worried that if the emphasis was on getting kids up to speed in English, here English-speaking child would not get the attention she needs.
  - Aesthetic issues play a role – a desire to walk into a school and feel a "happy vibe." "You have to make these places special."
  - They're worried that at neighborhood schools, their children will be exposed to unhealthy food. "We coddle our children and want to keep them in that environment."
  - Several parents said they recognized their position was "classist," but also said it was important to them to instill their values with regard to pop culture, proper nutrition, etc. in their children.

    - They're worried about consistency. Blanton might be recognized this year, but will it be in another couple years? A school like Casis will definitely be high-performing for the foreseeable future.
    - They also want a school that makes it clear that TAKS testing is not a high priority.

- Is it important to them to have a neighborhood school?
    - Overall, they would like to send their children to a school in the neighborhood in walking distance. "I feel guilty and wasteful driving my kid across town," as one put it. However, their priority is the quality of the school, not its location.
    - One of the ideas being discussed in the toddler's group is a home school co-op.
    - There was also a recognition that if they all worked together, it might be possible to create the kind of environment they seek at one of the neighborhood AISD schools, but no one wanted to be the "vanguard."
    - "If I knew other people would [send their child to Harris or Blanton] I would, but I don't know anyone who is doing it. If I could feel really confident we'd have a good experience, and could know ahead of time that the school would have academic peers."

Summary of Key Points:

- AISD should utilize a variety of communication methods to contact parents

- School Concerns:
    - Children with educational advantages will not be given the attention they need in schools with large high-needs populations
    - Value differences
    - Aesthetics of a school
    - Proper nutrition
    - Quality of school is most important, not its location
    - Environment is important – similar academic peers

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Webb Middle School representatives

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: September 13, 2007

Number of People Reached: 4

- David Delgado, Webb PTA; Rico Gonzales, Webb Parent Support Specialist; Allen Weeks, St. John Neighborhood Association; Susan Moffat, Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools

Input Provided:

Process Recommendations:

- Early notice is critical:
  - Notice to families and school communities should begin as soon as the district first identifies a problem with a school, such as failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress or experiencing serious over- or under-enrollment. Early notice should provide time for the community to take an active role in working with the district toward a positive solution.

- Communication should be clearly worded and designed to alert the recipient to the seriousness of the problem:
  - In the first stage of a problem, AISD should immediately notify the affected school's staff and families, as well as identified community partners, with a clearly-worded letter. The letter and envelope should be designed to alert the recipient that this is more than routine communication (for instance, a red banner headline reading, "Important! Your school may be in trouble"). The body of the letter should state the nature of the problem, any rights families may have, and the expected timeline and process for any changes or decisions. It should also set a date, time and location for a community meeting to discuss the issue.

- Notice should also go to identified community partners:
  - If a school is in trouble, our community is affected. A list of citywide partners should be developed who will also receive the above-described notice when a school is at risk. Such a list might include: the Austin City Council, Austin Planning Commission, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Austin Interfaith Alliance, Education Austin, Livable City, LULAC, NAACP, Urban League, Austin Area Interreligious Ministries, St. John's Regular Baptist Association, Austin Latin Ministerial Association, Austin Chamber of Commerce, African-American Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Asian Chamber of Commerce and others.

- District staff should speak truthfully and listen receptively:
    - In all dealings with the community, district staff should be prepared to explain the facts about a situation with complete candor and should explain truthfully any plans or long-term goals the district may have for the school. Staff should be willing to listen and learn from the community at the first stage of a problem, not issue top-down decisions when it is too late for real discussion of alternatives.

- District should develop a clear timeline for major decisions:
    - In cases involving TAKS, a state-mandated timeline for decisions already exists, but this must be clearly communicated to affected schools and communities from the very first year a school fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress. If this information is conveyed through the CAC, the CAC should be required to communicate this to the community immediately, in addition to the notice recommendations outlined above in #2 and #3. In cases involving over- or under-enrollment, a similar timeline should be followed, allowing a minimum of three years for any major decisions and changes, including adequate public input.

- District should develop a community outreach team:
    - AISD should develop a community outreach team that can be deployed immediately to troubled schools. Team members should be experienced in community outreach and able to work with school families and staff to enlist the help of community partners such as neighborhood associations, churches, businesses and community groups. Depending on the problem, partners might be asked to provide mentors or tutors, identify social services for families, create after-school programs, or discuss possible ways to alleviate over- or under-enrollment.

Policy Recommendations:

- Middle School redesign should be a priority:
    - As soon as possible, AISD should begin a middle school redesign that aligns with the current high school redesign process. If there is insufficient funding for a district-wide middle school redesign, the district should focus its resources on low-performing schools.

- Trustees should work to amend definitions and other accountability measures:
    - The district should examine the definitions used to identify troubled schools, as well as other accountability measures, and work for needed changes at the state level. For example, a child may currently be counted in three different categories for TAKS assessment (minority, low socio-economic, and special education); if that child fails a TAKS test, he or she is counted against the school in each of three categories, resulting in three strikes for a single child and potentially painting an unfair picture of the school's progress. Drop-out rates are another area where unclear definitions may lead to inaccurate reporting. Though procedures governing

TAKS assessments are beyond the scope of the district, we strongly encourage the Trustees to work with other Texas school boards to effect change at the state level and to encourage a more constructive, less punitive system for accountability.

- Provisions governing use of TEA monitors may also need amendment:
    - The current use of TEA monitors in "failing" schools is not constructive, creates confusion for the staff and exacerbates existing problems. Again, we realize this is not under the control of the district, but we encourage the Trustees to work with other school boards to effect change at the state level regarding the use of TEA monitors.

- AISD needs to be on the same side as the community:
    - Regrettably, the relationship between AISD and the community has been marked by past mistrust, at times becoming openly adversarial. Many feel the district administration views the public as a problem to be "handled" and is not interested in true public input regarding the policies and operations of our public school system. The district often appears to engage in "self-protecting behavior," trying to slide major decisions through below radar. When the district does engage in public process, it is often viewed cynically, as window-dressing to support decisions that have already made by the central administration. Good communication requires more than just changing a timeline for these decisions; it requires changing an attitude. The AISD Trustees and central administration should make a genuine effort to dedicate themselves to open, collaborative decision-making -- to demonstrate that they are on the same side as the community. We can accomplish much more by trusting each other and working together to provide an excellent education for all students.

- Webb area pilots new model of community involvement:
    - Leaders in the Webb area have recently created the Community School Alliance (CSA), focusing on the vertical team that includes Pickle and Brown Elementary schools, Webb Middle School and Reagan High School. The CSA meets monthly and is composed of representatives of over two dozen community groups, neighborhood associations, churches and businesses. It is currently working to align communications and calendars between the four schools and is seeking grant funding for three pilot projects designed to strengthen and enrich educational opportunities for students. If successful, the CSA may provide a model to be replicated in other areas.

Summary of Key Points:

- Process Recommendations:
    - Early communication is important

    - Clearly worded communication
    - Alert identified community partners
    - District staff should speak truthfully and listen receptively
    - Clear timeline for major decisions
    - Develop community outreach team

- Policy Recommendations:
    - Make middle school redesign a priority
    - Work for needed changes at the state level
        - Amend definitions and other accountability measures
        - Amend provisions governing use of TEA monitors
    - AISD needs to work with the community and be on its side
    - Follow Web area model for community involvement

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Maplewood Elementary School representatives

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: September 19, 2007

Number of People Reached: 4

- Maryann Overath, Maplewood CAC parent representative; Lisa Schemanske, Maplewood CAC parent representative; Wendy L. Morgan, Maplewood CAC parent representative and Wellness Team Chair; Susan Moffat, CCNS.

Input Provided:

- Maplewood representatives concurred with Webb's recommendations and suggested the following areas be added or strengthened:

Process Recommendations:

- Define clear lines for communications and accountability within AISD:
    - At the start of each year, the district should provide parents with a clear flow chart, showing the appropriate steps for informally appealing staff decisions, getting approval for proposed projects or seeking help with staff or leadership problems. This information should include contact information for the appropriate individuals and should be updated annually. Because the ombudsman does not deal with problems related to District employees, special care should be taken to provide specific information about the appropriate steps for parents experiencing problems with District personnel. Information should be available in English and Spanish.
- Clearly define role of district ombudsman:
    - At the start of each school year, AISD should provide parents with information about the District's ombudsman, including what kind of issues the ombudsman does and does not handle. This information is currently available online, but is not included in the information guides distributed to parents. Information should be available in English and Spanish.
- Provide direct communication between community and elected school board representatives:
    - The email address for elected AISD board representatives (trustees@austinisd.org) should be reconfigured to go directly to board representatives, without requiring a staff person to redirect these messages, as is currently done. This will prevent delays when staff is absent and will remove the current perception that some messages may be filtered, diverted or simply lost in transit. In addition, all incoming community communication will receive a response via e-mail, phone or

mail in a timely fashion.

Policy Recommendations:

- Support and empower principals to seek innovative, creative approaches to learning:
    - In the current AISD climate, principals are “mandated to death” and often express fear of doing anything that may call attention to the school – even positive attention - if it is out of the norm. Creative principals cite the need to “fly under radar” with innovative programs that might otherwise serve as models for other schools. Many parents believe this stifling atmosphere is at least partly responsible for the high turnover rate among AISD principals and talented teachers, creating an undesirable working climate. AISD should support and empower its campus leaders to identify and share innovative, creative approaches to teaching and learning.
- Recognize the importance of public schools to our community, including the value of smaller neighborhood schools and of individual cultures.
    - The District should adopt an official policy that recognizes the importance of all public schools in maintaining healthy neighborhoods and communities, including the value of smaller neighborhood schools and of each school’s unique culture and identity. Our neighborhood schools should not be closed, except as an extreme last resort, after an exhaustive process to identify alternatives to closure that includes outreach to community partners. This would also help AISD comply with Title I community/parent involvement requirements.
- Change AISD institutional culture to truly involve community:
    - This issue was previously noted by Webb representatives and was underscored by Maplewood parents. Families feel increasingly alienated by a District that says it encourages parent involvement, while ignoring public input in favor of top-down directives. Current policies that require every school to march in lockstep, coupled with the overuse of standardized tests, are driving many middle-class and low-income families to consider private school and charter schools as the only remaining source for a creative, non-test-driven education. Though some of these issues are beyond local control, many are not (benchmark tests, for example, which many teachers report are upsetting to students, reduce class instruction time and do not provide useful information). AISD must take steps to change its institutional culture from one of fear and secrecy to one that values and listens to its community.
- District should partner with community to change accountability system at state level:
    - It is an open secret among parents, teachers and administrators that the current state accountability system is not working; in fact, as currently applied, it is likely turning off an entire generation to the joy of learning and is driving some of our most talented educators out of the public school system. We encourage AISD trustees to enlist our community, as well as other like-minded school boards in Texas, to push for much-needed

reforms during the next Texas legislative session.

- Maplewood representatives also recommended that CCNS interview the principal of Ridgetop Elementary.

Summary of Key Points:

- Group also agreed with Webb MS recommendations

- Process recommendations:
  - Define clear lines for communications and accountability within AISD
  - Clearly define role of district ombudsman
  - Provide direct communication between community and elected school board representatives

- Policy recommendations:
  - Support and empower principals to seek innovative, creative approaches to learning:
  - Recognize the importance of public schools to our community, including the value of smaller neighborhood schools and of individual cultures.
  - Change AISD institutional culture to truly involve community
  - District should partner with community to change accountability system at state level

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: City of Austin planning staff: Greg Guernsey and Carol Barnett

Type of Activity: Interview

Date of Activity: September 20, 2007

Number of People Reached: 2

- Interview with City of Austin planning staff

Input Provided:

- AISD and COA have developed processes for planning for schools in suburban areas, particularly large residential subdivisions and PUDs. It is typical for the COA to ask large developments to provide a school site.

- Similar mechanisms don't exist for infill development. Part of this is that brand-new housing trends don't fit into the old formulae:
    - the overstuffed apartments in north-central Austin
    - whether or not infill units will actually provide children

- "You can't just predict off building permits anymore."

- AISD used to notify COA when schools were at capacity, but always with the caveat, "You don't have to worry about it; we'll just change the boundaries."

- AISD and COA have a history of sharing facilities on parks and outdoor facilities, but indoor facilities are harder because of security issues.

- In neighborhood planning processes, it is almost universal to say, "We want to do something about the schools." But this is usually not followed up on because COA doesn't have the tools to "do something." She's not even sure what "do something" means, but it can sometimes include:
    - Safe walking routes in the neighborhood
    - More schools closer to residential areas
    - Better coordination between AISD and APD

- They have talked about trying to get AISD staff to participate in subsequent neighborhood plans.

- They did coordinate with AISD when they were putting together applications for Safe Routes to School funding.

- COA planning staff is trying to work with schools to get the word out about the neighborhood planning process: sending notice home with kids or using the marquee to tell parents about NP meetings; presenting to the CAC or PTA.

- They've also kicked around ideas for having high schoolers do mini-NP processes for geography or civics credit.

Any Recommendations for Policy or Procedure:

- Have school staff participate in the neighborhood planning process.

- Have principals be part of the neighborhood plan contact team.

- Continue investigating ways for schools to serve as the center of the community by co-locating social services or health services on the same campuses.

- Make a strong effort to develop data on the relationship between different infill housing types and schools.

Lessons Learned or Other Comments:

- Infill is a relatively recent phenomenon and all our census data is nearly a decade old. Does any data exist that suggest any trends nationally with regard to infill units providing schoolchildren? Anecdotally everyone says that urban parents still move to the suburbs when their kids hit school age, but is this really the case?

Summary of Key Points:

- Coordination between COA and AISD
    - AISD staff and local school presence in neighborhood planning process
        - Also advertise NP process to citizens through local schools
    - COA notification when schools are at capacity
    - Coordinate planning of new schools – closer to residential locations
        - Typical for COA to recommend a school site in large developments
        - Must develop ways to address infill development
    - Continue co-locating services at campuses
    - Continue coordination of Safe Routes to School program
    - Better coordination/communication between APD and AISD

- Planning for schools in infill development
    - Must develop ways to address infill development
    - Must develop data on relationship between different infill housing types and schools

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC)

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: September 26, 2007

Number of People Reached:

- General meeting of ANC

Input Provided:

- How inform and engage stakeholders?
  - AISD should communicate directly with affected neighborhood associations and through the ANC.
  - AISD should be more forthcoming with information to Campus Advisory Councils and the community – tell the truth.
  - AISD should identify a staff person in central administration to reach out to neighborhoods because teachers and school staff are already overwhelmed.
  - Door to door leafleting is effective.
  - AISD should host an online central discussion forum where information about each school is available.
  - Postcards are more effective than letters and cheaper.
  - District should collect PTA contact info and make it available on AISD website.
  - Communicate through school listserv, neighborhood listserv, neighborhood newsletter, community registry.
  - Communications about school problems should be clearly marked URGENT and written in plain language.
  - AISD should encourage better sharing of demographics with the city and other local governments.

- Over-enrollment and under-enrollment:
  - AISD should consider socio-economic status of school populations; smaller classes and smaller schools may be optimal for low SES students.
  - Had Webb Middle School closed, it would have had a ripple effect on other AISD schools.
  - Low enrollment may be temporary; AISD should look at new families, child care enrollments, permits for multi-family projects, etc.
  - Some schools have been threatened because new schools have been built.
  - District's open transfer policy draws students away from some neighborhood schools.

- How identify alternatives? What steps? Who involved? Timeline?
    - Neighborhoods must be involved and must have notice at the first hint of a school problem, i.e. as soon as principal has first conversation with central administration.
    - Community must have time to find workable alternatives and rebuild struggling schools.
    - AISD should consider demographics and the cyclical nature of populations since low enrollment may be temporary; should consider number of young families, child care enrollments, permits for multi-family projects when assessing neighborhood schools.

- Who in community should be involved in helping schools increase enrollment and performance?
    - Business, neighborhoods and churches should all be invited and involved.
    - TEA ratings should be publicized widely, especially to neighborhood groups

- Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider?
    - Schools are hugely important to neighborhoods beyond academic offerings.
    - District is enabling sprawl by “following the rooftops;” should engage in more responsible urban planning.
    - AISD should give first consideration to disadvantaged students.
    - Schools without a strong voice are most likely to be targeted for closure or repurposing; we must all stand up and help communities organize to give schools a voice.
    - AISD needs to change adversarial relationship with community and rebuild trust.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication with stakeholders: (please see above input)

- Over-enrollment and under-enrollment: (please see above input)

- Process recommendations: (please see above input)

- Key stakeholders in community that should be involved in process: (please see above input)

- Other factors to be considered: (please see above input)

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Dale Henry

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: October 1, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Individual from Brentwood neighborhood

Input Provided:

- Ways for the school district to inform stakeholders:
  - Post on AISD and involved school's web site where it can be found with out having to know to look for it
  - Send notice home in parent info packets or other official school to parents correspondence.
  - Inform local neighborhood group and news outlets

- Over / under-enrollment:
  - Use better demographics that include preschool age children in the school's area.
  - Work with effected schools to limit the effect on the school's culture.
  - Build schools where the population is. AISD seem to want to build where the population will go, but they are leaving out the children that are already here.

- Alternatives:
  - Once again AISD need to look at the whole picture of demographics. What will the school area look like in 3 years, 5 years.
  - AISD need to be reminded that the local elementary schools are a building block of community. That they help young persons grow and have a place that not only includes their home but their school and neighborhood. Giving them roots to grow into better citizens.

- Who should be involved:
  - Anyone who will. We all have a stake in how the school system does their job.

- Other than enrollment:
  - Since of community for young persons
  - Special needs

Summary of Key Points:

- Stakeholders include anyone who wishes to be involved
- Utilize a variety of ways to inform stakeholders such as websites, parent information packets, news media, and local neighborhood groups
- Pay special attention to demographic factors such as preschool age children, future projections, and where the population currently is.
- Community and culture are important factors. Local elementary schools are important community and neighborhood centers
- Special needs population is also an important factor

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Sarah Baker (with Save Our Springs)

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: October 1, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

Input Provided:

- How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?
    - Neighborhood newsletters, press releases to local media, and an email list where you can sign up to be informed about school district issues.

- What do “over-enrollment” and “under-enrollment” mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?
    - Over-enrollment to me means that you have more students on a particular campus than that campus is equipped to handle. This could mean sub-populations of students, such as more Spanish speaking students than there are bilingual teachers.
    - I think it is hard to have an under-enrolled school. To me this means there are very few students attending a particular school, such that the student-teacher-staff ratios are too low to justify the expense of keeping the school open. I do not think this includes a situation where the enrollment is less than the total capacity of a physical building, or where you have lower than average student-teacher ratios. Small schools are generally good and just because an entire building isn't being used that doesn't define under-enrollment for me.

- How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?
    - It is important for the District to look holistically at a school's enrollment, and work together with city, county, state and neighborhoods to look at past and future projected enrollment for an area and not limit itself to making decisions based on "snapshots" of enrollment in a short timeframe.
    - Parents, students, teachers, neighborhood and city and county leaders should be involved in identifying enrollment issues and look at surrounding circumstances to determine if the trend is expected to continue or if there

are external forces that may be affecting enrollment such as new public facilities or policies that are expected to draw families to certain areas and thus increase enrollment in an area in the future.

- Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools increase enrollment and performance?
    - The local business community, colleges and universities, and local government all benefit from increased school enrollment and performance and should be involved.

- Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider in making decisions about your school?
    - AISD should be working with the other policy decision-makers in the community, working with the City of Austin, Travis County, and others to make sure planning is undertaken in a cooperative manner. The City of Austin has policies to increase density and encourage development in downtown and east of Austin, and AISD should be working with the City to plan mutually beneficial programs that leverage each other's work rather than reacting or opposing that work.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication with stakeholders:
    - Neighborhood newsletters, press releases to local media, email listserv

- Over-enrollment and under-enrollment:
    - Over-enrollment - more students on a particular campus than there are resources to accommodate them
    - Under-enrollment - very few students attending a particular school, such that the student-teacher-staff ratios are too low to justify the expense of keeping the school open; does not include situations where the enrollment is less than the total capacity of a physical building, or where you have lower than average student-teacher ratios.

- Process recommendations:
    - Look at past and future projected enrollment for an area as well as external factors or issues that could an affect enrollment
    - Involve parents, students, teachers, neighborhood, city, county and state leaders

- Key stakeholders in community that should be involved in process:
    - Local business community, colleges and universities, and local government

- Other factors to be considered:

- District should work with other policy making entities to coordinate planning efforts

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association Executive Committee (Brief focus group in course of regular monthly meeting)

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 3, 2007

Number of People Reached: 14

- Matt Coldwell, Ronnie Dittmar, Stuart Hampton, Gary Hyatt, Kris Kwolek, Brad Patterson, Cynthia Schiebel, Mateo Scoggins, Jim Retherford, Cory Walton, Ingrid Weigand, Sara Wilder, Gavin Wilson, Jody Zemel

Input Provided:

- Participants began with comments directly related to the enrollment at Becker Elementary, which was proposed for closure the previous year. One participant noted that in Becker's case, the school is under-enrolled because in previous decades, the district added on to the building; the (relatively) new square footage has impacted the capacity determinations. Several participants pointed out that some parents in the district "don't have faith" in the school, which has contributed to the decline in enrollment; they offered that AISD could work with communities experiencing similar situations to better market the school or strengthen the academic program.

- In terms of more general feedback about the district's decision-making process, participants felt that decisions about facility use should be made based on what one individual called "a practical, real consensus." Consideration should be given to the campus's historic significance, location, density of surrounding neighborhood, and the hardship on students in area.

- Participants felt strongly that the district should support neighborhood schools — especially at the elementary school level—and, more generally, and the concept of walkable schools throughout the Austin community. Some participants encouraged AISD to consider boundary changes as a way of maintaining a system of neighborhood schools throughout the city. The group also offered ways that AISD could maintain neighborhood schools with low enrollment by partnering with other entities. One example would be to offer "womb to tomb" educational experiences by partnering with Austin Community College to offer parenting classes and other resources for the out-of-school public. As one participant articulated, "A neighborhood school should serve everyone in a community."

- Participants identified the need for the City of Austin and AISD to communicate and collaborate more effectively. Participants urged the district to work with and support the City of Austin and its planning goals; to use the City's community registry to communicate important information to broad stakeholder groups; to participate in the neighborhood planning process so that planning teams are more aware of the health of the schools in or around their area.

Summary of Key Points:

- AISD should assist under-enrolled schools in marketing efforts to increase student enrollments and similar efforts to strengthen the academic programs.

- Decisions about facility usage should consider the campus's historic significance, location, density of surrounding neighborhood, and the hardship on students in area.

- AISD should support neighborhood schools and walkable schools
    - Consider boundary changes
    - Partner with ACC or other entities to provide resources for the community (such as parenting classes)

- City of Austin and AISD should communicate and collaborate
    - Collaborate with the City to achieve its planning goals
    - AISD should use the City's community registry to communicate information
    - AISD should participate in neighborhood planning processes.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Dave Sullivan

Type of Activity: Interview

Date of Activity: October 3, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Dave Sullivan serves as chair of the city's Planning Commission. He is also the parent of a child who attended Matthews Elementary and now attends the Ann Richards School. He has been an active PTA member, and helped campaign for the 1996 AISD bonds.

Input Provided:

Process:

- In terms of how AISD should evaluate a school that may be over- or under-enrolled, Sullivan believes the district should use objective methods—i.e. the number of students per classroom—but should also consider the special needs of students on that campus. For example, a campus like Matthews with a large number of ESL students might require a smaller class size and a second teacher in the classroom. At a more homogenous school, it might be appropriate for AISD to count the number of children and divide by classrooms, but a more diverse community calls for AISD to consider the particular needs of that student body. In a diverse community, a target enrollment of 400 students may be too high. Sullivan noted that he trusts the administration to arrive at reasonable and appropriate expectations of capacity.

- Everyone in a society has a stake in a strong public education system, Sullivan emphasized, and all should be engaged in questions related to a campus's future. He cited students, parents, and the general educational community as the most important stakeholders, but identified homeowners and local businesses as stakeholders as well. Not only does school success correlate to property values, "schools are more than just places of education." He offered examples of the role Matthews Elementary plays in the broader community: large numbers of neighbors (many without children at the school) attend the school carnival, and other school fundraisers are community events.

- Sullivan addressed the need for AISD to keep investigating ways to increase parental involvement. To allow working parents to participate more easily, Sullivan suggested that teachers might schedule parent meetings on occasional weekends or hold telephone conferences after work hours. Schools could also offer ways for parents to volunteer on weekends. He noted that not all parents may feel comfortable getting involved in their children's school, particularly in

instances of language or cultural differences, but Sullivan views such involvement as crucial to student success. He added, too, that teachers benefit from increased parental involvement—"and happy teachers are likely to be better teachers."

- He also commented that residents of the city often don't have much information about what happens to their tax dollars. He suggested that it would be valuable to include information in utility bills educating citizens about how much of their property tax goes to support administration versus instruction versus retirement and to provide information about school outcomes (including the district's overall graduation rates).

Policy:

- Sullivan would like to see AISD and the City of Austin work more closely together in issues related to planning. As he pointed out, the city charter names the president of the as a member *ex officio* of the Planning Commission—a provision the city has interpreted to mean that the AISD representative must be the president and that (s)he is not a voting member. If an AISD representative participated in reviewing cases that come before the Planning Commission, all parties might have better understanding of the relationship between development and schools.

- He offered as an example a recent zoning case in which a developer sought a zoning change to create more single-family houses than currently allowed on a particular parcel. Although no one could guarantee who the eventual occupants might be, in allowing more houses on the property, the zoning change could enable the developer to sell each unit for a lower price—thus increasing the likelihood of attracting families to those dwellings. The neighborhood association in the area opposed the zoning change. Sullivan noted that if AISD had played a more prominent role in that discussion and could have offered some estimates as to the number of potential children, the neighborhood might have seen a value for its school in supporting such a zoning change.

- Sullivan cited another example in which a smart housing development was being constructed nearby an overcrowded school. An AISD representative did come and provide information about the overcrowding. As the children in the new development could walk to the school, Sullivan offered that a possible good alternative would be to redraw the outer boundaries of that attendance zone to reduce transportation needs.

- Sullivan expressed that while it would be ideal for a trustee to serve on the Planning Commission, an AISD staff member should at least review the agenda, provide factual information, and offer a recommendation. Just as zoning applications offer estimated vehicle trip counts and plans for water detention, so should these applications consider how particular developments might affect the number of school-aged children in an area.

- Sullivan offered several ideas in response to question 3 regarding the consideration of alternatives. He identified adjusting boundaries as one way to adjust populations when necessary. As a short-term option for over-enrolled schools, he suggested that the district investigate whether buildings with more modular designs might present the opportunity for a campus to add to an over-enrolled school without using portable trailers which provide "second-class classrooms." Sullivan suggested that advances in modular buildings could offer new opportunities to address population increases more cheaply than bond elections.

- Sullivan introduced the possibility of AISD using under-enrolled campuses for other purposes. Schools now offer space for community programs, but AISD could consider expanding an under-enrolled campus's educational service to older populations. Individuals in our community will always have a need for classes like ESL, remedial reading, and life skills, and although Austin Community College does serve a wide range of educational needs, AISD could play a role. He also suggested a small Austin Public Library branch as an possible "multipurpose" use that could be integrated into an under-enrolled campus. Sullivan noted that mixing young and older populations would require careful planning to assure student security, but offered the Ann Richards School and some joint public/school libraries in other cities as examples of successful arrangements.

- He stated that while he has "misgivings" about single gender schools, options such as the Ann Richards School and the boys campus under consideration are "part of the flavor of diversity in AISD." These alternatives, or creating more siloed arts or technology programs on particular campuses, would also provide options for a floundering school. Such a path would keep the school intact and within the district so that the building will be available when the student population in the area again increases.

- In order of preference, Sullivan would like to see AISD first try to boost parental involvement and then, in conjunction with the City of Austin, to look at housing decisions that could bring more students into an area or stabilize the current student population. All of these stated suggestions should, in Sullivan's opinion, be attempted before "more radical surgery"—i.e. closing a particular school.

Post script:

- At the Nov. 10, 2007 Housing Summit, a large group of participants heard from Dr. Forgione on the effects of poverty and affordable housing shortages on education. Sullivan talked to Mr. Joe Silva about trying to get some national data on the distribution of school-age children in different housing types – e.g., children per household where housing type = condo priced $200K-$300K, children per household where housing type = house priced $300K-$500K, etc. for a range of housing types (e.g., condo, apartment, duplex, detached house)

and home values. These data could help estimate the effects of land use change on schools.

Summary of Key Points:

- AISD should utilize objective measures for determining over/under enrollment. Also, considerations for special needs populations should be taken into account.

- Everyone has a stake in public education, but students, parents, and the general education community are the most important stakeholders. Also, homeowners and local businesses are important.

- Investigate ways to increase parental involvement, especially for working parents or in instances of language and cultural differences

- Residents do not have much information on what happens with their tax dollars in regards to school spending
    - Could provide this information on utility bills
    - Should provide public with how much money is spent in each budget category
    - Provide information on school outcomes

- AISD and the City of Austin should work more closely together in issues related to planning
    - Both should look at housing options that could bring more students into an area with an under-utilized school
    - AISD representative should be on the Planning Commission
        - Would be ideal for a Trustee member to be involved
        - At least, a staff member should review the agenda, provide factual information, and offer a recommendation

- Alternatives to closures:
    - Continue adjusting boundaries
    - Utilize better quality modular building as opposed to portables
    - Repurpose under-utilized campuses
        - Co-locate other community programs
        - Continue the use of special types of programs at campuses such as special arts or technology programs or single gender schools.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Travis Heights parents

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 3, 2007

Number of People Reached: 4 parents

- These are Spanish-speaking, apartment residents.

Input Provided:

- Don't depend on computers to do communicate – these folks don't have computers at home.

- Have events at different times of day to accommodate different people's work schedules. "People have to cook dinner or work at night. I'm lucky I happen to be off tonight or I couldn't be here."

- Don't count on written materials to make it home, or for busy parents to read them. When it was proposed for Becker to be closed, for example, one parent remembers feeling totally surprised and off-guard that the process was well underway by the time she heard about it. – "I guess I didn't read the letter."

- They all said the best way to get information is through their children's teachers – if a teacher tells them something, they know it's really important. In addition, the principal should stand out front and talk to parents.

- Apartment managers were identified as key communicators. They felt there was a difference in participation levels between parents at different complexes and credited the managers.

- One talked about the several-year process that has gone into her feeling comfortable contributing to the discussion. She used to be extremely shy but because the principal and other parents encouraged her to stay involved she has become increasingly comfortable having a voice in school processes.

- The manager of Travis Heights apartments is said to have developed a strong communication network that is very effective for getting the word out. "Those mothers at the Heights have a real community."

- Travis Heights has a strong Interfaith network, and as such these parents emphasized the role of in-person communication and the need to develop longstanding relationships of trust.

    - When the controversy over closing Becker was going on, they held small-group meetings rather than one large forum so people would feel more comfortable talking, and would have greater opportunity to talk.
    - If school staff is proactively holding house meetings and developing those relationships, it's easier for AISD to tap into those existing communication networks to communicate and engage on important issues.

- Populations will wax and wane. AISD should develop ways to build schools back up instead of closing them.

- If there are a lot of absences, if the parents aren't happy, and if the school seems disorganized, those are good reasons to consider making major changes to the schools.

- If you do need to consider alternatives, you should develop strong communications networks ahead of time. Don't just send someone in from the district to have one large group meeting. The school should be in a habit of using parent leaders to hold meetings about AISD issues, and it should be in these small-group settings that AISD should ask for ideas for change. A possible process might be:
    1. Advertise a large meeting about the future of the school. Use traditional methods (e-mail, flyers, the principal, teachers) to get the word out
    2. The people who attend are likely the most motivated potential leaders. Recruit them to hold meetings of their friends and neighbors.
    3. Once those meetings have been established, the district can tap into them to communicate and engage with the community.

Any Recommendations for Policy or Procedure:

- Personal relationships were extremely important to these parents. Exploring ways to build sustained parent networks seems a fruitful project for AISD.
    - This could include training teachers and principals in techniques for developing communications networks.
    - Perhaps this is an expanded role for the PSS: to develop parent networks, as well as relationships with community leaders, apartment managers, and groups outside of AISD.

- Work with apartment managers to spread the word about proposed changes.

- If you do need to consider alternatives, you should develop strong communications networks ahead of time. Don't just send someone in from the district to have one large group meeting or two when it's already crisis time. The school should be in a habit of using parent leaders to hold meetings about AISD issues, and it should be in these small-group settings that AISD should ask for ideas for change.

- A possible process for recruiting parent communicators might be:
    1. Advertise a large meeting about the future of the school. Use traditional methods (e-mail, flyers, the principal, teachers) to get the word out.
    2. The people who attend are likely the most motivated potential leaders. Recruit them to hold meetings of their friends and neighbors.
    3. Once those meetings have been established, the district can tap into them to communicate and engage with the community.

Lessons Learned or Other Comments:

- They feel that Travis Heights is over-enrolled, because the lunch line is so long that the kids don't really have time to eat.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication Issues:
    - Some people don't have access to computers
    - Have events at different times of day to accommodate different people's work schedules.
    - Don't count on written materials to make it home, or for busy parents to read them.
    - Utilize children's teachers and principals to communicate
    - Apartment managers were identified as key communicators
        - Travis Heights apartments is said to have developed a strong communication network that is very effective
    - Emphasized role of in-person communication and the need to develop longstanding relationships of trust.
    - Develop strong communications networks in advance

- Other Issues:
    - Populations will wax and wane. AISD should develop ways to build schools back up instead of closing them.
    - If there are a lot of absences, if the parents aren't happy, and if the school seems disorganized, those are good reasons to consider making major changes to the schools.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Gavin Wilson

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: October 4, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Parent and Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association officer

Input Provided:

- Ways for the school district to inform stakeholders:
  - Multi-pronged approach to communicate to communities on issues in schools, especially those that are fundamental to the structure of the school. For example, AISD should have informed the neighbors years before that Becker had fundamental issues of under-enrollment which might result in closure.
  - Better communication with city. City representative on AISD Board and vice versa

- Over / under enrollment:
  - Under-enrollment – agrees with AISD's definition
  - Over-enrollment – over 100% is over-enrolled
  - Need to consider neighboring school enrollment – neighboring over-enrolled schools should offset, since parents can send their kids here – and this means AISD needs to invest in improving the under-enrolled schools
  - Why are schools under-enrolled?

- Alternatives:
  - Look at future demographic trends better

- Who should be involved:
  - Everyone – all segments of community – businesses, parents, BCNA

- Other than enrollment:
  - Goals such as ability to walk to school, smaller is better, especially when it is existing
  - Need to consider cost of rebuilding schools versus using existing structures

Summary of Key Points:

- An early, multi-pronged approach to communicating with the community is important
- Feels there should be better communication with the City
- Agrees with AISD's definition for under-enrollment and feels that schools over 100% is over-enrolled
- Suggests considering neighboring school enrollments and overall demographic trends
- Everyone in the community should be involved in the process
- Other considerations should include costs of rebuilding schools versus using existing structures, the ability to walk to schools, and smaller existing schools

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Oak Springs Elementary School

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 4, 2007

Number of People Reached: 3 parents

- These are all residents of the Booker T. Washington housing complex. They consider themselves very involved – PTA, CAC, eating meals with their kids.

Input Provided:

- Good communication begins with a welcoming environment at the school. Stable staff, personal relationships. For example, there was a sense that there has been less staff turnover in recent years, and that seems to add to the welcoming feeling – when you recognize a lot of the faces on campus, you feel more part of a community.

- "If AISD comes to me and we start to be friends now, when a situation arises, I'll be there to help. And I know almost everyone in the neighborhood, so I can help you get the word out."

- Involve the CAC early in substantive issues.

- Remember most parents feel intimidated in policy discussions, which is why developing personal relationships is so important. "It's building up the personal relationships. If we can see AISD as regular people, we feel comfortable."

- One of the parents got involved in the school because a teacher specifically invited her to get more involved. That inspired her to start going to the parent coffees. "The more time I spent there, the more I felt like I belonged."

- They think in-person meetings, like parent coffees, are a good way to get parents involved. If something is really important, school staff should go door to door.

- Snail-mail letters are not necessarily effective. "When they sent the letter home for the forum (about the proposed closure) I didn't think anything about it. The first letter came a week before the forum." The language in the letter didn't make them feel like it was a big deal; it was just "on the future of Oak Springs." She realized it was a big deal when she saw Dr. Forgione would be coming. But she wishes she had heard about it through teachers or through the parent coffees. "I was at parent coffees all the time and they never mentioned it."

- In general, repetition is key. “If I get more than one flyer, I’m interested. And if it’s in the TV, newspaper. Or maybe e-mail.”

- “People throw letters in the trash. It needs to be in the news. Even if I don’t see it, someone else will, and they’ll tell me about it.”

- There was skepticism toward how much AISD wants parent involvement. “They say they want parents involved, but if important things are going on and you try to be involved it’s like you’ve stepped on their toes or overstepped your authority.”

- If you’re having a meeting, make sure the timing works for parents. ACC is doing some sort of collaboration with Oak Springs but the timing doesn’t work for anyone at the meeting to attend.

- Food and door prizes are effective. “When I invite people to things, they first thing they always ask is, ‘What will be there? Food?’”

- They should let us know about the problem as soon as it arises, and partner with the community to solve it.

- Now they’re doing all this stuff to save Johnston, four years after the TAKS scores were down. It’s hard to imagine Johnston could be saved now. But four years ago, why didn’t they say something?

- Don’t necessarily keep the communication at the school – “Half the parents here don’t have cars. They’re not going to get on a bus to go to a meeting. You have to come here.”

- They understand that the NCLB letters have to get sent out, but recommend they do a better job showing how AISD is addressing the problem on a district level. Otherwise “the good kids leave” and parents feel like they should pull their kids out of a “sinking ship.”

- “There should be a good enough reason if you’re going to close a school . . . and I don’t think there is a good enough reason.” But when pushed, he said that if the teachers weren’t teaching and the kids weren’t learning, it would be a good enough reason.

Any Recommendations for Policy or Procedure

- AISD should develop ways to better empower teachers and campus staff to develop strong relationships with parents. Then, use those networks to communicate important issues to parents.

- If the school is having a problem, address the community with the problem and ask for the community’s input on how to solve it.

- Find places that parents already are, and go to them to have meetings. Don't expect parents to go to the school.

Lessons Learned or Other Comments:

- In the last few years, they've seen tremendous change in the atmosphere in the school, and credit a change of principal.

- They shouldn't just look at the TAKS test in determining how well a school is doing.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication issues:
    - Involve the community on school problems
    - Communicate the problem as soon as it arises
        - Involve the CAC early in substantive issues
    - Good communication begins with a welcoming environment at an individual school
        - A drop in teacher turnover seems to help
        - Empower teachers and campus staff to develop strong relationships with parents
        - A change of principal has had a positive effect on the atmosphere at Oak Springs
    - Build personal relationships with parents
        - Most parents feel intimidated in policy discussions
    - In person meetings are good
        - The timing of the meeting is important
        - Food and door prices are effective to recruit people
        - Keep in mind parents without cares going to meetings – Go to places where parents already are
    - School staff should go door to door for important issues
    - Letters in the mail aren't necessarily effective
    - Repetition is important
    - Skepticism towards how much AISD wants parent involvement

- School concerns:
    - Closing schools should be a last resort, unless the students aren't learning
    - Shouldn't just look at the TAKS test for how well a school is doing

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Chris Riley

Type of Activity: Interview

Date of Activity: October 5, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Downtown resident and member of Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association, Old Austin Neighborhood Association, and Original City Neighborhood Association. Former chair of the Planning Commission.

Input Provided:

- The discussion focused largely on the relationship between a healthy central city and downtown and the overall health of the city. Maintaining a mix of uses, include residential uses, is critical to the health of a particular area, Riley emphasized. Areas without such diversity of uses can be out of balance and "can throw the whole urban ecology out of kilter." Residents help increase an area's safety, and in the case of downtown, encouraging residential uses supports important environmental goals. Keeping residents in the downtown and central city, Riley said, "serve's the community's interest in that it allows people to go through the day without getting in the car."

- Riley suggested that AISD use the city's Community Registry to maintain ongoing communications with nearby neighborhood associations, businesses, and other interested parties. Riley feels that district proposals to close or to make significant changes on a campus shouldn't come as a shock to surrounding communities. He offered the analogy of air quality non-attainment, suggesting that AISD articulate clear criteria for such decisions as well as a consistent warning process. If a school reaches the "red zone" in terms of dropping enrollment, he added, the district should hold a community meeting and consider adjusting boundaries. The residents in such an area, those with and without children, should be involved in the decision-making.

- Pease Elementary, the oldest continually operating school in the district, converted from a neighborhood school to a transfer-only school when the student population dropped. Downtown students now are assigned to Matthews Elementary.

- Riley encouraged AISD to recognize the value of keeping existing schools, especially those in the inner city. To close such schools, he said, is "short-sighted" and a "bad omen for the neighborhood." AISD continues to introduce magnet programs and academies, he said, and offered the Ann Richards school

as an example of a creative educational offering. Such a focus, he pointed out, “gives people a reason” to send their children to a particular campus. Citing New York and Vancouver as examples, Riley spoke about the nationwide trend toward the renewal of downtowns and speculated that increasing oil prices and congestion could add strength to this shift. He added that AISD will benefit from keeping “the bricks and mortar there” because when family populations in an area again rise, schools such as Pease can then convert back to neighborhood schools.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Representatives of Becker Action Committee

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 5, 2007

Number of People Reached: 3

- Lorie Barzano, Mary Diaz, Ann Kriss

Input Provided:

- All urged AISD to adopt better definitions of under- and over-enrolled and a mechanism for calculating capacity that would take into account the number of special programs that might be housed within a school. Becker, for example, houses two programs that serve the whole district: ACES and the district dyslexic office. Participants believe that such uses, which must be housed somewhere in the district, be counted toward a campus's utilization figures. In addition, participants noted that students on a campus like Becker may have particular needs. Rooms used for services that meet the particular needs of students (family support, tutoring, and outreach) should also be counted toward utilization percentages.

- In terms of AISD's current definitions of capacity, one participant indicated that 120% seems too high and that a campus should be considered over-enrolled at a lower number. Participants agreed that AISD should apply the term "under-enrolled" only once a campus has dropped below a certain percentage and has had a downward trend established over a period of several years; an enrollment that drops 5% for two consecutive years, for example, might trigger district and campus attention. Enrollment will fluctuate over time; AISD should adjust boundaries to better regulate over- and under-enrollment. The group did acknowledge that boundary changes are politically difficult.

- Participants believe assessments of under- and over-enrollment should also take into account how well a campus serves its students. Factors that should be considered include: particular needs of the student population, including socioeconomic status; extent to which needs of student population may demand facility space be allocated for extra support services; and how changes to a campus would affect the quality of life for students.

- Any changes to a school campus should take place over a minimum of three to five years. AISD should convey any proposals at a public meeting to which parents, school staff, neighborhood residents, business owners, and other members of the larger community should be invited. Information about the

proposal should be broadly disseminated through merchant groups, neighborhood associations, and churches. As one participant expressed, "Schools are the focal point of a community, and all should be involved and informed about potential changes."

- AISD should assist campuses struggling with dropping enrollment in developing action plans. Furthermore, the district should offer resources and assistance in implementing such plans. District-level resources that should be leveraged to help a campus achieve its action plan should include but not be limited to subject-area expertise; technology support; curriculum support; and communications assistance. Participants emphasized that AISD should be proactive in offers to brainstorm ideas and help leverage resources since communities and parents may not know what sort of assistance or resources they can access. AISD could and should find ways to facilitate communication among campus communities about the innovative ideas in place at certain schools. AISD should help schools develop marketing plans and efforts. AISD should provide assistance in helping campuses develop enhanced curricular programs that draw on schools' existing strengths or specialties.

- AISD should pursue multi-purposing opportunities (and should seek these out as alternatives to repurposing). One member of the group cited a recent approach from Dougherty Arts Center to lease space at Becker as an example of the need for AISD to facilitate such partnerships and to pursue them with enthusiasm.

- All felt strongly that AISD should commit to neighborhood schools. Neighborhood schools, one participant noted, serve an important democratic function, providing as they do a place where diverse neighbors come together and meet each other. Neighborhood schools provide enhanced educational opportunities. Students at a neighborhood school can participate more freely in after school opportunities since they do not have to depend on car transportation. At a school like Becker where all students walk, participation in after school programs remains among the highest in the district. Instructors have the flexibility to end programs at different times, so the offerings can be more creative. Parents tend to attend student events and meetings in larger numbers; higher parental involvement strongly correlates to higher student achievement.

Summary of Key Points:

- AISD should adopt better definitions of under- and over-enrollment
    - Schools should be termed as "under-enrolled" only once a campus has dropped below a certain percentage and has had a downward trend established over a period of several years
    - AISD should adjust boundaries to better regulate over- and under-enrollment
    - Considerations should include how well a campus serves its students.

    - Capacity calculations should consider special programs or special needs within a school

- Communication about changes regarding a particular school
    - Changes should take place over a minimum of three to five years
    - Proposals should be presented at a public meeting including all stakeholders
    - Information about proposals should be broadly disseminated

- AISD should provide support for campuses with dropping enrollment in developing action plans
    - Assistance in implementation
    - District resources could include but not be limited to: subject-area expertise; technology support; curriculum support; and communications assistance

- AISD should seek multi-purposing opportunities as alternatives to repurposing

- AISD should commit to neighborhood schools

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: South Central Coalition of Neighborhoods

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 6, 2007

Number of People Reached: 12
Lorrraine Atherton, Jeff Jack, Bobby Rigney (Zilker N.A.); Carol Gibbs, Oscar Lipschalk, Bryan King, Kevin Lewis, and Bill Stoughton, (South Lamar N.A.); Patty Sprinkle, (Galindo N.A.); Nan Clayton, Peter Hess, (Barton Hills N.A.); Cory Walton, (Bouldin Creek N.A.)

Input Provided:

- The assembled group spent thirty minutes of its regular monthly meeting addressing the focus group questions prepared by the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools.

- In a discussion about over- and under-enrollment, Bryan King urged AISD to assess, if not end, the open transfer policy as allowing students to transfer from their home campuses does factor into over- and under-enrollment. Others agreed; Patty Sprinkle, however, disagreed and noted that she transferred her child into Barton Hills because the neighborhood school (Galindo) was “terrible.”

- Lorraine Atherton, with much agreement from others, expressed strong concern about AISD’s current capacity definitions and determinations. She offered Zilker Elementary as an example; the school was originally built for fewer than 400 students and the core can only handle that number, but the district has added portable buildings and increased the capacity to 600. Bryan King pointed out that as a result, his son went to lunch at 10:20 a.m. while attending the school, and that the entire student body could not attend an assembly together.

- Jeff Jack observed that AISD’s operational paradigm is, in his opinion, not just flawed, but detrimental to educational goals. In his opinion, AISD operates using an industrial model of economy; the district’s evaluation of schools in economic terms of what efficiency is doesn’t relate to educational quality or to the reality of the community needs. He described the situation as a mismatch between the economy of scale philosophy at AISD and the reality of neighborhoods, where demographics will fluctuate over time. Jack encouraged AISD to adopt practices that would allow campuses to respond to fluctuations in enrollment. One such practice would be boundary changes. Another would be to incorporate design strategies that would result in more modular schools that could be expanded or shut down as needed.

- Cory Walton, with much agreement from others, articulated the need for better communication between the City of Austin and AISD. He also cited the need for market-driven incentives to encourage more housing in the central city for families and incentives and programs that would assist teachers in living in or near the neighborhoods where they teach.

- Several participants encouraged AISD to broaden its reach into the community. Often, they pointed out, AISD committees and task forces rely entirely on the school community, and individuals directly involved in a school don't necessarily reflect the community at large. Participants suggested that AISD communicate with stakeholders using the city's Community Registry. All believed that information about a campus's health needs to circulate beyond the individual school into the surrounding community. One suggestion was to mandate that Campus Advisory Councils include a representative from the neighborhood association, if one exists in that area.

- Participants expressed strong concerns about AISD's communication and relationships with the public. Most believe that AISD doesn't, in the words of one participant, "function as a public entity" and (in the words of another) instead "limits public participation." The problem, as participants view it, extends both to administration and to the trustees. As one participant expressed, "AISD cuts off elected representatives from communication." She and others urged AISD to provide email addresses that would allow constituents direct contact with their elected representatives. Providing addresses such as "place1@aisd.org" would obviate the need for a staff member to forward emails manually to trustees. Lorraine Atherton suggested that AISD should consider assigning more staff support to trustees so that they can be more accessible to constituents.

- Many participants felt that AISD administration seldom engages in open public processes but instead controls both the inputs into the system as well as the information released. The system "needs to open up," one participant explained. Kevin Lewis suggested that AISD hold an annual "state of the union" report, to which the entire community would be invited. The discussion concluded with many participants expressing their disappointment with the administration's responsiveness to the community and their strong encouragement that AISD take dramatic steps to be more responsive to community concerns.

Summary of Key Points:

- In terms of under/over-enrollment, AISD should end the open transfer policy.

- Participants expressed concern about current capacity definitions and determinations. In particular, there is a disconnect at some campuses between

core capacities (such as the cafeteria), and the capacity of classrooms and portables.

- Economic efficiency and economies of scale principles are not appropriate for schools when education should be focused on the quality of children's needs and the community.
    - Suggested ways to respond to changes in enrollment include boundary changes and innovative modular designs

- Communication:
    - There needs to be better communication between AISD and the City of Austin.
    - AISD should broaden its communication efforts. Suggestions included using the City of Austin's Community Registry and having a representative from the neighborhood association on a particular school's Campus Advisory Council (CAC).
    - AISD limits its communication with the public both from the administrative and Board levels. Suggestions included providing email addresses that would allow direct communication with trustees, and assigning more staff support to trustees so that they can be more accessible to constituents

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Travis Heights parents

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 7, 2007

Number of People Reached: 3

- Betty Weed, Vivian Ballard, and Laura Sajbel

Input Provided:

Communications:

- One participant identified communication as "one of AISD's biggest problems." All agreed that communications is an area deserving of attention and in need of being "refreshed" in terms of content and delivery method.

- Information gets to principals on a campus, but those principals get numerous emails and cannot always get the word out to others. The group suggested that AISD continue to expand its range of communications methods as some parents are very wired, while others do not have computers or prefer other methods.

- Participants offered the following suggestions:
    - Set up an e-list that would send out alerts to parents and other interested stakeholders about proposed changes on a campus
    - Post notices at schools
    - Send out releases to CAC and PTA members
    - Put information in newspaper – not just in advertisement form, but also on community calendars
    - Convey all information using plain English rather than "education-ease." Find ways to signify to recipients the importance and/or urgency of particular communications.
    - Continue/expand use of district surveys
    - Post information on neighborhood association lists in areas of the city that have active associations
    - Work with organizations like Austin Interfaith, Healthy Kitchen, and other similar organizations to get the word out about important school issues
    - Develop (or expand) email list for 100 or so community leaders
    - Drawing on the district's substantial resources as well as those of groups like the Friends of Texas Public Schools, spread the good news about Austin's public schools. In addition to expanding marketing efforts, AISD should provide guidance on its website about how to choose a school. The first point on this list should be to visit one's neighborhood school.

- One participant offered the opinion that AISD tends to be very "inward-looking" – in that the same individuals often appear on different AISD committees. She offered the strong suggestion that AISD change this practice as part of making sure the district is really connected to the community.

Policy:

Capacity calculations

- Participants noted that the district's capacity of calculations should take into account the difference between new schools and older campuses. Older structures tend to be "funkier" in terms of layout, maintenance needs, and other related issues. The smaller classrooms that characterize older schools like the historic Travis Heights Elementary cannot accommodate the same number of students as a classroom in a brand new school might. Travis Heights's square footage only nets it three full time custodians, despite the fact that as an older school, it has no elevators. The participants urged the district to remeasure older schools and to adopt capacity standards that reflect the unique circumstances of these older structures rather than the standards more appropriate for brand new schools.

- Largely through parental and community effort, Travis Heights Elementary enrollment has increased substantially. This increase has been accompanied by other changes at the campus. The campus now holds 600 students, but participants felt strongly that students and staff are now too crowded. Although the district has indicated 700 as the figure for full capacity at Travis Heights, all three participants felt that number far exceeded the actual appropriate capacity for the school. Seven hundred students would fit in the school, one participant said, "if they stood in the hallways holding hands."

- Participants offered several examples to illustrate the effects of this disconnect between actual appropriate capacity and the district's standards. Students now have lunch periods from 10:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Rooms once reserved for special educational purposes no longer exist. One participant pointed out that her children had independently expressed to her how upset they are at the loss of a science laboratory, for example. Once students in Travis Heights had a place where they could go and conduct the kind of messy experiments teachers don't always want in their classroom; that lab has now been converted to another function. A "quiet room" once available for Travis Heights's special needs students no longer exists, although those students would still benefit from having a place to go when they need to be alone and away from the stimulation of a classroom.

- Participants pointed out other variables that the district should consider when arriving at capacity calculations. Special needs students require more staff and administrative resources, yet the district does not consider such matters in discussions about capacity.

- Once the district has re-measured older schools, it should then adopt different practices regarding administrative resources. For example, if Travis Heights is declared at full capacity at 500 students, then AISD should consider it a "complete school" and assign it an assistant principal or at least pro-rate that position.

Promotion of neighborhood schools

- Participants focused their responses to the "guiding questions" on suggestions for how the district should handle "under-enrollment," which they suggest be handled differently than situations of over-enrollment.

- Participants urged the district to adopt multi-year approaches to schools identified as "under-enrolled." Increasing the enrollment at Travis Heights took time, as they explained. They had to educate their neighbors and to address neighbors' concerns and misperceptions/ misconceptions about the quality of the education students at Travis Heights Elementary receive—and this effort is still ongoing. Some parents believe their children won't be challenged by the curriculum. Others place (too) high value on things like the Blue Ribbon designations and will move their children from campus to campus if/when a school loses that status. Still others believe rumors and do not even take time to tour the school unless neighbors reach out and encourage them to do so.

- The group emphasized that if the district really feels it necessary to consider changes to a campus, the decision-making process needed to include all stakeholders—parents, the neighborhood, and staff.

- Participants felt strongly, however, that AISD must commit to supporting neighborhood schools. This commitment should be an explicit philosophy; as participants emphasized, AISD should not be "closing schools in the central city and following growth to outlying areas," a practice that "perpetuates and promotes sprawl." As one participant explained, "It is very frustrating to see the City of Austin devote resources to densifying [the center city] when the school district doesn't support that goal." Instead of watching where people move and locating schools in those areas, participants agreed, AISD should be working in partnership with the City of Austin to explore ways to keep center city schools viable.

- In addition to the suggestions listed above, participants identified other specific ways AISD can better promote its neighborhood schools. The first would be to establish a dedicated office to support neighborhood schools. Such an effort would be in sync with other district goals to enhance curriculum through magnet programs or high school redesign. As one participant put it, there is no reason why every district school can't be a good one with attractive educational offerings. A district office could also provide school and community partners with resources—including access to AISD's marketing resources—that will help them

attract families and students to “under-enrolled” schools. Such support would begin at the time when the district noted a downward trend in enrollment.

- Participants felt strongly that AISD should consider factors other than enrollment when making decisions regarding schools; in fact, one participant asserted that enrollment “should be at the bottom of the list” of factors. Participants feel AISD decisions should first and foremost consider what school settings are most conducive and effective for allowing students to get a good education; decisions should “focus on the success of each child as well as the student population as a whole.” In conclusion, participants emphasized again that as soon as enrollment at a particular campus starts to decline, AISD should immediately consider what the district can do to shore up that school: the City of Austin and most Austinites want the central city to remain family friendly, and maintaining existing schools in imperative to that goal.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communications:
    - Communications is a key area to address in AISD
    - Principles cannot always to convey information as they receive many emails.
    - AISD should continue to expand its range of communication methods.
    - Participants offered many suggestions on communication methods (in bullet form above).
    - The same individuals tend to appear on the different AISD committees, and representation should be expanded.

- Policy:
    - Capacity calculations:
        - The district’s capacity calculations should consider the differences between older and newer campuses.
        - Participants felt that the full capacity number of 700 at Travis Heights Elementary was not appropriate for the school. The current capacity of 600 already feels too crowded.
        - Examples of capacity conflicts include early and late lunches and the elimination of rooms once designated for special education purposes.
        - Special needs students require more resources
    - Promotion of neighborhood schools:
        - AISD should handle cases of under-enrollment different from cases of over-enrollment
        - The district should have a multi-year process for schools designated as under-enrolled. At Travis Heights, it took time for neighbors to reach out to other neighbors to clear up any misconceptions on the quality of education at Travis heights.

- Changes to a campus should include all stakeholders in the decision-making process.
- AISD should strongly support neighborhood schools and should find ways to keep center city schools viable. This includes working in partnership with the City of Austin
- AISD should establish an office to support neighborhood schools and attract people to under-enrolled campuses
- Other than enrollment, AISD should consider what school settings are appropriate for students to receive a quality education

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Sara Clark

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: October 8, 2007 and October 16, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Parent and Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association officer

Input Provided:

Comments from October 8, 2007:

I just took your on-line survey. I thought the question regarding whether AISD should ever consider under-enrollment or over-enrollment to close or divide a school was worded unfairly. It is two questions and may require two answers. Someone might want to answer that they agree that AISD should consider over-enrollment when "dividing" a school, but strongly disagree that under-enrollment should be a reason for closing a school. The survey did not give any opportunity to express this view. Nor did it explain what "dividing" a school and various other terms used in the survey actually mean. Please include this comment in your survey data.

Comments from October 16, 2007:

I think that under-enrollment should not be a factor for closing a neighborhood school. Under-enrollment might be a reason for shifting school populations, however, so that we can maintain neighborhood schools. This is especially important where there are underprivileged children in a neighborhood who need access to education to be as easy as possible. Also, ensuring that as many children as possible can walk or bike to school fits in with the goal of decreasing our community's "carbon footprint."

Summary of Key Points:

- Under-enrollment should not be a factor for closing a neighborhood school, but it could be a reason for shifting school populations.
- Underprivileged children in a neighborhood need easy access to a school
- Important to ensure that as many children as possible can walk or bike to school

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Capital Idea parents

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 10, 2007

Number of People Reached: 15 parents

- These are parents, many of them single, who are putting themselves through ACC while working. They are not involved in their PTAs and CACs because they are way too busy.

Input Provided:

Communication issues:

- They currently get information from principal e-mails; flyers; physical letters; the Wednesday folders.

- There was much discussion of what does not work with regard to communication:
  - They don't get information from word of mouth.
  - One said she got information from the media but it scared her, it seemed like it was always the bad and controversial stuff.
  - Parents night seemed "aimed at two-parent households"
  - The problem with personal phone calls is they're hard to reach, or "You're trying to listen but the kids are screaming and you've got food burning on the stove."

- After much discussion of what did not work, the stakeholders came to general agreement that when AISD has a message to communicate, it should get out of the schools and go to places where people are already going, such as the Texas Parks and Wildlife festival, the Pecan Street festival, benefit walks/runs, or even the grocery store. "Everybody else sets up booths. Why don't they do the same thing?"
  - "It's not how do you get people to come to you. It's how do you go to them? They're not going to go to you until you engage them."

- On the campus, they identified teachers as important communicators. However, they expressed concerns that because so many teachers are so young and turn over so frequently, it's difficult to develop relationships of trust with them.

- They identified principals as the most important communicator: "The principal needs to be out front every morning, greeting the students, talking to the parents, having coffee."
  - However, many parents feel intimidated talking to because their English

isn't perfect or because they themselves lack education. That is why developing a long-term trust relationship is so critical.

- They wanted to see flyers up around the neighborhood. "I always see flyers up about the neighborhood meetings. Could they do the same thing?"

- They also said snail-mail letters attracted their attention that something was really important.

Closing Schools:

- Academic performance should be a factor. Even if a school is under-enrolled, if the students are performing well you should keep the school open.

- Physical deterioration would be a reason to close a school.

- AISD should engage people as soon as signs appear that a school could one day be in peril. "We all just heard Johnston is in critical condition and everyone is panicking. Apparently it's been in trouble for three or four years. Why didn't we hear about this sooner?"
    - However, they expressed concern that "hey, the school is in peril" letters would lead people to transfer their kids out of the school, worsening the problem. So, any communication indicating should include information about what the school's game plan for improvement is.

- They didn't think there was a specific amount of time the process should take, other than a general sense that if AISD is informing parents early about a problem that could lead to closure, it would by necessity be a several-year process.

- As an alternative to closing, they suggested staff rotation – moving all the staff from a school that is excelling to one that is not.

Recommendations for Policy or Procedure:

- Teacher's continuing education should include classes and workshops about how to develop relationships with parents.

- AISD should develop an outreach presence at non-AISD community events.

Lessons Learned or Other Comments:

- AISD should consider the strain that closing a school can place on already-busy parents, because it can create or exacerbate transportation issues.

- As described above, if a school is performing or improving, it shouldn't be closed.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication issues:
    - Problems with current communication strategies
    - AISD presence at non-AISD community events
    - Teachers are important communicators
        - Concern about young teachers and frequent turnovers – establishing relationships and developing trust
        - Continuing education classes and workshops to help teachers develop relationships with parents
    - Principal is the most important communicator
        - Should make their presence known and make the parents feel welcomed regardless of language and other barriers
        - Long term trust relationship is important
    - Flyers posted around the neighborhood and letters in the mail should be utilized.

- Closing Schools:
    - If a school is performing or improving, it shouldn't be closed.
    - Physical deterioration would be a reason to close a school
    - Early communication about possible school closures – process would be several years
    - Alternative to closing – staff rotation from better performing school to low performing schools
    - Transportation issues – could be a problem for parents that must find alternative ways to get their children to school

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: McCallum vertical team elementary schools

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 10, 2007

Number of People Reached: 9

- Ann Baddour, Gullett; Kevin Golliher, Highland Park; Andrea Griswold, Gullett Sally Hunter, Highland Park; Pamela McKinney, Campbell Elementary; Sarah Nelson, Gullett; Janie Ruiz, Gullett; Yvonne Steckel, Gullett Tammie Workman, Highland Park

Input Provided:

- Overcrowding Issue:
  - Personnel
  - Space
  - Connection with kids
  - Overcrowding of classroom

- Under-utilized or under-enrolled:
  - Affects staffing-leveling, quality teachers, retention

Any Recommendations for Policy or Procedure:

- Overcrowding Issue:
  - Better planning
  - School facility flexibility

- Under-utilized or under-enrolled:
  - 6th grade on elementary schools
  - Bilingual-only campuses vs. English/ESL- only campuses
  - "Clearer" definition of an "under-utilized" space
  - Policy of "no cap" on neighborhood school

- Public Engagement:
  - Far advance notice- month
  - Food and child care
  - Impact of meeting
  - Listen critically and deeply- not just put on a "show"
  - Involve media in outreach efforts
  - Community liaisons being used strategically
  - Hold in important places to that community
  - Talk about the economics of it all

    - Tap into community, not just parents of school-age kids

- District considerations of under-utilized or overcrowding campuses:
    - Creative
    - Specialized (example: dual language)
    - Boundary issues
    - Transfer issues

- Who needs to be involved?
    - Parents
    - Community groups
    - Kids!
    - Businesses
    - Realtors
    - Pre-school program

- Other factors besides enrollment:
    - Culture
    - Needs of population
    - Demographic changes
    - SES
    - Planning of housing market
    - Inherit problem with city planning!

Summary of Key Points:

- Please see above input

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Rich MacKinnon

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: October 11, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Part of the Urban Transportation Commission

Input Provided:

- AISD land use and site selection is critical to the strategic land use plan for the region. Potential homeowners may overlook central city properties because they believe the "best schools" (or at least the newest ones) are in the suburbs. As a result, AISD is a major contributor to sprawl and its traffic-related problems.

- Accordingly, it can be a major contributor to the solution. I'd like to see more AISD investment in existing central campuses so there isn't such a dichotomy among the new suburban schools and the old central schools. Is it possible to develop spending parity per campus, regardless of its location within the district? This sort of reinvestment by AISD will go a long ways towards evening property values, reducing congestion, and increasing home values, and property tax revenues on undervalued homes near "undesirable" (under-invested) schools.

Summary of Key Points:

- AISD actions regarding school location is important in the region
    - Schools effect where people buy homes
    - Could be a contributor to sprawl

- Recommends:
    - Investment in existing central campuses

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association General Meeting (Brief focus group in course of regular monthly meeting)

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 16, 2007

Number of People Reached: approx. 22

Input Provided:

- Attendees wanted to first address the situation at Becker Elementary, Bouldin Creek's neighborhood elementary and the site of the association meeting. Concerns were raised about the way AISD measures capacity; attendees identified Becker's portable buildings (which house the ACES program) as one example of how the district's calculations do not always match the school's experience of facility usage. Participants, including those who had thoroughly reviewed district material, expressed confusion about which programs at Becker counted toward the total and how the district reaches capacity determinations. Some attendees expressed their opinion that the attendance zone for Becker Elementary needs to be larger and that redrawing boundaries to send students to Travis Heights has hastened Becker's declining enrollment. Others cited the perception of non-performance as a deterrent to neighborhood families sending their children to the school. "Battling that perception is important," one attendee pointed out, and others agreed that the district could better support the Bouldin Creek community (and others facing similar circumstances) in terms of this issue.

- With regard to the broader question of facility use across the district, attendees encouraged AISD to send letters to all households within an attendance zone if considering a facility use change. Attendees encouraged AISD and the City of Austin to collaborate more effectively and to align and coordinate their planning efforts. Both entities must also align their larger efforts with the area's neighborhood plan, participants emphasized. As an example, one attendee referenced the City's goal of increasing the number of downtown households by 25,000 in relationship to considering the closure of nearby neighborhood schools. "Where are the children of those 25,000 people downtown going to school?" he asked.

- Attendees expressed a strong interest in seeing AISD maintain its central city schools, which they regard as valuable existing assets. They suggested that AISD should work with Ryan Robinson, the city demographer, to address the growing "doughnut" effect in the central city, where families continue to move away from the urban center. Several attendees noted that in the case of Bouldin

Creek, the neighborhood was clearly experiencing a baby boom that the district should take into consideration. “There are baby buggies up and down the street,” one attendee said. At a minimum, another attendee emphasized, AISD should maintain its schools as educational facilities rather than closing campuses. Suggestions that the district should consider for balancing enrollment included changing boundaries and evaluating the district transfer policy.

Summary of Key Points:

- Concerns about capacity measurements and determinations:
    - Becker Elementary houses the ACES program
    - Confusion about which programs at Becker counted in capacity determinations
    - Becker’s attendance zone should be larger
    - Perceptions of low academic performance at Becker – prevents parents in neighborhood from sending their children to Becker

- If Considering a facility use change, AISD should send letters to all households within an attendance zone.

- AISD and the City of Austin should collaborate more effectively and align and coordinate their planning efforts.

- AISD should maintain their central city schools
    - At least maintain as educational facilities
    - AISD should work the City’s demographer
    - AISD should balance enrollment by changing attendance boundaries and reconsidering the district transfer policy

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Mark Haller

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: October 16, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Parent and member of Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association

Input Provided:

- How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?
    - Well, I answered in the survey that email was the best way to contact me, and I think is the most reliable way for a lot of people. However, I'm unclear if that is what the question is after.
    - Part of my problem with the approach that was taken in 2006 was the sudden nature of it, and the attitude by administration that this was more or less a done deal. There was very little sentiment of "working with" the community. If I had to guess, getting Becker off the books was the sole objective and everything else, including community input appeared to be an obstacle. Luckily we had a board that was too reticent (for whatever reason) to make a big ugly decision like shutting down a school such as Becker or Oak Springs, and frankly I think our current board is getting a reputation for indecision as well so I consider that a "good thing."

- What do “over-enrollment” and “under-enrollment” mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?
    - These are big deals in terms of getting the most out of our tax dollar, and I think I get that we basically have a constant looming fiscal crisis at the district. Transportation plans that would bus kids out of other neighborhoods seem like a last resort. Ultimately, I think Becker needs to get its kids from the existing base of neighbors. That may be very difficult, however. Even if the demographics are there (which they seem to be), selling Becker faces a number of problems.

- How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?
    - I haven’t been involved in that part of things at all, but it seems like our neighborhood and Becker staff are doing all the right things by setting up committees of interested people.

    - I think it is on the district and community to find out *why* enrollment is down, or *why* performance is bad (Becker meets the requirements) then work toward those ends.
    - Personally, I have an ongoing debate with my wife about sending our child to public school. We really can't afford private school, but we both have concerns about how accountability and test taking trends have affected the public school classroom. I think we'd be interested in the charter possibilities at Becker.

- Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools increase enrollment and performance?
    - Clearly parents, teachers, administrators, even the classified staff, and neighborhood residents have a lot at stake for keeping the school open, and increasing enrollment and performance will ensure that.
    - To me, if you don't know anything about Becker, and you live in the neighborhood, you should try to find some time to volunteer. There are tons of opportunities to get involved with the school, including mentoring, garden volunteers, and helping out with occasional project. To me, that will help people see at least part of the real Becker, and I think that would help a lot of perceptions.

- Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider in making decisions about your school?
    - Public space as an anchor for the community, including students and parents. Selling the property would destroy a sanctuary for play and exercise in the hood.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication with stakeholders:
    - Email is the most reliable form of communication
    - Problem with the approach for community input involving the possible closure of Becker Elementary

- Over-enrollment and under-enrollment:
    - Important issues for getting the most out of our tax dollar
    - Busing kids from other neighborhoods seem like a last resort
    - Schools, like Becker, face problems of selling the school to the existing neighborhood residents

- Process recommendations:
    - Setting up committees of interested people are good
    - Should also concentrate on *why* some schools are under-enrolled or low performing
    - Has concerns about accountability and test taking trends in public schools

        - Interested in charter school possibilities at Becker

- Key stakeholders in community that should be involved in process:
    - Parents, teachers, administrators, classified staff, and neighborhood residents

- Other factors to be considered:
    - Schools as anchors for the community

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Sally King

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: October 17, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Resident of the Bouldin Creek neighborhood

Input Provided:

- Thank you for your tireless efforts in this area. I feel strongly that the future needs of our neighborhood are not being taken into account. We are surrounded by young families with babies in our neck of the 'hood, at least a dozen preschoolers. I don't understand the disconnect between the AISD board and the 'new urban' city planners, why discourage sprawl with one department and starve the inner city schools in another? Why are so many far from the city core suburban schools being built, and the inner city kids are having their schools closed?

Summary of Key Points:

- Future needs of Bouldin Creek neighborhood are not being considered
- Young families with babies are in the neighborhood
- Disconnect between AISD actions and “new urban” planning principles
- Suburban schools are being built, while some central city schools face possible closures.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Representatives from Becker's Campus Advisory Council

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 18, 2007

Number of People Reached: 5

- Dora Lopez, Lorie Barzano, Mary Diaz, Brad Roalson, Elaine Diaz

Input Provided:

Capacity determinations

- Participants felt strongly that qualitative issues must be brought into determinations of capacity. Important questions when considering a campus would be whether the space is being utilized well, and if there is a return on the district's (and taxpayers') investment. Other qualitative issues would include (but not be limited to) whether the school serves a large number of at-risk students; where and what would be the alternatives if a campus were to close or be "repurposed"; and how parents/students get to the school and how parental involvement would be affected if students move to new campuses.

- Participants felt strongly that maintaining a neighborhood school, where parents and students can walk to the campus, was a strong value. Not relying on bus transportation increases the number of students who will participate in afterschool activities and increases the number of parents who attend meetings and special events. As one participant articulated, "creating more barriers for parents creates more barriers for students." Not only does parental participation enhance relationships with teachers and administration, it also has positive effects on student test results and academic performance.

- Participants regard closing a neighborhood school as an extreme solution. They believe the district should first explore other uses that might supplement the educational use—an alternative that might lower the costs of that facility. While the resulting situation might not be the most cost-efficient solution, it would be the best solution in the long run because it would (1) allow the district to retain that school once the demographics of a neighborhood changed and (2) not disrupt students and the larger campus community. Neighborhood schools also offer other benefits that participants urge the district to recognize. Neighborhood schools are crucial to the city's goal of encouraging walkable communities; walkable communities, in turn, support important environmental and health goals. Many neighborhood schools are important to the historical fabric of a community, and some have served several generations of neighborhood families. Participants also pointed out that AISD benefits from having some smaller

campuses; having a more diverse portfolio provides more options to Austin residents, and having options could increase the likelihood that a family will send its children to public school.

Communication

- Participants urged that AISD expand its communication and outreach to parents with children younger than school-aged and to couples who don't yet have children, in addition to the broader community of stakeholders who may not be directly involved in a particular campus. As decisions about a particular campus affect everyone in that community, AISD should develop ways of communicating with those broader stakeholders. Participants suggested businesses, churches, and neighborhood associations as just a few stakeholder groups who should be involved in addition to the campus community. They encouraged AISD to communicate through as many avenues as possible—what one participant referred to as "guerrilla marketing." Methods could include advertising in the *Chronicle* and *Statesman*; allowing interested parties to register for email "alerts"; and in-person discussions or phonecalls.

- On a related point, participants urged AISD to post agendas for trustee meetings much earlier so that interested individuals can attend.

Collaborative Decision-Making

- Participants noted that early communication from the district on any proposed facility changes was key, both to the campus and to the larger community. Adequate time was also necessary for the CAC to notify stakeholders, formulate responses, and undertake any necessary planning.

- For overenrolled schools, participants suggested that AISD might pursue immediate options that could alleviate a situation, such as temporary boundary re-alignments. They offered, however, that such schools will need as much lead time as possible before any major decisions and felt that at least one year was essential so that, among other things, certain students could be grandfathered. (On a related note, one participant encouraged AISD to provide information to the city-wide community about the extent to which the district has temporary buildings in use and about any long-term plans for facility expansion.)

- If the district is considering closing a campus, stakeholders should receive notice at least three to five years in advance so that the community has time to work toward a solution. Participants stressed that during that period, AISD should actively participate with stakeholders to effect change on that campus. Examples of district action would include assisting campuses in making connections with other campuses to share "contacts, resources, and best practices."

- They stressed that more collaborative decision-making with the community would be of real benefit to the district: as the challenges facing AISD are big ones and require lots of brainpower, the more people involved in discussing challenges

and possible solutions, the better. As one participant described, AISD should shift from presenting a proposal and eliciting a reaction to describing the problem to the affected community and, at a minimum, providing several alternatives for the district and community to discuss. As another participant explained, the proposal would then be a “work-in-progress” rather than a “done deal,” with “let’s work together” as the overall message conveyed by the district.

- Participants emphasized that communities will need consistent support from the district to evaluate proposals and/or generate new ideas and alternatives. During the process, the district should assist stakeholders in assessing alternatives, including providing feedback on the feasibility of alternatives that might come from the community. The district should also make information, including data, relevant laws, and the like, readily accessible to the community. Participants understood that communities might not be aware of district constraints that would make certain proposals impossible or unrealistic; ongoing, clear communication would make stakeholders aware of those constraints and would allow them to move forward in constructive and effective ways. Participants stressed again and again that the process should be a collaborative one in which AISD provides infrastructure, support, and assistance in generating ideas.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: South Lamar Neighborhood Association

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 18, 2007

Number of People Reached: approx. 12

- This brief discussion occurred about midway through a regular neighborhood association meeting attended by about 12 members and several other guests. The boundaries of this association are Oltorf Street to the north, Ben White to the south, South Lamar/Manchaca to the west, and the Union Pacific Railroad to the east.

Input Provided:

Policy suggestions:

- Several members urged AISD to reconsider its transfer policy and to "put resources into all schools" so that schools exhibit fewer differences in educational offerings and quality.

- One member and local business owner cited the gap between the declining enrollments in central city schools—which, he pointed out, mirrors a nationwide trend—and the City of Austin's explicit goal of encouraging more density in that area of town. Attendees encouraged AISD to keep in mind that neighborhoods go through lifecycles and phases and that decisions related to a school's future should be long-term in perspective. Calculations of campus enrollment should review a period of at least several years and should consider that information alongside general demographic trends in that area.

- Possible changes affecting a campus should be addressed with community stakeholders several years in advance of any potential implementation; many participants also urged AISD to communicate earlier, more broadly, and more effectively about any challenges facing a particular campus (see ideas below). Participants did acknowledge that steps might need to be taken to alleviate overcrowding at a campus, in which case AISD should begin contacting stakeholders as soon as any change is contemplated. Several people referred to Zilker as overcrowded, and one participant noted that his son had lunch at 10:20 a.m. as a result of the large numbers of students on that campus—many of whom transfer into the school from other attendance zones.

- In terms of other factors they would suggest AISD consider, attendees urged AISD to remain aware of the role schools play within a neighborhood, and the correlation between strong schools and successful communities. Several

attendees added that schools are not just as educational resources, but as "community assets," serving as much-needed public gathering spots for voting, meetings, and similar uses. Others cited relationships between school closures or significant campus changes such as "repurposing" and incidences of crime. They also pointed out that such campus changes have a "ripple effect" on nearby businesses.

Process suggestions:

- Participants encouraged AISD to consider new ways to communicate with stakeholders. Communication suggestions included:
    1. Using the City of Austin's community registry to send information out to neighborhood associations and other registered groups and organizations
    2. Partner with Austin Energy to provide information within utility bills in a geographic area
    3. Hold open houses to poll users on opinions and to engage them in brainstorming
    4. Notify and involve other potentially affected campuses and their community stakeholders
    5. Provide information about schools at grocery stores

- One attendee offered the suggestion that AISD distribute an annual campus report card tracking performance as well as enrollment and potentially other issues. This report card would enhance communication between the district and stakeholders and should be distributed widely, including perhaps in utility bills as suggested above.

- Participants emphasized that AISD should engage a broad-range of community members in decisions affecting schools. In terms of specific groups, participants urged AISD to communicate with business owners and people without children in addition to families and staff within a particular school community. As one attendee put it, every taxpayer in the community is a stakeholder in decision-making regarding schools, and if AISD wants community members to "cheerfully listen" and support bond initiatives, then AISD should be prepared to "cheerfully listen" when those stakeholders request a voice in decision-making processes.

Summary of Key Points:

- Reconsider transfer policy

- Should consider long-term population and demographic changes in an area keeping in mind neighborhood lifecycles

- Communicate issues with stakeholder more broadly and effectively several years in advance

- Should consider the correlation between strong schools and successful communities as well as the role they play in neighborhoods

- Communications suggestions: utilize city of Austin's community registry, provide information within utility bills, hold open houses, notify and involve other potentially affected campuses and their community stakeholders, provide information at grocery stores

- Could provide stakeholders with an annual campus report card tracking performance as well as enrollment and potentially other issues.

- District should engage a broad-range of community members in decisions affecting schools

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Meodowbrook Apartments

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: October 26, 2007

Number of People Reached: 8

- 30-minute meeting with group of Spanish-dominant moms at Meadowbrook Apartments in South Austin.

Input Provided:

General Comments:

- The majority of the participants were recent immigrants with a limited knowledge of English. All of them lived at the Meadowbrook Apartment complex (160 units) on West Live Oak. All except for one were mothers of school-age children. One participant was a 60 year-old grandmother of 11. She spoke both English and Spanish fluently and was active in the education of her grandchildren and interacted with their schools.

- None of the participants was familiar with over/under enrollment.

- None wanted schools to close and thought the district should keep campuses open at all costs.

- None wanted to switch their children from their schools and cited proximity to school as a main reason.

- None owned a computer. None had an Internet connection at home. Most had never used the Internet.

- None were familiar with a Parent Support Specialist (Becker has no PSS, although the Communities in Schools representative seemed to function as the de facto liaison between the mothers and the school). Participants were very happy with her.

- Participant's children attended Fulmore, Becker and Travis. One participant had no children.

- Participants normally communicated with teachers and considered them the first line of contact with the school.

- All participants had gone to their school to speak to their child's teacher (show of hands). Two had spoken to someone other than a teacher.

- Only one mother participant had not gone to the school and said the teacher had not asked her to go.

- When asked how they preferred receiving information from their schools, the majority expressed a preference for regular mail and notes or flyers sent from the school office or teacher -- in both languages -- so they could refer to the terminology in English if needed.

- Participants asked if schools could send speakers twice a year to the Meadowbrook apartments to give parents an orientation in Spanish of "who" to speak with at the schools and where to go with questions.

Quotes:

- "I had my children in a school in which the Principal was not bilingual and did not attempt to talk to us. I went to two meetings, but I never knew what was going on. I ended up talking to the teacher about everything. Now that I'm in Travis, I'm very happy with Principal Garganta. But before, I did not feel welcome at the school."

- "Bilingual teachers and counselors make me feel welcome at the school."

- "I want to help at the school. If they ask me to just come to help pick up or do gardening or something, I'll do it. They are helping my children and I want to help the school, but I do not know how I can help."

- "It would be nice to have school representatives come out to the community too and talk to us and tell us how we can help. We have monthly meetings here at the apartment and I could get many moms to attend. It would be much easier for us if we had a meeting here right after school. A lot of moms don't know who to talk to at the school."

- "I just do not know who to talk to at the school other than my son's teacher. I wish there was an orientation just for Spanish speaking parents so that we know who to speak with."

- "Sometimes I feel like we are imposing on others at a meeting when we ask questions. It takes longer to translate things."

- "The teacher is the one I go to whenever I have a question. If she sends a note, I go to the school."

- “I feel like I don’t know what’s going on when there isn’t a translator at a school meeting and I don’t want to ask a question because I don’t know what has been said.”

- “I don’t know everything that’s going on at the school, but if I can help, I will. I want to help my children to learn.”

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Liveable City

Type of Activity: Report from Liveable City

Date of Activity: October 31, 2007

Number of People Reached:

- Liveable City Education Committee: Dr. Catharine Echols, Dr. Kevin Foster, Marguerite Jones, Louis Malfaro, Jill McRae, Susan Moffat (chair), Jim Walker, Wendi White

Input Provided:

See attached report

Facing the Future:
Key Recommendations for
Rebuilding Trust in AISD

Report to the
Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools

Submitted by Liveable City
October 31, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pressures on the Austin Independent School District (AISD) at this time are enormous: a growing population of high-needs students, lack of adequate public funding, unchecked new development that plays havoc with traditional enrollment predictions, and punitive state and federal mandates that often disregard the most basic realities of teaching and learning. In the face of such pressures, it is easy to fall into a desperate shell game, lurching from one crisis to the next. But it is now, when a defining vision may seem an unaffordable luxury, that we most need a solid foundation that reflects our core values as a community. Schools are the heart of our community and every child deserves a challenging, enriching education -we cannot risk losing sight of these basic tenets.

The Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools (CCNS) has been charged with creating process and policy recommendations for the AISD Board of Trustees about how best to deal with major decisions that affect our public schools, such as those triggered by failing TAKS scores or significant under-or over-enrollment. Liveable City submits this report to the committee as a synthesis of information gained during ongoing conversations with the community and our own personal experiences as parents, professionals and volunteers in AISD. The report provides a discussion of policy and process issues related to major decisions affecting Austin's public schools and offers the following proposed action items for AISD.

Policy Action Items (1- 5)

1. Adopt a formal public policy that commits AISD to three fundamental goals as a foundation for decision-making:
    - To provide an equitable, enriched and challenging education for all of Austin's children;
    - To engage the community to ensure a true public voice in important decisions affecting our public schools; and
    - To act as a responsible partner in community planning by acknowledging the crucial role schools play in shaping our city, committing to reinvestment in our vital central city schools and recognizing that neighborhood schools should only be closed as an extreme last resort after all other options have been exhausted.
2. Commit to changing AISD's institutional culture to rebuild trust with the community, including a stated policy that district staff and elected representatives will communicate fully with community members by providing same information available to district decision-makers.
3. Re-evaluate standardized testing policies under district control, such as benchmarks and field testing, and partner with the community to work for positive change in state and national accountability testing systems.
4. Make middle school improvement an immediate priority, with an emphasis on strong community involvement, giving first priority to low-performing schools.

5. Support and empower AISD faculty and administrators in identifying and sharing effective, innovative approaches to teaching and learning, giving strongest consideration to the recommendations of those who are most actively involved in our classrooms.

Process Action Items (6 -11)

6. Adopt an early notice policy to immediately communicate with families and school communities at first sign of trouble, such as a school failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress or experiencing significant over-or under-enrollment.
7. Develop a clearly-worded notice letter, including a distinctive banner on the envelope and letterhead designed to alert the recipient to the seriousness of the problem. The notice letter should state the nature of problem, explain any legal rights families may have, and set a date, time and location for the first community meeting on this issue.
8. Develop a list of key community partners to also receive the above-described early notice letter when a school is in trouble or facing major change.
9. Develop a clear time-line for decisions involving schools, with a minimum of three years for major decisions, noting that severe over-enrollment may require swifter action. Sufficient time must be allowed to work with the community to develop and consider alternatives, again recognizing that neighborhood schools should only be closed as an extreme last resort after all other options have been exhausted.
10. Identify clear lines of communication and accountability within AISD, particularly for Issues concerning district employees, and provide this information annually to parents with their first-day packet. Information should provide appropriate steps for formally or informally appealing staff decisions, getting approval for proposed projects, seeking help with staff or leadership problems, and explaining the role and limitations of the district ombudsman.
11. Provide direct email communication between community and elected board officials.

Liveable City is a nonprofit organization working to create a community consensus for policies that address the long term social, environmental and economic needs of the people of Austin. Learn more at www.liveablecity.org.

BACKGROUND

The pressures on the Austin Independent School District (AISD) at this time are enormous: a growing population of high-needs students, lack of adequate public funding, unchecked new development that plays havoc with traditional enrollment predictions, and punitive state and federal mandates that often disregard the most basic realities of teaching and learning. In the face of such pressures, it is easy to fall into a desperate shell game, lurching from one crisis to the next. But it is now, when a defining vision may seem an unaffordable luxury, that we most need a solid foundation that reflects our core values as a community. Schools are the heart of our community and every child deserves a challenging, enriching education - we cannot risk losing sight of these basic tenets.

The Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools (CCNS) has been charged with creating process and policy recommendations for the AISD Board of Trustees about how best to deal with major decisions that affect our public schools, such as those triggered by failing TAKS scores or significant under-or over-enrollment. Liveable City submits this report to the committee as a synthesis of information gained during ongoing conversations with the community and our own personal experiences as parents, professionals and volunteers in AISD.

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ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Liveable City presents the following issues and recommendations for consideration by the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools. Issues are divided into two sections, one for policy and another for process, and are followed by a list of proposed actions items referencing each issue by number.

Policy Issues and Recommendations (1-8)

1. AISD SHOULD ADOPT A STRONG OVERARCHING POLICY THAT REFLECTS COMMUNITY VALUES AND PRIORITIES. Because of the continued challenges facing AISD, it is essential that we identify our core values as a community to provide a solid foundation for major decisions moving forward. Therefore, we strongly urge AISD to make a formal commitment to three fundamental goals:
    - To provide an equitable, enriched and challenging education for all of Austin's children ;
    - To engage the community to ensure a true public voice in important decisions affecting our public schools; and

- To act as a responsible partner in community planning by acknowledging the crucial role schools play in shaping our city, committing to reinvestment in our vital central city schools and recognizing that neighborhood schools should only be closed as an extreme last resort after all other options have been exhausted.

With this solid framework in place, we can then begin to work together as a community to find solutions to the continuing challenges of educating our most precious natural resource our kids.

2. AISD SHOULD TAKE A LEAD ROLE IN RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY PLANNING. Few things drive the shape of our city more than the location and quality of its public schools. For this reason, it is critical that AISD recognize its responsibility and take an active role in future community planning. AISD's staff and board should build on existing partnerships with City of Austin staff, Planning Commission, City Council and other local governments to plan and maintain a community that is equitable, affordable and sustainable. Communications between city staff and AISD should be formalized to ensure that the district is regularly alerted to any project that will affect school enrollment. AISD staff must be encouraged to speak forthrightly at public hearings if a proposed project will place an undue burden on existing schools. The district should also be encouraged to give strong support to efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing for families and teachers, which will, in turn, ensure greater stability within our schools. Finally, AISD must recognize the importance of reinvesting in its older Central Austin schools as a key element in limiting suburban sprawl and in maintaining a healthy city core.

3. AISD SHOULD PARTNER WITH COMMUNITY TO WORK FOR CHANGE IN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS. It is an open secret among parents, teachers and administrators that the current state accountability system is not working. In fact, as currently applied, it appears to be deadening the joy of learning for an entire generation and is driving some of our most talented educators out of the public school system. At the same time, many AISD families feel increasingly alienated by a district that claims to want parental involvement, while ignoring public input in favor of top-down directives. Current policies that require every school to march in lockstep, coupled with the overuse of standardized tests, are driving many middle-class and low-income families to consider private or charter schools as the only remaining sources for a creative, non-test-driven education. We strongly encourage the district to reevaluate testing mandates within its control, for example, field testing and benchmark tests, which many teachers report are upsetting to students, reduce class instruction time and do not provide useful information for teachers. We further encourage the Trustees to enlist community support -including that of AISD faculty and teacher organizations, as well as other like-minded Texas school boards - to work for much-needed legislative action at the state and federal levels. Our goal must be to create a

more constructive, less punitive system that balances the need for accountability with the need to engage students in the joyful, creative process of learning.

4. FOCUS ON MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SHOULD BE A PRIORITY. It is widely acknowledged that the weakest link in the current AISD system is at the middle school level. AISD must immediately begin a serious focus on middle school improvement, with as much community involvement as possible. If there is insufficient funding for a district-wide middle school effort, the district should initially focus its resources on its low-performing schools.

5. AISD SHOULD SUPPORT AND EMPOWER ITS FACULTY AND PRINCIPALS. In the current AISD climate, teachers and principals routinely operate under intense pressure from numerous state and district mandates and often cite lack of support by the district for creative approaches to learning, even expressing fear of being discovered using innovative techniques. Sadly, many believe it is safer to avoid innovations that may call attention to their schools even if it is positive attention for a creative new idea or an effective program. Teachers and principals sometimes cite the need to fly under radar with innovations that might otherwise serve as models for other schools. Many parents believe this stifling atmosphere creates an undesirable work climate and is at least partly responsible for AISD's high turnover rate among talented faculty and administrators. Those who spend every day working and teaching in our schools have invaluable information to share and their ideas and recommendations should be given the strongest consideration. AISD should support and empower its faculty and administrators to identify and share innovative, creative and effective approaches to teaching and learning.

6. AISD SHOULD ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE ONGOING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. The district and its community partners should work together to actively encourage ongoing public involvement in our schools. As an example, leaders in the Webb Middle School area have recently created the Community School Alliance (CSA), focusing on the vertical team that includes Pickle and Brown Elementary schools, Webb Middle School and Reagan High School. The CSA meets monthly and is composed of school leaders and representatives of over two dozen community groups, neighborhood associations, churches and businesses. It is currently working to align communications and calendars between the four schools and is seeking grant funding for three pilot projects designed to strengthen and enrich educational opportunities for students. If successful, the CSA may provide a model to be replicated in other areas. Such programs would also benefit AISD by demonstrating compliance with Title I community and parent involvement requirements.

7. AISD SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO OUR COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE VALUE OF SMALLER NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS AND OF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL CULTURES. Many of Austin's most

heated public debates in recent years have been sparked by the threat of school closures in our close-in central city neighborhoods. The district should adopt a policy that formally recognizes the crucial role of our public schools in maintaining healthy neighborhoods and shaping the growth of our city, including a strong public commitment to maintaining, and reinvesting in, our vital central city schools. Neighborhood schools should not be closed, except as an extreme last resort, after an exhaustive process to identify alternatives to closure that includes strong involvement of community partners.

8. AISD MUST CHANGE ITS INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE TO TRULY INVOLVE THE PUBLIC IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Regrettably, the relationship between AISD and the Austin community has been marked by past mistrust, at times becoming openly adversarial. Many feel the district administration views the public as a problem to be managed and is not interested in true public involvement in the policies and operations of our public school system. The district often appears to engage in self-protecting behavior, trying to enact major decisions quietly, apparently hoping that no one will notice in time to voice opposition. When the district does engage in public process, this is often viewed cynically, as window-dressing to support decisions that have already made by the central administration. A good working relationship requires more than just developing a timeline or process for major school decisions; it requires a change in AISD's institutional culture. The AISD Trustees and central administration should make a genuine effort to dedicate themselves to open, collaborative decision-making with the public - to demonstrate that they are on the same side as the community. We can accomplish much more by trusting each other and working together to provide an excellent education for all students. By changing an institutional culture from one of fear and secrecy to one that values and listens to its community, we all win.

Process Issues and Recommendations (9-16)

9. DISTRICT SHOULD PROVIDE EARLY NOTICE OF PROBLEMS TO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY. Families and school communities often say that they were not notified in time to effectively address problems in their neighborhood schools. Notice to families and school communities should begin immediately when the district first identifies a problem, such as failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress or experiencing significant over-or under-enrollment. Notice should occur early enough to allow sufficient time for the community to take an active role in working with the district toward a positive solution.

10. COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE CLEARLY WORDED AND DESIGNED TO ALERT THE RECIPIENT TO THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM. In the first stage of a problem, AISD should immediately notify the affected schools staff and families, as well as identified community partners, with a clearly-worded letter, written at the 4th grade reading level, in both English and Spanish, with additional languages where needed. The letter and envelope should be designed

to alert the recipient that this is an urgent communication, by using a red banner headline, for example. The body of the letter should clearly state the nature of the problem, any legal rights families may have, and the expected timeline and process for any changes or decisions. It should also set a date, time and location for a community meeting to discuss the issue.

11. NOTICE OF SCHOOL PROBLEMS SHOULD ALSO BE SENT TO IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY PARTNERS. The district should work with community leaders to develop a list of citywide partners who will also receive the above-described notice letter when a school is at risk. Such a list might include, but not be limited to, the following: the Austin City Council, Austin Planning Commission, Zoning and Platting Commission, Urban Transportation Commission, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Austin Interfaith Alliance, Education Austin, Liveable City, LULAC, NAACP, Urban League, Austin Area Interreligious Ministries, St. Johns Regular Baptist Association, Austin Latin Ministerial Association, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Capital City African American Chamber of Commerce, Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Asian Chamber of Commerce, E3 Alliance, local media and others. The list of community partners should be reviewed periodically to ensure full representation for all sectors of the community.

12. AISD REPRESENTATIVES SHOULD COMMUNICATE FULLY AND LISTEN RECEPTIVELY. In all dealings with the community, district representatives, including staff and elected trustees, should be prepared to explain the facts about a situation with complete candor and should explain fully any plans or long-term goals the district may have for the school. Information presented to the community should be the same information provided to the districts decision-makers, absent any legal restrictions. District representatives should be willing to listen and learn from the community at the first stage of a problem, not simply try to sell top-down decisions when it is too late for a discussion of real alternatives.

13. AISD SHOULD DEVELOP A CLEAR TIMELINE FOR MAJOR DECISIONS. In cases involving TAKS, state-and federally-mandated timelines for decisions already exist and these must be clearly communicated to affected schools and communities from the very first year a school fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress. If this information is conveyed through the Campus Advisory Council, the Council should be required to communicate this to the community immediately, in addition to the notice recommendations outlined above. In cases involving over- or under-enrollment, a similar timeline should be developed, allowing a minimum of three years for any major decisions or changes to a school. This timeline should include a well-defined process that allows for true public involvement and discussion, as well as a thorough exploration of alternatives.

14. AISD SHOULD IDENTIFY CLEAR LINES FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN AISD. Parents are often confused about how to deal with a problem at their child's school, particularly if it involves a staff member. At the start of each year, the district should provide parents with a clear flow chart, showing the appropriate steps for formally or informally appealing staff decisions, getting approval for proposed projects or seeking help with staff or leadership problems. This information should include contact information for the appropriate individuals and should be updated annually. Because the ombudsman does not deal with problems related to AISD employees, special care should be taken to provide specific information about the appropriate steps for parents experiencing problems with district personnel. Information should be available in English and Spanish, with additional languages if needed.

15. AISD SHOULD CLEARLY DEFINE ROLE OF OMBUDSMAN. Many parents do not understand the role of the districts ombudsman or the types of problems that the ombudsman may appropriately address. At the start of each school year, AISD should provide parents with information about the role of the districts ombudsman, including what kinds of issues the ombudsman does and does not handle. This information is currently available online, but is not included in the information guides distributed to parents. Information should be available in English and Spanish, with additional languages if needed.

16. AISD SHOULD PROVIDE DIRECT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVES. The email address for elected AISD board representatives (trustees@austinisd.org) should be reconfigured to go directly to board representatives, without requiring a staff person to redirect these messages, as is currently the case. Direct distribution will prevent delays when staff is absent and will remove the current perception that some messages may be filtered, diverted or simply lost in transit. In addition, all incoming community communication should receive a response via e-mail, phone or mail in a timely fashion. At a minimum, the sender should receive a brief reply indicating the message has been received by its intended recipient.

ACTION ITEMS

Based on the issues explored in this report, Liveable City proposes the following action items, which it strongly urges AISD to consider for adoption. Each action item is followed by parentheses indicating, by number, the issues it is designed to address.

Policy Action Items (1-5)

1. Adopt a formal public policy that commits AISD to three fundamental goals as a foundation for decision-making:

    - To provide an equitable, enriched and challenging education for all of Austin's children;

    - To engage the community to ensure a true public voice in important decisions affecting our public schools; and

    - To act as a responsible partner in community planning by acknowledging the crucial role schools play in shaping our city, committing to reinvestment in our vital central city schools and recognizing that neighborhood schools should only be closed as an extreme last resort after all other options have been exhausted. (Issues: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8)

2. Commit to changing AISD's institutional culture to rebuild trust with the community, including a stated policy that district staff and elected representatives will communicate fully with the public by providing same information available to district decision-makers. (Issues: 8, 12, 14, 16)
3. Re-evaluate standardized testing policies under district control, such as benchmark and field testing, and partner with the community to work for positive change in state and national accountability testing systems. (Issues: 3, 6)
4. Make middle school improvement an immediate priority, with an emphasis on strong community involvement, giving first priority to low-performing schools. (Issues: 4, 6, 7)
5. Support and empower AISD faculty and administrators in identifying and sharing effective, innovative approaches to teaching and learning, giving strongest consideration to the recommendations of those who are most actively involved in our classrooms. (Issues 3. 5).

Process Action Items (6-11)

6. Adopt an early notice policy to communicate with families and community partners at first sign of trouble, such as a school failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress or experiencing significant over-or under-enrollment. (Issues: 8, 9,11)
7. Develop a clearly-worded notice letter, including a distinctive banner on the envelope and letterhead, designed to alert the recipient to the seriousness of the

problem. The notice letter should state the nature of problem, explain any legal rights families may have, and set a date, time and location for the first community meeting on this issue. (Issues: 8, 9, 10, 11,12)

8. Develop a list of key community partners to also receive the above-described early notice letter when a school is in trouble or facing major change. (Issues: 8,11)
9. Develop a clear time-line for decisions involving schools, with a minimum of three years for major decisions prompted by under-enrollment, noting that severe over-enrollment may require swifter action. Sufficient time must be allowed to work with the community to develop and consider alternatives, again recognizing that neighborhood schools should only be closed as an extreme last resort after all other options have been exhausted. (Issues: 8, 12, 13)
10. Identify clear lines of communication and accountability within AISD, particularly for issues concerning district employees, and provide this information annually to parents with their first-day packet. Information should provide appropriate steps for formally or informally appealing staff decisions, getting approval for proposed projects, seeking help with staff or leadership problems, and explaining the role and limitations of the district ombudsman. (Issues: 8, 14, 15)
11. Provide direct email communication between community members and elected board officials that does not require an intermediary staff person to forward communications. (Issues: 8, 16)

Liveable City submits this report to the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools for consideration in developing policy and process recommendations for the AISD Board of Trustees about how best to deal with major decisions affecting our public schools. Liveable City is a nonprofit organization working to create a community consensus for policies that address the long term social, environmental and economic needs of the people of Austin. Learn more at www.liveablecity.org or contact us at 512326-3331.

Submitted by:
Liveable City Education Committee
Dr. Catharine Echols
Dr. Kevin Foster
Marguerite Jones Louis Malfaro
Jill McRae
Susan Moffat (chair)
Jim Walker
Wendi White

Approved by Liveable City Board
October 20, 2007

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Allen Elementary: Parent/Family Involvement Advisory Council

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: November 7, 2007

Number of People Reached: approx. 25

- The Parent/Family Involvement Advisory Council meets monthly and includes parents, Parent Support Specialists, ACPTA representatives, AISD faculty and administrators and community members. Approximately 25 people attended the November 7 meeting, including several non-English speaking parents who participated in the discussion through a translator.

Input Provided:

- Communications/Process:
  - District should notify school community at first sign of problem.
  - Communication should be in plain language at 4th grade reading level and include who, what, when, where and why.
  - Communications should be in English and Spanish, with other languages as needed.
  - Notice should go to all affected stakeholders: neighborhood associations, businesses, parents, families, churches, parent support specialists, etc.
  - Many methods of communication should be used: school newsletters, student folders, direct mail, parent networks, regular open meetings with Parent Support Specialists or PTA, phone trees, automated phone calls (Note: most elementary schools do not have access to automated call equipment and may need to be partnered with their middle schools to use this technology for communication on major issues).
  - Principals need to know that they are allowed to share information with their school communities and should not be asked to withhold information from families.
  - CACs must be made accountable for sharing information with families and community.
  - District should consider mirroring Title One requirements for communication.
  - District should schedule public forums to get input early when a school has a problem.
  - For all public meetings, district should provide people who can explain the problem clearly, as well as any rights families may have, timetables for decision-making, etc.

    - District may need to consider two sets of procedures, one for schools that fail to make AYP, another for schools with enrollment problems.
- Enrollment issues:
    - Attendees expressed concerns about how well AISD is projecting enrollment: how can we have a new school like Blazier that is already over-enrolled?
    - Attendees expressed concerns about population growth and whether school boundaries were keeping pace.
    - Several attendees expressed support for adjusting boundaries rather than closing schools.
    - One parent said she had been told her school would have 100 new families this year; she learned this from attending CAC meetings, but questioned how other parents would know this.

Summary of Key Points:

- Communications/Process: (please see above input)

- Enrollment Issues: (please see above input)

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Lori Renteria

Type of Activity: Email communication

Date of Activity: November 8, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- Previously worked for Community Education at AISD

Input Provided:

My biggest issue is how unfair and political the process is for community groups to use AISD facilities. I used to work for Community Ed and was responsible for coordinating after-hours use of Martin Middle School for almost 11 years. I was part of a task force and discussions when AISD changed the policy regarding building use and athletic fields and I along with several other principals on the task force objected strongly to centralizing the decision making in central office and not allowing principals to make their own decisions about allowing use of their campus by community groups. We were able to get a compromise in that principals could make their own arrangements and could waive fees. The big argument for increasing and requiring mandatory fees for building use was high electric bills. The fee structure implemented at that time was increased to the point that most small non-profits and civic groups could not afford to use school space. Even PTAs were supposed to pay $50 per hour to use the cafeterias. The fields at Sanchez Elementary became rental facilities that at that time only Hyde Park Baptist Church Lacrosse Team could afford to use.

I was fortunate in that the principal I worked for at Martin, Mary Liz Singleton, knew the importance of community partnerships and we found ways around the new building use policy and we kept the doors open for groups regardless of their ability to pay fees. Since a change in principals at Martin, all but one of the community groups I had forged formal partnerships to have a presence with students and teachers during the day have been moved off campus (some with only a few days notice to vacate their designated space) and do not use space even after hours because of the fees. This has been a real big issue for the Metz Recreation Center which has used the gym at Martin for over 30 years free of charge.

Way back in the 1970's, when Gus Garcia was on the school board, our neighborhood had a community gym operated by the Salvation Army. When AISD bought the land to build Sanchez Elementary, the Salvation Army Gym had to close. The community was outraged that they would lose this community asset. Gus solved the conflict and made the first inter-local agreement to share space - the gym at Martin Middle School - which

would be operated by the city's Metz Rec. Center with no fees attached. This agreement has been honored for decades although we have been unable to find any documentation about the agreement. But ever since the new principal came to Martin in 2001, she has tried to get rid of Metz using the gym. This is becoming a huge issue because our rec centers are required to raise funds to support their programs in the neighborhood. Metz needs to use the gym at Martin for free gym time for youth and youth leagues, as well as to run adult tournaments and special events that raise funds to subsidize other programs operated by Metz. It's November and Metz is still locked out of the gym this year. They even hired a Martin staff as a Metz employee to try to appease the principal to no avail.

Anything you can do to inquire about the current building use policy and fee structures and look at joint use agreements between the city and AISD and whether these agreements are equitable would be helpful. (I know St. Johns and Dove Springs have these joint use agreements, Legal Aid uses Martin and Webb, and Alliance Schools regularly use campus facilities for Interfaith functions)

I believe school buildings should be used as the hub for community engagement. But when we lock down buildings and refuse to collaborate and share resources with non-AISD groups we are not building productive partnerships. I think it is in Sweden that school buildings are utilized fully with programs serving immediate neighbors (taxpayers) from the cradle to the grave with everything from basic education to leisure activities. Their buildings serve youth from 8 am to ?2pm (operated by school employees), and community from after school to 10 pm (operated by recreation employees).

This is the direction AISD should be moving to, filling unused space – day and night - with community groups providing direct services to that neighborhood. Then decreased enrollment becomes an opportunity to build community involvement in the school instead of a burden to taxpayers. Keep the lights on and the doors open to these great community assets. We are the ones who pay for it, we should have unfettered access to them.

Summary of Key Points:

- The process for community groups to use AISD facilities is unfair and political.
    - The fees charged to community groups to use the facilities are too expensive
    - Suggests looking at the current building use policy, fee structures, and joint use agreements, and also whether these agreements are equitable.

- Importance of community partnerships
    - AISD is not working with community to share resources
        - Metz Recreation Center is no longer able to use the gym at Martin Middle School, and the community needs this resource.

- Feels that school buildings are great community assets and should be used as the “hub” for community engagement
    - Citizens pay for the facilities, and should have access to them
- Decreased enrollment becomes an opportunity to build community involvement in the school instead of a burden to taxpayers

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Urban Transportation Commission (UTC)

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: November 13, 2007

Number of People Reached: 10

- UTC Commissioners: Andrew Bucknall, Chair; Ed Easton, Patrick Goetz, Joi Harden, Melissa Whaley Hawthorne, Dustin Lanier, Dana Lockler, Richard MacKinnon, Carl Tepper

- Susan Moffat gave a short presentation to the UTC about the purpose and goals of CCNS and invited commissioners' comments. In a subsequent discussion, individual UTC Commissioners offered the following recommendations.

Input Provided:

- A commissioner expressed concern that a disproportionate amount of AISD's resources were being spent on suburban schools to the detriment of central city schools and recommended that AISD consider a TIF model (tax increment financing) to ensure that a percentage of school tax dollars would be remain in the areas that generated them.

- A commissioner recommended that schools should function as multi-use facilities, encompassing a variety of community services under one roof in partnership with other governmental entities.

- A commissioner recommended that schools should be developed in an environmentally sensitive way that is compatible with the community.

- A commissioner recommended that AISD should carefully evaluate schools in the vicinity of the new TOD (Transit Oriented Design) communities, as these will likely be family-friendly developments that will affect school enrollment.

- Several commissioners recommended that city staff and AISD staff work together closely so that AISD is apprised of new projects that could affect enrollment.

- A commissioner recommended that there should be a strong financial incentive for the district to maintain its existing schools; if a neighborhood loses its public school, the district should cut and/or refund a portion the school tax for that area since the loss of its school negatively affects property values in the immediate area.

The Commissioners then adopted a resolution to encourage AISD to maintain the CCNS as a standing committee and to encourage further discussion between the City of Austin, the Urban Transportation Commission and AISD/CCNS on issues of mutual interest, particularly those related to transportation. The clerk of the UTC will forward the full text of the resolution to the CCNS.

Motion by: Patrick Goetz
Seconded by: Dana Lockler

Motion: Recommend City Council encourage the establishment of a permanent AISD committee to review school closings, locations and re-locations with ongoing communication and cooperation from the Urban Transportation Commission, Land Use and Transportation (LUT) subcommittee and City Council, in relation to transportation.

Ayes: Bucknall/Goetz/Harden/Lockler/MacKinnon
Nays: Hawthorne/Tepper
Abstain: Lanier
Absent: Easton

Summary of Key Points:

- Concern that more money was being spent on suburban school; recommends using a TIF (tax increment financing) model for financing in central city schools
- Schools should be multi-use facilities and developed in an environmentally sensitive way
- District should evaluate schools in the TOD areas
- City and District staff should work together
- Should be a strong financial incentive for the district to maintain its existing schools
- The commissioners adopted a resolution to encourage establishment of a permanent AISD committee.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: John Donisi

Type of Activity: Interview

Date of Activity: November 20, 2007

Number of People Reached: 1

- John Donisi is a Travis Heights resident, parent of a pre-school-aged child, and an active participant in city planning initiatives and efforts.

Input Provided:

- Donisi encouraged the district to adopt a proactive approach to facility use and, when making decisions about a particular campus, to consider how that campus fits into the overall, long-range district plan. He discussed the clear connection that exists between development decisions and schools. As big development projects can shift populations, family types, or numbers, he encouraged AISD to consider development trends in the area surrounding a campus in question as well as in nearby areas. He identified the development community and neighborhood groups as some of the stakeholders (in addition to the campus community) that should be involved in discussions regarding facility use and with whom the district should be in close communication.

- Donisi pointed out that while the district cannot keep a dying school open and might need to make hard decisions, those decisions need to be fully vetted in an open public process. Stakeholders should be notified well in advance and should know how, when, and where they can participate in the decision-making process. Schools are often the focal point of a community, and closing an existing school will impact the surrounding neighborhood. The district should also demonstrate a consistent approach in terms of its investment in new schools and in existing schools, Donisi said.

- He advised a more holistic, collaborative approach to decision-making about school facilities. Donisi encouraged AISD and the City of Austin to align their long-term planning goals and to consider, for example, whether what the city is embracing in terms of entitlements is consistent in terms of district plans and goals.

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Summary Form

Name of Group: Linder Elementary

Type of Activity: Focus group discussion

Date of Activity: November 28, 2007

Number of People Reached: approx. 30

Input Provided:

- How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?
    - Holding a variety of meetings to discuss a variety of issues with stakeholders in a variety of neighborhoods
        - Town meetings
        - Recruit people for meetings
        - Attending board meetings
        - AISD actively seeking neighborhood members on task forces/committees
    - Using a variety of communications media to inform stakeholders about a variety of issues in a variety of neighborhoods
        - Newspaper
        - Mailed bulletin
        - At least a week in advance
        - News media
        - Email
        - Teachers walking house-to-house – asking hopes and dreams questions
    - The need for disseminating clear, concise, and understandable information to stakeholders
    - Working closely with stakeholders in a timely manner on and on-going basis to resolve problems or issues
        - Alliance schools
    - Using the network of stakeholders and their organizations to facilitate communication with stakeholders
        - Neighborhood block captains to hand out materials
    - Using the network of schools and other district organizations (the district infrastructure) to facilitate communication with stakeholders
        - AISD cable channel
        - CAC
        - PTA

- What do “over-enrollment” and “under-enrollment” mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?
    - Assessing Optimum School Capacity and/or Appropriate School Utilization
    - Considerations related to under-utilization (under-enrollment)
        - Jealous of under-enrolled (smaller classes/more space)
    - Considerations related to overcrowding (over-enrollment)
        - Over 100% capacity
        - What is trigger-point for overcrowding?
        - Short changed on facilities: library, cafeteria, and gym
        - 51 classes – start lunch at 10:00 AM, finish at 1:30 PM
        - Small window for assemblies
        - Library used for many other things – vision/hearing, pictures
        - Bad weather – people from portables must come inside main building
        - Overcrowded classes: 26 in second-grade classroom -- increase in fighting/violence
        - For last 9 years, enrollment projections in January for next year have been 100 too low
        - Add average 5 teachers each year, let trained teachers go based on projections, move portables, hire new teachers, no classrooms
        - New teachers need equipment, books, AV, etc.
        - Turbulence/disruption for all students, not just a few classes
        - Constant overcrowding – kids set up for failure
    - District/community collaboration to resolve utilization, transfer, and school boundary issues
        - What else can we do besides boundary change?
        - How do you control enrollment?
        - Can you put a cap on some schools?
        - How are supplies, furniture reallocated?

- How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What alternatives should AISD consider for under-enrolled schools? What alternatives should AISD consider for over-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision-making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?
    - Over / Under-enrollment:
        - Closing school to enrollment – not welcoming to newcomers
        - Build another school – promised a new school – didn’t happen
        - What about a Pre-k through 8 school near each other?
        - Primary and intermediate school side-by-side
        - Earlier work on boundary issues: last year, no representation; this year, representation from schools involved starting much earlier
    - What steps should be included in the decision-making process?

        - Collaborative, multi-year decision-making process
            - Ongoing meetings between AISD staff, parents, community members, and businesses
            - Need better relationship with our board member
        - Intelligence (information) gathering
        - Collaborative action planning and testing of ideas
        - Provide resources throughout process
        - Communicate effectively
            - Paradigm shift – don't wait for our parents to speak – may not feel empowered
            - How to get parents involved and hear from those who don't speak!!
        - Conduct authentic collaborative process
            - Go house-to-house
    - Who should be involved and how?
        - Could proxy be used to speak for parents?
        - Access an advocate to speak for us
    - What is a reasonable length of time for this process?

- Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools increase enrollment and performance?
    - Community participants for a neighborhood school should represent key groups from the entire neighborhood population
        - Parents (some stable/long-term parents)
        - Neighborhood organizations
        - Proxies
        - Advocates
        - Teachers
        - Staff
        - Administrators (include from other schools)
        - CAC
        - PTA
        - Churches
        - Businesses
        - School Board member
        - State legislators
        - Partners in education
        - CIS
    - The set of participating community groups should also include the following:
        - Mentor groups
        - Partner schools
        - Chambers of Commerce
        - Administrators
        - Teachers
        - Students

- Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD [and the community] consider in making decisions about your school?
    - Effects of decisions on the school and its community
    - Sustainability
    - City and regional planning goals
    - Development and demographic trends in a geographic area
    - Historic value of school
    - Value to AISD of having diverse portfolio of newer/older/smaller/larger campuses
    - Proximity to major centers of work
    - Transportation issues
    - Factors related to under-enrollment or over-enrollment
    - Alternative uses of school
    - Transfer policy
    - School and community needs
        - Needs of children and families
    - Factors that vary from school to school (neighborhood to neighborhood)
    - A point about the goal of recommendations
    - Need shared vision: We are concerned about all of our children and should not be divided by turf war.
    - Partnership between low/high income schools – shared resources
    - Equity in access to education, opportunity, and facilities
    - People who are oppressed are not going to speak up

Summary of Key Points:

- Communication with stakeholders: (please see above input)

- Over-enrollment and under-enrollment: (please see above input)

- Process recommendations: (please see above input)

- Key stakeholders in community that should be involved in process: (please see above input)

- Other factors to be considered: (please see above input)

CCNS Member Outreach Activities
Additional Comments

Name of Group: Bryker Woods Elementary (PTA board, CAC, neighbors in area)

Type of Activity: Focus group discussions

Date of Activity: September and October of 2007

Number of People Reached:

PTA board:	approx. 20
CAC:	approx. 15
Neighbors in area:	3 meetings with approx. 3-4 each

Input Provided:

- Continue to allow transfers throughout the district. Many parents transfer so that their child will be at a school near where the parent works.
- To fund upgrades/new buildings on old campuses which have consistently shown to be at or above capacity rather than investing all new building funds in outlying areas.
- Find out why a school is under-enrolled - lack of students in boundary area, transfers out due to performance of school, then fix those problems, but don't close a neighborhood school.
- Repurpose elementary schools that are under-enrolled by adding a pre-k and/or 6th grade, or a magnet program at the elementary level.
- Add district resources to enable administrators and parents at under-enrolled schools to advertise their school to their neighborhood to recruit new students.

Appendix J
Summaries of First Community Forum

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Community Forum
Pearce Middle School
October 9, 2007

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
(See attached list)

Proceedings:

- The forum was called to order at 6:10 p.m. in the cafeteria of Pearce Middle School.
- Although 87 people registered, total attendance is estimated at 150. In several cases, one person registered for a family.
- Mark Williams, President of the AISD Board of Trustees, welcomed attendees and provided a brief background on the Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools.
- Joey Crumley asked attendees to break out into assigned groups for discussion. In the smaller groups, participants would first take a survey (also available online on the AISD website) and then respond to a series of questions focused on the work of the committee (questions attached).
- Attached are summary notes from each of the four group discussions. Three group discussions were conducted in English and one in Spanish.
- Following their group discussions, attendees reconvened briefly to hear highlights from each of the groups.
- The co-chairs thanked attendees for coming and providing valuable input to the committee.
- The forum was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/27**	**12/11**	**1/8**	**1/22**	**2/12**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓							
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓							
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓										
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓							
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓							
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓							
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓							
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓											
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓												
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓							
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓								
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓							
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓								

✓= Present

Others in Attendance:

Laurie Barber, Principal, Andrews Elementary School
Laurie Barzano, Community Member, Becker Elementary School
Laura Bautista, Community Member
Maria Bohner, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Sonya Bolden, Community Member, Pearce Middle School
Elmer Bonilla, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Nancy Bosch, Community Member, Linder Elementary School
Cheryl Bradley, AISD Board of Trustees
Maria Brito, Community Member, Reilly Elementary School
Maria Cantu, Community Member, Pearce Middle School
Benita Cooper, Teacher, Pearce Middle School
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Maru Cueto, Leon Translations
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Maria DeLuna, Community Member, Pearce Middle School
Mary Diaz, Community Member, Becker Elementary School
Charlotte Dotson, Community Member
Christina Escobar, Parent Support Specialist, Andrews Elementary School
Josephine Espino, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Nicanor Esquivel, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Jennifer Fahrenbacher, Teacher, Becker Elementary School
Jason Fowler, Teacher, Pearce Middle School
Monica Fuentes, Community Member,
Edgar Garcia, Community Member
Delia Gonzales, Parent Support Specialist, Pearce Middle School
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Felisha Henry, Teacher, Pearce Middle School
Celia Hernandez, Community Member
Raven Hill, Austin American-Statesman
Jimmie Hines, Teacher, Pearce Middle School
Barbara Johnson, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Betty Johnson, District Advisory Council
Ann Kriss, Community Member, Becker Elementary School
Tomas Leon, Leon Translations
Rashaanne Lewis, Austin Council of PTAs
Thelma Liñon, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Angela Lopez, Community Member
Corina Lopez, Teacher, Andrews Elementary School
Dora Lopez, Teacher, Becker Elementary School
Elvia Lopez, Community Member, Pearce Middle School
Marcia Maisenbacher, Math Specialist, Pearce Middle School
Lisa Martin, Community Member
Marcia L. Martinez, Community Member, Pearce Middle School
Misty Martinez, Community Member
Jorge Meave, Assistant Principal, Pearce Middle School

Rosa Mendez, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Helen Miller, Community Member
Rosa Montoya, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Elizardi Morales, Community Member, Pearce Middle School
Laura Muñoz, Community Member
Consolacion Nava, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Amanda Navarrette, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Gloria Neunaber, Windsor Park Neighborhood Association
Beverly Odom, Principal, Linder Elementary School
Blanca Padron, Community Member
Josie Palacios, Teacher, Becker Elementary School
Elva Perez, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Beverly Pickett, Teacher, Pearce Middle School
Shalana Poole, Community Member
Maria-Elena Ramon, AISD Planning & Community Relations
Benita Reyes, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Nettie P. Roby, Substitute Staff, Pearce Middle School
Paula Rodriguez, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Irma Rosas, Community Member, Reilly Elementary School
Sharon Ryder, Community Member, Andrews Elementary School
Bob Sessa, Community Member, Becker Elementary School
Billie Spivey, Community Member, Pearce Middle School
Kenny Taylor, Community Member
James Trautman, Principal, Pearce Middle School
Gloria Treviño, Community Member
Maria Vidal, Teacher, Pearce Middle School
Marie Washington, Community Member
Allen Weeks, St. Johns Neighborhood Association
Mark Williams, AISD Board of Trustees

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Guiding Questions

The following questions are numbered for reference and are not presented in any particular order of importance:

1. How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?

2. What do “over-enrollment” and “under-enrollment” mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?

3. How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?

4. Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools increase enrollment and performance?

5. Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider in making decisions about your school?

Summary Notes from Group Discussions

Group 1

Information

- Meetings: advertise two weeks in advance
- Forums
- Change locations: priorities and issues vary from school to school
- Letters, flyers, TV
- Make information parent friendly
- Proof by parent group
- Ongoing basis, not crisis mode
- Door-to-door flyers to those without kids, through churches and neighborhood associations, PTA presidents, CAC members
- Allow more time before decisions are made. How much time depends on the issue; two weeks to a month to a year. Possibly five years for larger problems.
- Can school go to the people (neighborhood associations, churches, etc.)?

Under-enrollment

- Need clear definition of under/over enrollment
- Need to look more at what capacity and utilization mean
- Funding, staffing, salaries
- Community does not have power over boundary lines
- Vulnerable communities: safety, transportation, parent involvement
- Limited programs in under-enrolled schools due to lack of students. This is a cycle; schools will continue to lose students.
- Flexibility of formula at campus level (Becker has ACES, special academies, dyslexia offices)

Academic achievement versus enrollment

- Look at formula: identify campus needs.
- Common areas lacking in older campus.
- Consider whole climate of school
- Support personnel areas
- Give “weight” to factors

Time frame

- Start process at beginning
- Trend or annually
- Established trigger point
- 3-5 year time period
- Interactive process: develop collaborate action plan with benchmarks
- Hold AISD accountable to community for information
- Impact on other (receiving) schools must be a factor
- Survey to school: direct to parents
- Consider survey takers: get people to critique

- Test audience at various schools
- Internet access?
- Consider kids' point of view as well

Who?
- Everyone!

Other factors?
- How it affects school, parents, students
- Transportation issues to new schools
- Leaving community "network"
- Economic factors
- Community needs: are parents heard?
- Under-enrolled may not be able to offer curriculum of larger school
- Book, Small is Beautiful for smaller schools. Very special for those students
- Possibly use campus space for academy
- Larger schools may not be best
- Look at each school and community individually. Get all people involved.
- AISD should not consider closing our schools. Find proper use.
- Encourage students to stay
- Transfer policy promotes not supporting neighborhood school
- Look at transfer policy
- Encourage parents to give the school a chance
- District needs to offer more of its expertise and resources to school community to accomplish action plan for campus.

Group 2

Question #1
- Working closely with community
    - Meetings at school
    - Having all information at same time
- Email doesn't hit everyone … try flyers, phone calls
- Recognize different schools are different
    - Churches or neighborhood associations might be your best bet
    - Don't even count on the school (flyers, CAC, PTA)
- Timing is really important; church or neighborhood association needs a lot of advance notice for newsletters
- Need to get outside of AISD networks so non-parents can be involved
- Recognize language and education barriers; use "people-friendly" language
- Personal phone calls
- Make it clear what the data and letter mean to me … numbers not percentage
- Grocery stores, other places of business
- Barbershops (for need for mentors); example of Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) trying unique ways to get the word out
- Newspaper won't reach everyone

- Should have a “stakeholders list” that anyone could join to keep informed about AISD issues
- Need earlier notice
- Electric bills
- People are afraid to speak out and identify what they see is wrong, especially on the east side

Question #2

- Teacher at Linder elementary: over-enrollment means they’re at about 150% capacity
    - Had to add extra specials
    - Lunch starts at 10:05
    - Kids only go to library every 2-3 weeks because library is being used
    - PE classes share gyms
    - “We keep asking for relief and it’s not happening”
    - Proposal to move kids to Becker: transportation issues meant many parents prefer kids close but in overcrowded schools rather than across town
- Perception that some people don’t want “these kids” in the neighborhood school
- BB/BS will (sometimes) prefer to provide services at schools that aren’t under-enrolled (even though those are often the kids who need the help the most)
- Becker: even though under-enrolled, the kids have huge needs
    - Good that parents can walk to schools
- BB/BS proposals to close schools affect their funding
- Doesn’t like portables … why can’t we plan better?
    - Response: it gives flexibility for fluctuations in school population size
- Even if parents at one school don’t want kids from another school transferred there, you should transfer them anyway

Question #3

- Closer communication between district and city on permitting
- Give better information to stakeholders
- Don’t tell us in April for changes in fall; September/October good time to identify problems; in January go to community with those problems and propose a few options
- Start a year in advance at least
- The boundary task force already has proposals for what boundaries should look like … “I should be a part of deciding those”
- Teacher are a good source of information, but don’t always have authority to communicate all their ideas to parents
- School board trustees can invite people to participate if they’re there to represent <u>all</u> kids
- People in East Austin don’t trust AISD because they’ve been mistreated in the past; that’s why they don’t get involved
- Need administrators who can relate to the community

Question #4

- Need strong mentors
- Administrators need to keep the doors open to the community to allow mentors
- Need administrators who welcome the community's involvement
- Recruit retired people to mentor
- Pair schools in different parts of town
- BB/BS; CIS; other mentoring groups; APIE
- 2,500 kids in AISD have mentors … can we increase that?
- Get Chamber to help make it easier for people to volunteer during work hours

Question #5

- Lack of transportation
- Parents' educational and family status
- Need for mentoring
- Language
- Transfer policy
- If a school is low performing too long, it gets into a "death spiral"
- Need caring, effective teachers
- Need for equity between schools
- Need strong administrators
- Work schedules
- Student advocacy: the difference between advocacy levels at different schools

Group 3

Question #1

(a) Stakeholders should be informed through the following means:

- Newspaper, TV, radio ads/coverage
- Notes sent home with students
- Regular mail
- PTA meetings/newsletter
- Parent support specialists
- Phone calls, automated phone calls
- Email
- Churches
- Neighborhood associations
- NOTE: Most participants heard about this meeting from Parent Support Specialists and flyers sent home with students

(b) Communication should:

- Be written in "plain English," as well as Spanish and other languages as needed
- Be direct and to the point
- Marked so that the recipient knows this is an important issue

(c) The district could reach more people by:

- Having multiple meetings at different locations

- Supporting the parent support specialists and paying them more … they are key to communication
- Building bridges between elementary, middle, and high schools
- Engaging parents
- Keeping parent contact information current; both parents and staff should work to keep this current in school office
- Having a "parents room" at schools to give parents space to socialize and get information

Question #2

(a) "Over-enrollment" means:
- Children don't get individual attention
- More than one-quarter of the campus is made up of portable classrooms
- Not enough tutors

(b) "Under-enrollment" means:
- School's demographics should be considered in determining under-enrollment; schools with large numbers of higher needs kids may function best with low enrollment and smaller class sizes
- Most parents do not view under-enrollment as a problem
- Parents generally prefer small class sizes and smaller schools
- Under-enrollment can be issue if size is too small to offer extracurricular activities and special areas, such as art, music and PE; may need to find creative ways to help smaller schools offer certain activities, perhaps by partnering with another small school

(c) Other enrollment issues:
- Academic achievement of the school may indicate over-enrollment or under-enrollment; if students are doing well in an "under-enrolled" school, maybe it is the right size; if they are struggling in a fully-enrolled school, that may indicate over-enrollment.
- Too large of a school may not allow all interested students to participate in extracurricular activities due to lack of space or extreme competition for spots
- Community needs to be involved in boundary decisions
- District should monitor each school's enrollment and deal with it before it becomes a problem
- District's determination of schools' ideal size needs to be reevaluated to find true optimum size

Question #3

(a) Identification and alternatives:
- District should consider socio-economic status of school and needs of students in determining whether a school is over- or under-enrolled
- If school is over-enrolled, close it to transfer students; first preference should be given to students in the school's attendance zone

- If school is under-enrolled, look at school-compatible partnerships to multi-purpose the school building (daycare, police substation, etc.)
- Consider combining two under-enrolled schools with opposite socio-economic statuses to provide balance and give more opportunity.
- District needs to use business model and study successful schools so it can apply methods that work to less successful schools
- Priority must be to provide a quality education, not just move kids around

(b) Steps district should take in decision-making process:

- Communicate through early notice and multiple community meetings
- Provide a multi-year process for major decisions, involving parents, staff and community
- District needs to devote resources to address major school decisions and give the community a fair and informed starting point

(c) Who are community members who should be involved?

- All those mentioned in Question #1 response, including parents, Parent Support Specialists, PTA, churches, neighborhood associations, etc.
- Education experts working with the community.

(d) What is a reasonable time frame for major decisions?

- At least five years to bring parties together, develop a plan and implement it
- Over-enrollment should be addressed more quickly since it takes away from the education process, ideally in one year to 18 months
- Under-enrollment should be addressed in a longer timeframe to allow time to rebuild a school

Question #4

- All parties listed in Question #1 response should be included: parents, PTA, Parent Support Specialists, area churches, neighborhood associations, etc.
- In addition, the district's central administration should commit to taking an active role in helping to rebuild a struggling school

Question #5

Additional factors for consideration should include:

- The importance of the school to the community fabric
- Small central schools often cannot become physically larger; though they can't compare in size to suburban schools, they are vital to their communities and that value should be recognized
- Don't be shortsighted and look at ongoing community development; a school that is currently under-enrolled may be fully enrolled in a few years
- Impacts to tax base: closing or repurposing a school will likely lower property values
- Consider basic needs of students and families, such as access to adequate food, clean clothing, decent housing and health care; lack of basic necessities can

negatively affect school performance and the community should be enlisted to address these needs
- Low-income schools tend to be branded failures; need to change the paradigm to ensure high-quality education for all students
- Work to create more socio-economic diversity in schools
- Recommendations of committee should not simply create a better process by which to close schools; goal should be to create a process that will help us maintain all our public schools and encourage them to function for the benefit of students and the community.

Group 4 ***(Conducted in Spanish)***

General Notes:

- Group consisted of approximately 24 parents (almost all mothers)
- Most of the participants were under 35 years of age
- A majority of the parents were from Andrews and Reilly elementary schools
- 20 of the parents had been in the United States less than 10 years
- These parents were eager to participate and contribute to the sessions; however, they were generally unfamiliar with many of the topics we were asking them to talk about (e.g., over-enrollment, under-enrollment, state law regarding academic performance requirements, AISD policies, and policies/practices specifically related to their children's schools)

Survey:

A majority of the parents required a significant degree of assistance filling out the survey in Spanish. Some of the reasons include:

- Many participants had less than a high school education and found the language level used in the survey difficult to understand
- Most participants had little experience taking surveys
- Survey terminology was either unfamiliar to respondents or not translated consistently (e.g., the over-enrollment/under-enrollment term used in the guiding questions was different than the term used in the survey)

General comments from participants:

- Language was mentioned frequently as the main barrier to participation in school events
- Participants did not know about or had not been informed of the resources available to them at the schools (e.g., the majority had not heard of Parent Support Specialists; when the translator and Pearce Principal were asked what Parent Support Specialist is called in Spanish, no uniformly used district term emerged)
- Teachers are held in very high regard and are the most sought after and trusted source of school information
- Participants hold the schools in high regard and greatly appreciate the efforts made to educate their children

- Participants are starved for information that helps them navigate the school system and are eager to contribute to the schools themselves; they want to be asked to help, but they do not know what they can do or the best way to interact with their schools; they asked for guidance
- Participants identified teachers as the ones who care the most for their needs; school administrators and the district lagged far behind; many participants gave the district an “A” grade in their surveys, however responses diverged greatly when participants were asked if staff, administrators, district, trustees, or superintendent “valued” their input; teachers, school administrators, and bilingual principals were highly valued
- The majority of the participants did not have Internet access and were unfamiliar with the Internet; only a few had home computers, but most parents indicated they were willing to obtain one for their children if it would help them at school; some were concerned that they would not know what their children were doing or watching on the Internet if they bought them a computer
- AISD’s Channel 22 was unfamiliar to the group
- Participants recommended community gatherings, churches, and other social events as good places to receive school information
- Radio was mentioned frequently as a good place to get information
- Many parents asked of the school could call them before a meeting
- Parents wanted more than one scheduled meeting time so that they could attend school events
- All participants worked
- Notes from school, especially from the teacher, was the preferred method of school-to-parent communication
- Despite the lack of specific knowledge about over-enrollment and other important school issues, participants expressed happiness and were flattered that we were asking their opinions
- Participants said translations were not uniformly provided at school events
- Many participants expressed a reluctance to speak in school gatherings because they felt they did not know enough about the subject at hand; they also expressed a strong desire for a school orientation that would walk them through who to contact in the school when they had specific needs
- When asked, participants voted unanimously against closing schools for any reason
- Childcare was important to school meeting attendance; however, most parents had their children with them at our meeting; the reason expressed by a few parents was that they attended another school (not Pearce) and they were reluctant to leave their child with a person they did not know
- Although the participants were not initially familiar with the term over-enrollment, the group expressed concern that over/under enrollment could cause school closure and wanted to be informed of the process and help in whatever way they could; the key for them was to avoid closing the school at all costs

- Participants were uniformly against transferring their children to other schools citing lack of a second vehicle and the inability to easily reach a child if there was a problem
- Participants expected challenges facing the schools would be solved with district, school, and parents working in conjunction to find solutions
- Participants wanted more meetings with teachers and principals so that they could help their children get ahead
- Parents repeatedly sited bilingual teachers, administrators, and principals as extremely important to making them feel welcome at the school
- Participants wanted to know the process the district and schools use to make decisions; who could participate, and how could they participate; they want easy to understand information that tells them exactly what is expected of them and how they can help
- Regarding the length of time it should take to make important decisions affecting the school, participants indicated that the district should take their time and allow input from those affected; many tended to trust the district to determine a reasonable time frame for decisions, as long as those affected were consulted
- Transportation to meetings was particularly important for two women who attended along with their five children, including an infant; they walked approximately ten blocks to this meeting and walked home afterward
- At the end of the focus group, many participants thanked the moderators for asking their opinions and expressed eagerness to participate in similar forums again

Appendix K
Survey Instrument

The Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools (CCNS) was formed by the AISD Board of Trustees to make recommendations on how the district can improve stakeholder awareness, engagement, and participation.

The CCNS would greatly appreciate a few minutes of your time to answer the following questions regarding important issues related to our schools. Your responses to the following survey are completely confidential. Thank you!

1. Which of the following describes you? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Parent or guardian of a child currently in an AISD school
- ☐ Employee of AISD
- ☐ Community member who does not have a child currently in an AISD school
- ☐ Student in an AISD school
- ☐ Other (please describe):

2. If you currently have a child or children in AISD, please enter the name of the school or schools of attendance:

3. If you currently have a child or children in AISD, please enter the name of the school or schools of attendance:

4. How does AISD inform you about important decisions related to your school(s)? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Regular mail
- ☐ A letter or flyer sent home from school
- ☐ Communication directly from the principal, a teacher, or school staff (phone call or in person)
- ☐ School newsletter or website
- ☐ Austin InSiDer (the AISD newsletter)
- ☐ PTA/Campus Advisory Council
- ☐ AISD website
- ☐ AISD Cable Channel 22
- ☐ Announcements in local newspapers
- ☐ Text messages
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please describe):

5. How would you prefer AISD inform you about important issues and decisions related to your school(s)? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Regular mail
- ☐ A letter or flyer sent home from school
- ☐ Communication directly from the principal, a teacher, or school staff (phone call or in person)
- ☐ School newsletter or website
- ☐ Austin InSiDer (the AISD newsletter)
- ☐ PTA/Campus Advisory Council
- ☐ AISD website
- ☐ AISD Cable Channel 22
- ☐ Neighborhood Association/Community Center
- ☐ Church
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ TV
- ☐ Announcements in local newspapers
- ☐ Text messages
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please describe):

6. In which of the following activities related to schools and neighborhoods are you currently involved or have been involved? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ PTA, PTSA, or PTO
- ☐ Campus Advisory Council
- ☐ Other school organization or club
- ☐ School volunteer
- ☐ Student tutor or mentor
- ☐ District Advisory Council
- ☐ Other AISD committee or task force
- ☐ Austin Council of PTAs
- ☐ Neighborhood or community group
- ☐ Church
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please describe):

7. If you chose "None of the above" for question #6 above, would you like to comment:

8. Please "grade" how well AISD informs you about important issues and decisions related to schools. Please check one:

☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ F

Would you like to comment on the grade you gave?

9. Sometimes schools have more students (over-enrollment) or fewer students (under-enrollment) than what the building is designed to hold. Are you familiar with how AISD defines over-enrollment and under-enrollment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. How familiar are you with the way over-enrollment or under-enrollment may affect important decisions at your school(s) in the following areas:

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not at all familiar
Changing school boundaries	☐	☐	☐
Building new schools	☐	☐	☐
Consolidating or dividing schools	☐	☐	☐
Changing how a school building is used	☐	☐	☐
Closing a school	☐	☐	☐

11. How familiar are you with how academic performance affects the decisions AISD is required by law to make regarding your school(s) in the following areas:

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not at all familiar
Implementing a school improvement plan	☐	☐	☐
Providing students with options to transfer to other schools	☐	☐	☐
Replacing principals and/or teachers	☐	☐	☐
Management of a school by an entity other than AISD	☐	☐	☐
Closing a school	☐	☐	☐

12. When you have found out about important issues related to your school, what actions did you take? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Communicated with other parents at the school
- ☐ Communicated with other community members
- ☐ Attended a related school meeting
- ☐ Contacted the school (Principal, Parent Support Specialist, etc.)
- ☐ Contacted AISD administration
- ☐ Attended a related AISD administrative meeting
- ☐ Attended a related community or neighborhood meeting
- ☐ Not applicable: I was informed about an issue, but didn't feel the need to take action
- ☐ Not applicable: I wanted to take action, but was unable to
- ☐ Not applicable: I have not been aware of any issue that would require action
- ☐ Other (please describe):

13. In the above question, if you indicated that you wanted to take action but were unable to, which of the following would have helped? Please, check all that apply:

- ☐ Providing more information about what action I could take
- ☐ Providing information early and/or often enough to take action
- ☐ Scheduling meetings at times I could attend
- ☐ Providing transportation to meetings
- ☐ Making me feel invited or encouraged to take action
- ☐ Offering meetings in my language
- ☐ Providing child care at meetings

- ☐ Not applicable: I'm too busy with work
- ☐ Not applicable: I'm too busy with non-work activities

14. What process would you prefer AISD use to address important issues related to your school(s)? Please check one:

- ☐ AISD should work closely with each school and the surrounding neighborhood to find joint solutions to address enrollment
- ☐ AISD should develop a set of options and present them to the community to choose from
- ☐ AISD should find the best solution and implement it
- ☐ Other (please describe):

15. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: AISD should never close or divide a school based on enrollment.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Not Sure

16. To what extent do you agree that the following people value your involvement when making important decisions related to your school(s)?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
AISD Superintendent and district administration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AISD Board of Trustees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Principals and school staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School PTAs and Campus Advisory Councils	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Neighborhood associations and community organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. Briefly list three ways in which AISD could encourage parents and community members to become more involved in general or attend important school meetings:

1.
2.
3.

To assist in our analysis, please tell us a little about yourself. Answer as many as you feel comfortable answering. All answers are confidential.

18. Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

19. Which of the following best describes you? Please check one:

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ White (Non-Hispanic)
- ☐ Hispanic

20. Which language do you prefer to speak at home? Please check one:

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Other (please describe):

21. Which of the following describes your computer access at home?

- ☐ Computer with Internet access
- ☐ Computer with no Internet access
- ☐ No computer

Thank you very much for taking this survey. Your input will be carefully considered.

Appendix L
Summary of Survey Results (English Responses)

Respondent Profile

1,469 Total Respondents

Question 1: Category

- The majority of respondents (42.8%) categorized themselves as parents
- 38.2% of respondents categorized themselves as AISD employees
- 26.3% of respondents categorized themselves as community members; however, most of the write-in responses under "other" (7.2%) also describe community members

Question 18: Gender

- The majority of respondents (77.1%) were female

Question 19: Ethnicity

- The majority of respondents (68.7%) were White
- 17.7% of respondents were Hispanic
- 12.8% of respondents were African American

Question 20: Home Language

- The majority of respondents (96.2%) indicated English
- 2.3% of respondents indicated Spanish

Question 21: Computer Access

- The majority of respondents (94.9%) indicated computer with Internet access
- 2.5% of respondents indicated computer with no Internet access, and 2.9% indicated no computer

Identified Schools

Question 2: Schools Identified by Parents

The top 10 schools by total number of responses were:

Small MS	**71**
Bryker Woods ES	54
Hill ES	52
McCallum HS	48
Bowie HS	42
Austin HS	37
Anderson HS	28
Gullett ES	27
Brentwood ES	26
Kealing MS	25

Question 3: Schools Identified by Community Members

The top 10 schools by total number of responses were:

Becker ES	**52**
Maplewood ES	38
Blanton ES	32
Reagan HS	30
McCallum HS	29
Crockett HS	26
Brentwood ES	26
Bryker Woods ES	25
Pearce MS	20
Lamar MS	19

Informing the Community

Question 4: Ways in Which AISD Informs the Community

- The majority of respondents (43.3%) indicated email, but very close were letter or flyer from school (43.0%) and school newsletter or website (41.3%)
- 34.2% of respondents indicated regular mail, and 34.0% indicated AISD website

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- Fewer African Americans indicated letter of flyer from school (31.2%) and school newsletter of website (28.3%)
- The majority of parents (75.6%) ranked letter or flyer from school the highest, while the majority of AISD employees (65.5%) ranked email the highest
- AISD Employees (55.4%) ranked AISD website second-highest, while parents (31.4%) ranked it seventh-highest

Question 5: How the Community Would Prefer to Be Informed by AISD

- The majority of respondents (67.5%) indicated email
- 41.0% of respondents indicated school newsletter or website
- 34.1% of respondents indicated regular mail, 33.2% indicated letter or flyer from school, and 28.3% indicated direct communication from someone at school

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- African Americans preferred TV (34.6%), newspaper announcements (34.6%), and church (30.2%) over direct communication from someone at school (27.9%)
- Hispanics preferred direct communication from someone at school (36.8%) more than African Americans (27.9%) and Whites (26.8%)
- Parents (81.0%) and AISD employees (72.7%) preferred email more than community members (45.3%)
- Almost as many community members (44.7%) preferred newspaper announcements as email (45.3%)
- After email and school newsletter or website, parents preferred letter or flyer from home (51.8%) while AISD employees preferred the AISD website (40.6%)

Question 8: How Well Does AISD Inform the Community

- The majority of respondents (34.3%) gave AISD a B; with A's (16.7%) and B's combined, AISD received 51%
- 29.2% gave AISD a C, 12.4% a D, and 7.4% an F

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- 20.5% of African Americans gave AISD an F; conversely, only 22.7% of African Americans gave AISD a B
- Of all ethnic groups, Hispanics (22.8%) gave AISD the greatest percentage of A's
- Of all respondent categories, AISD employees (27.7%) gave AISD the greatest percentage of A's
- Of all respondent categories, community members gave AISD the lowest percentage of A's (5.7%) and B's (20.7%)

Community Awareness

Question 9: Familiarity with Definitions of Over- and Under-enrollment

- The majority of respondents (56.8%) said they were not familiar with the definitions, while 43.3% said they were familiar

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- 60.4% of AISD employees said they were familiar with the definitions, while 32.3% of community members said they were familiar

Question 10: Familiarity with How Over- and Under-enrollment Affect Decisions

- The majority of respondents (41.2%) said they were somewhat familiar with how building new schools is affected
- The majority of respondents said they were not at all familiar with how changing school boundaries (40.0%), consolidating or dividing schools (45.6%), changing how a school building is used (46.8%), and closing a school (46.0%) are affected
- For all types of decisions, the combinations of very familiar and somewhat familiar were greater than not all familiar

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- For all types of decisions, AISD employees were more familiar than other respondent categories

Question 11: Familiarity with How Academic Performance Affects Decisions

- The majority of respondents said they were somewhat familiar with implementing a school improvement plan (40.9%), providing students with transfer options (39.7%), and closing a school (40.7%)
- The majority of respondents said they were not at all familiar with how replacing principals and/or teachers (41.4%) and management of a school by another entity (52.9%) are affected

- With the exception of management of a school by another entity, for all other types of decisions the combinations of very familiar and somewhat familiar were greater than not all familiar

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- For all types of decisions, AISD employees were more familiar than other respondent categories

Community Involvement

Question 6: Activities Related to Schools and Neighborhoods

- The majority of respondents (57.1%) indicated PTA
- 44.9% of respondents indicated school volunteer
- 34.1% of respondents indicated neighborhood or community group, 28.0% indicated other school organization or club, and 27.1% indicated church

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- The majority of African Americans (50.4%) indicated church
- 51.4% of Whites indicated school volunteer, compared to 28.1% for African Americans and 38.9% for Hispanics
- 78.6% of parents indicated PTA, compared to 66.1% of AISD employees and 23.8% of community members
- 70.9% of parents indicated school volunteer, compared to 31.5% of AISD employees and 23.8% of community members
- 54.5% of community members indicated neighborhood or community group, compared to 32.4% of parents and 22.9% of AISD employees

Question 12: Actions Taken When Learning of Important School Issues

- The majority of respondents (51.2%) indicated attending a school meeting
- 51.2% of respondents indicated communicating with other parents and 42.3% indicated contacting the school
- 36.4% of respondents indicated communicating with other community members and 27.2% indicated attending a community or neighborhood meeting

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- 40.2% of African Americans indicated communicating with other parents, compared to 54.2% of Whites and 45.4% of Hispanics
- 72.8% of parents indicated communicating with other parents, 68.3% indicated attending a school meeting, and 55.9% indicated contacting the school
- 50.0% of community members indicated communicating with other community members
- 25.3% of community members indicated that they were not aware of an issue requiring action, compared to 11.3% of parents and 11.% of AISD employees

Question 13: Things That Would Help to Take Action

- The majority of respondents (59.2%) indicated providing timely information, but very close was providing more information (58.0%)
- 40.6% of respondents indicated convenience of meeting times and 34.4% indicated feeling invited or encouraged to take action
- 12.2% of respondents indicated providing child care at meetings

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- 11.6% of Hispanics indicated offering meetings in their language compared to 3.8% overall
- 69.6% of parents indicated providing more information compared to 53.6% of community members and 48.8 of AISD employees

Question 14: What Process Should AISD Use

- The majority of respondents (72.2%) said AISD should work closely with each school and the surrounding neighborhood to find joint solutions
- 18.6% of respondents said AISD should develop a set of options for the community to choose from
- 6.3% of respondents said AISD should find the best solution and implement it

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- 62.8% of African Americans said AISD should work closely with each school and the surrounding neighborhood to find joint solutions, while 14.6% of African Americans said AISD should find the best solution and implement it

Community Agreement

Question 15: AISD Should Never Close or Divide a School Based on Enrollment

- The majority of respondents (33.7%) disagreed and 14.3% strongly disagreed for a combined 48.0%
- 18.2% of respondents agreed and 12.7% strongly agreed for a combined 30.9%
- 21.1% of respondents were not sure

Significant Variances from Overall Results

- 28.5% of African Americans strongly agreed and 25.6% agreed for a combined 54.1%

Question 16: My Involvement Is Valued in Decision-Making

- For Superintendent and district administrators, 32.1% positive (agree and strongly agree) and 45.4% negative (disagree and strongly disagree)
- For Board of Trustees, 39.6% positive and 34.9% negative
- For principals and school staff, 73.0% positive and 16.1% negative
- For PTAs and CACs, 75.6% positive and 11.1% negative
- For neighborhood associations and community organizations, 73.2% positive and 9.3% negative

Appendix M
Summary of Survey Results (Spanish Responses)

Respondent Profile

24 Total Respondents

Question 1: Category

- The majority of respondents (86.4%) categorized themselves as parents

Question 18: Gender

- The majority of respondents (81.8%) were female

Question 19: Ethnicity

- 100% of respondents indicated they were Hispanic

Question 20: Home Language

- The majority of respondents (90.9%) indicated Spanish

Question 21: Computer Access

- The majority of respondents (47.6%) indicated no computer
- 38.1% of respondents indicated computer with Internet access, and 14.3% indicated computer with no Internet access

Identified Schools

Question 2: Schools Identified by Parents

All of the schools identified by total number of responses were:

Andrews ES	**12**
Pearce MS	7
LBJ HS	3
Winn ES	2
Reilly ES	2
Pillow ES	1
Akins HS	1

Question 3: Schools Identified by Community Members

The only school identified was Winn ES (1)

Informing the Community

Question 4: Ways in Which AISD Informs the Community

- The majority of respondents (77.3%) indicated letter or flyer from school
- 63.6% of respondents indicated regular mail and 45.5% indicated direct communication from someone at school

Question 5: How the Community Would Prefer to Be Informed by AISD

- The majority of respondents (71.4%) indicated regular mail
- 61.9% of respondents indicated letter or flyer from school and 57.1% indicated direct communication from someone at school

Question 8: How Well Does AISD Inform the Community

- 34.8% or respondents gave AISD an A and 34.8% gave AISD a B
- 13.0% gave AISD a C, 8.7% a D, and 8.7% an F

Community Awareness

Question 9: Familiarity with Definitions of Over- and Under-enrollment

- The majority of respondents (90.9%) said they were not familiar with the definitions, while 9.1% said they were familiar

Question 10: Familiarity with How Over- and Under-enrollment Affect Decisions

- For all types of decisions, the majority of respondents said they were not at all familiar

Question 11: Familiarity with How Academic Performance Affects Decisions

- For all types of decisions, the majority of respondents said they were not at all familiar

Community Involvement

Question 6: Activities Related to Schools and Neighborhoods

- The majority of respondents (61.9%) indicated school volunteer
- 47.6% of respondents indicated PTA and 42.9% indicated church

Question 12: Actions Taken When Learning of Important School Issues

- The majority of respondents (81.8%) indicated attending a school meeting
- 40.9% of respondents indicated communicating with other parents and 40.9% indicated contacting the school
- 36.4% of respondents indicated attending a community or neighborhood meeting

Question 13: Things That Would Help to Take Action

- 80.0% of respondents indicated convenience of meeting times and 80.0% indicated offering meetings in their language
- 73.3% of respondents indicated providing transportation to meetings and 66.7% indicated providing more information
- 60.% of respondents indicated feeling invited or encouraged to take action and 53.3% indicated providing child care at meetings

Question 14: What Process Should AISD Use

- The majority of respondents (79.0%) said AISD should work closely with each school and the surrounding neighborhood to find joint solutions
- 5.3% of respondents said AISD should develop a set of options for the community to choose from
- 10.5% of respondents said AISD should find the best solution and implement it

Community Agreement

Question 15: AISD Should Never Close or Divide a School Based on Enrollment

- The majority of respondents (42.9%) strongly disagreed and 9.5% disagreed for a combined 52.4%
- 9.5% of respondents agreed and 14.3% strongly agreed for a combined 23.8%
- 23.8% of respondents were not sure

Question 16: My Involvement Is Valued in Decision-Making

- For Superintendent and district administrators, 44.5% positive (agree and strongly agree) and 22.2% negative (disagree and strongly disagree)
- For Board of Trustees, 52.6% positive and 21.1% negative
- For principals and school staff, 70.6% positive and 5.9% negative
- For PTAs and CACs, 59.0% positive and 22.7% negative
- For neighborhood associations and community organizations, 36.8% positive and 21.1% negative

Appendix N
Summary of Second Community Forum

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Community Conversation on Draft Report
Martin Junior High School
March 25, 2008
Summary

Member Attendance:
(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:
Hilda Alvarez, DAC, Ortega ES
Jennifer Bennett, AISD, Office of Planning and Community Relations
Joey Crumley, AISD, Office of Planning and Community Relations
Raffy Garza-Vizcaino, AISD, Martin JH
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD, Office of Planning and Community Relations
Juanita Hernandez, Ortega ES
Linda Karstensen, AISD, Ortega ES
Jennifer Kim, Austin City Council
Daniel Machuca, AISD, Martin JH
Rosa Montoya, AISD, Office of Planning and Community Relations
Anna Pedroza, AISD, Ortega ES
Maria-Elena Ramon, AISD, Office of Planning and Community Relations
Maria Rodriguez, Ortega ES
Janie Serna, AISD, Ortega ES
Zoila Trejo, Ortega ES
Avareli Vega, Ortega ES
Rick Wood, AISD, Ortega ES

Proceedings:
- The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. in the cafeteria of Martin Junior High School.
- Andy Anderson thanked everyone for attending. He began by explaining the purpose of the committee and said that the committee began meeting on May 22, 2007. He said the committee's final report, to be submitted to the Board, is targeted for the end of April 2008.
- Mr. Anderson then provided an overview of the committee's draft report, including he following points:
    - A considerable amount of information and data the committee considered
    - Extensive community input, including: all committee meetings open to the public with opportunities for citizens communications; updates to the Board of Trustees and Joint Subcommittees; joint meeting with the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force; community survey; focus group discussions and individual interviews; community forums; and online comments.

    - Several findings relating to school enrollment and capacity, community participation and engagement, communications, and collaboration with other entities.
    - Recommendations in direct response to the committee's charter relating to community participation, review criteria for school utilization, communications, collaboration with other entities, and neighborhood schools.
- Rachel Proctor May continued with the presentation and provided a more in-depth review of the committee's recommendations, including the following points:
    - There are four major categories of recommendations: review criteria, ongoing communications system, decision making process, and community collaboration.
    - *Review Criteria* – The enrollment and accountability status (state and federal) of a school are the threshold criteria which, if triggered, would kick-off a community involvement process. As part of the process, additional criteria would then be considered.
    - *Ongoing Communication System* – This system would establish a knowledge base and relationship between the community and the district. In particular, the committee recommends an annual "State of the Campus" event for each school and stronger involvement from each Campus Advisory Council.
    - *Decision Making Process* – This process begins if a school has reached certain threshold points. The process would begin with the "State of the Campus" event and would follow with community notification, information gathering, and an initial community meeting to assess the situation. Then, the process would continue with more information gathering, a second meeting to develop recommendations and action plans, more meetings as necessary, implementation of action plans, briefing to the Board of Trustees, and an annual reassessment.
    - *Community Collaboration* – This was an important theme for the entire committee. Particularly, the committee recommends that the district recognize the importance of neighborhood schools and that community planning, school planning, and neighborhood determination be in cohesion.
- Ms. Proctor May ended the presentation by explaining that the main purpose of this community conversation was to obtain feedback and ideas relating to the draft report. She also recognized City Council Member Jennifer Kim as being present.
- The presentation was then followed by community questions and input: Highlights included:
    - The main purpose of the report is to establish a formalized process that the district and the community can use for the public to have input, to provide facility-use balances.
    - Most of the people attending were from the Ortega Elementary School community, and they felt that Ortega might be a school that would end up applying the committee's recommendations.
    - An important factor impacting school communities, and Ortega in particular, is the inability of families to live in certain areas because of a lack of affordable housing. Transportation can also be an issue for many families.

- Ortega is a Recognized campus and parents would like to be able to keep their children enrolled at the school.
- In response to what can the city do to make housing more affordable, Council Member Kim said that the city is conducting a study to find opportunities for affordable housing and affordable child care, and that a special task force is currently developing specific recommendations. She also emphasized the need for preservation of family-sized housing. She mentioned that the city is getting ready to update its comprehensive plan, and that it would like school communities to be very involved. Finally, she pointed out opportunities to address affordable housing and child care in transit-oriented developments.
- Many single-family houses in the Ortega community are being sold to people without children, and rents are very high.
- The community needs to become more involved in researching other possibilities and uses for under-enrolled schools and to revitalize schools and neighborhoods.
- For Ortega's situation, perhaps boundary adjustments could be made.
- Ortega might serve as a good test case for how the city, neighborhood, and school district could work together to solve a problem.
- The committee is greatly interested in what is going on at certain schools but, by its charge, its recommendations are not campus-specific.
- Overcrowding at some campuses can affect the quality of education.
- The affordable housing issue is affecting all of East Austin, not just the Ortega community.
- Housing affordability is about the whole community and is a broad issue, involving the market, planning, and external factors.
- The community appreciates that the committee's recommendations are very transparent.
- Perhaps landlords should be invited to meetings related to school issues, and make them stakeholders.
- Ortega might want to consider adopting a "sister school" in another part of town in order to share insights.
- Perhaps it would be a good idea to hold another public meeting at Ortega.
- Ortega is doing well in reaching out to its community.
- The Ortega community happens to be in hot real estate market.
- Although AISD may not be in direct control of housing, at least it can be supportive.
- This meeting did not seem to be publicized as much as the Middle Level Education Plan meetings.

- The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007													2008					
	5/22	**6/12**	**6/26**	**8/14**	**8/28**	**9/11**	**9/25**	**10/9**	**10/23**	**11/13**	**11/14**	**11/27**	**12/4**	**1/8**	**1/29**	**2/12**	**2/26**	**3/25**	**4/8**
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓											
Chiquita Watt Eugene																			
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓											
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓		✓	✓	✓			
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓										
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓															
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓																
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓				
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓								
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	

✓= Present

Appendix O
Online Comments on Draft Findings and Recommendations

#1
I was glad to see a recommendation for improving communication to families that speak languages other than English as part of the plan to involve the community in determining over and under enrollment in our schools.

#2
This report is well-written, I was especially enthusiastic to see the section on how we might "bubble up" pilot programs that are a success, encouraging innovation at the school level and a way to share with others. My only constructive criticism is about this section on translation in the District level recommendations. While I understand the criticality of Spanish, it should not be the only language referenced. I believe your recommendations should be in general form, and use Spanish as an example. For example, there may be a growing population of Korean nationality that requires more attention that Hispanic population even though the majority of the school may show Hispanic in the demographics. Thanks for listening!

#3
This is a great report and is encouraging that AISD might become part of the world of planning for the future. Thanks to the committee as I know this took a lot of work and careful thought. A couple of comments about specific schools. First, thank you for including historic value of school and value to the neighborhood as criteria. Our historic school of great value to our neighborhood, Baker School, was repurposed about 10 years ago into an office building. I don't see any criteria that permit us to "repurpose" this building into a real school so please come up with that criteria. Now that our assigned school is apparently at capacity, we need a trigger to get this building considered for education purposes as opposed to its current office use. This use has converted playing courts previously used by neighborhood residents to parking lots - illegally I think. The building is historic and should be so designated but AISD painted its 95 year old brick last year - a great waste of resources. My second comment is regarding qualitative criteria. The use of a site is very important. Campus sites come in all different sizes and have very different natural features. There may be room for more buildings, or for more recreation facilities or the opportunity to teach children about the environment. There could be a recommendation to convert a sprawling one-story campus to a more urban form releasing precious central city ground for open space that will be more and more in demand. In a bond issue of a few years ago AISD was building schools over the watershed several stories tall to minimize environmental impact while taking up precious ground for new buildings in central city schools. The Lee softball space was used for the library even though parents asked for the library to be built over the cafeteria saving outdoor space. Apparently at that time saving land was less a criteria than construction cost. This was not a good choice in the long run - especially now that an elevator was added to the school in the last year. So what kind of future are we addressing? The next 5 years? I hope much more.

#4
Please consider returning Baker School in Hyde Park to the citizens who live there. The building could be refurbished and brought to code in keeping with the historic nature of the neighborhood.

#5
Currently, the Baker School in Hyde Park is underutilized. This historic building should be repurposed as a school that serves the surrounding community. The best use would be as a Middle School, as it is absolutely ridiculous we have to send our kids to Kealing right now.

#6
I live in the Hyde Park Neighborhood and would like to see a revitalization of our local school, Ridgetop Elementary, so it will be a viable choice for Hyde Park families. This revitalization should include outreach to the neighborhood so the families understand what Ridgetop can offer them without having to submit vouchers to attend alternative elementaries outside of our immediate area. Currently, Ridgetop is viewed as basically an ESL school by most of the local families although it has a wonderful teacher/child ratio and an excellent GT program. AISD should do more to improve and expand the image of this school to make it attractive for local families. Additionally, Baker School should either be used as a school (as it was intended) or as administrative buildings. It would be a shame for the neighborhood to lose such a unique building devoted to educating our children either directly or in support of their education.

#7
There are hundreds of students from families which speak a couple of dozen languages besides Spanish. Is there a language line or something for those schools to use until they can find a parent volunteer to help translate for the others?

#8
This is FAR too long to read for the average person! Complete the Executive Summary, that is what I need to read. If I find a concern there, I can then read the details. Aim your document for an 8th grade level reader and you will be almost all inclusive of the average reader. Tell us in the executive summary: 1) What is the background or problem we\'re trying to solve, 2) Tell us what are the strategies to resolve those issues, 3) Tell us the timeline and 4) Tell us how you will monitor/adjust the plan according to the results as they come along. This should be really simple to read, not this document as is. Hope this helps!

#9
In qualitative criteria I saw no consideration given to the tax payers of AISD and their right to see their tax dollars utilized the most efficiently. (Yes, I am speaking for the analytics in the audience) Public education is in fact an industry and the tax payers are the shareholders. It is galling to see one campus at 110-115% of capacity and another at under 80% without a strategy and resulting policy to equalize them to create fair class sizes for all. We are aware that there is overhead inherent in public education, but we would like it to be overhead that makes sense based on where the children are actually living and going to school. This consideration may be underlying in this report, but I could not locate where it was actually spelled out in the criteria.

#10
I support the recommendations of open, complete and accurate communications, transparency and participation in decision making process , all of which affects children, parents, and the wider community.

#11
The thrust of the report recommendations is excellent. I would like to comment that as all good plans, they require the support and active participation from the community, and although the CAC can do much to encourage this participation, it will still be difficult. I strongly recommend that some of the operating routine requirements in which parents and communities now participate, be integrated into this effort. For example, registration at the beginning of each school year be integrated with the discussions of the

problems affecting each school, or report card mailings be associated with the communications about academic achievement of that particular school, in other words, we need to make stakeholders out of parents and community rather than be in the position of asking them to get involved in yet another activity or effort. There needs to be a daily mission coordinator representing all the efforts that are in progress. I am in agreement with the concept that the support and participation of the parents and community are critical to the success of these initiatives to address planning problems and implement solutions, but from a parents standpoint, there are too many initiatives going on seemingly with little coordination which makes it less encouraging to participate.

#12
A lot of thoughtful info was formulated by this committee. I'm sure all schools will be grateful for its work. A couple thoughts: 1-In addition to including how many portables a school has when viewing overcapacity, please also include the number of traveling teachers it has. Anderson HS has no portables, but more than 25 traveling teachers. It is overcapacity. 2-The report seems one-sided in that it does a great job to protect the rights of an under-capacity school and its neighborhood, but doesn't really consider the taxpayer throughout the district. I think some guidance given to the Trustees to be good stewards of taxpayer money is necessary. It's hard to hear that schools are underutilized and possibly even performing poorly and that the district throws more money and personnel at the problem year after year. This is difficult, especially when some secondary schools are unable to offer electives that their communities request because they can't have one or two more teaching units. The district cannot "afford" them. If the public could even hear these words, that would go a long way to reestablishing trust.

Appendix P
Recommended Communication Plan for Campus Advisory Councils

At the start of each school year, the District Advisory Council (DAC), with assistance from district staff, shall send the following letter with attachments to each Campus Advisory Council (CAC), advising members of their responsibilities and providing recommended operational guidelines, pursuant to CAC Bylaws, Article VI, Section Two.

Dear Campus Advisory Council Members:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on your Campus Advisory Council (CAC). Your contributions as a CAC member will help build a stronger school for all students, and we greatly appreciate your service.

One of the most important roles of the CAC is to establish effective ways to communicate with parents, faculty, and your wider school community. Please take some time to review the attached communication guidelines at your first meeting. At a minimum, each Campus Advisory Council must:

- Adopt systematic ways to obtain input from the community, parents, and staff, and to provide information to those persons and organizations; and
- Hold at least one public meeting each year to discuss the annual campus performance report from the Texas Education Agency, as well as the new AISD "State of the Campus" report card.

As a reminder, the membership numbers stated in the CAC bylaws are the **lowest** number of members required, not the highest. If you have more people who wish to serve as CAC members in any category, they are most welcome to do so. For schools in areas with strong neighborhood associations, we particularly encourage you to seek at least one community representative who is active in that association, as this individual will serve as a natural bridge to the surrounding community. Of course, all CAC meetings are also open to the public.

If you have any questions, please contact the DAC staff coordinator at 414-9961. We also encourage you to review CAC bylaws available at:

http://www.austinisd.org/inside/cac/resources.phtml.

Thank you again for your service on your Campus Advisory Council. Best wishes for a happy and productive school year!

Sincerely,
Jane Doe and Robert Roe, Co-chairs
District Advisory Council

Connecting with Your Community:
Five Tips for Campus Advisory Councils

One of the most important roles of any Campus Advisory Council is to communicate and obtain input from parents, staff, and the school community, as well as to provide information about the school to individuals and organizations. Although a communications system is required under CAC bylaws, many CACs have been unaware of this responsibility in the past or have been unsure of how to go about it.

We hope the following tips will help you get started. We have also included information about the St. Johns Community School Alliance, an award-winning community partner program started here in Austin by Webb Middle School and the St. Johns Neighborhood, which you may wish to use as a model. If you have questions, please feel free to contact the District Advisory Council support staff at 414-9961.

1. WHY DO WE NEED COMMUNITY PARTNERS?

Every school needs strong community support and the best way to achieve that is through ongoing communication with parents, neighborhood representatives, and community and business partners. Let's imagine your school is facing a crisis; it could be falling test scores, rising truancy numbers, a rumor about boundary changes – even closure or repurposing of your school building. What partners would you want on your side to help your school in a time of trouble? You'd probably look for individuals or organizations that could serve as advocates, provide insight about ways to strengthen your school, offer connections to other organizations, or help you get the facts about your situation out to the wider community. Community partners need not donate money or services to the school, though some may wish to do so. These are individuals or organizations with whom you will build an ongoing relationship and with whom you will communicate regularly about school news and events. In developing these partnerships, you are building a community safety net for your school. Think of your partners as your campus champions.

2. WHO WILL OUR PARTNERS BE?

Potential community partners include local neighborhood associations, businesses, churches, synagogues, nonprofit groups, elected officials, other schools in your vertical team, and more. Businesses such as public relations firms can be effective partners by helping you with communications. Area restaurants may wish to donate food for your school events. Local churches or synagogues may be a great source of student tutors or mentors. Ask parents, teachers and staff to recommend individuals or groups who might make good partners.

You can find your school's closest neighborhood associations by zip code at: *www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighbor/search.htm*.

Don't forget local elected officials such as your school board representative (*http://www.austinisd.org/inside/board/members.phtml*), and state representative and senator (*http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/*). If there is an Austin City Council member who lives in your school's area, be sure to include him or her on your list. Your school needs all the friends it can get!

3. HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

At the first CAC meeting of the year, set aside time on the agenda to create a list of potential community partners, using the above information, or to update the previous year's list. Once you have a list of potential community partners, designate a person or small committee to be in charge of introducing your school to them. Depending on the partner, you may wish to phone, send a letter, or drop by in person, but in most cases you'll want to give something in writing about your school. You may want to see if a teacher would like to assign an introductory letter as a writing contest for older students, using facts about your campus from the AISD website at: *http://www.austinisd.org/schools/*. Or, you may prefer for the principal or a parent volunteer to write a form letter similar to the one below.

Dear Community Partner:

We would like to introduce you to John Doe Elementary School, located at 1212 West Brook Street in Austin, Texas. We are a public school in the AISD system, built in 1945, with 560 students currently enrolled in kindergarten through 5th grade. Our mascot is the Mountain Lion and our school colors are blue and white. Our annual events include a Fall Book Fair in our library and a Spring Carnival on the school playground. Many of our students are English language learners and we are very proud of their progress.

We hope you will consider joining our school family as a community partner by participating in special school events, mentoring students or simply sharing our progress through our regular newsletter. We would also welcome you as a community member in our Campus Advisory Council, which meets on the third Thursday of each month, at 4pm in the school library, at 1212 West Brook Street.

To be successful, our students need the support and involvement of our entire community. The John Doe Elementary families and teachers are proud of our school and our students and we hope you will be, too. To find out how you can get involved, please call Principal Kate Smith at 555-5555 or Parent Support Specialist Jose Ruiz at 222-2222. Many thanks!

Sincerely,

Kate Smith, Principal

4. FOLLOWING UP WITH YOUR PARTNERS.

Once you've introduced your school, make sure you keep your partners in the loop on all school meetings, events, and communications – they need to know what's going on with your campus. If you send home a newsletter or an announcement about a school event, make sure your partners get one, too. If there are specific things your school needs, try your partners first. Even if they can't provide help themselves, they may be able to connect you with others who can or assist you in thinking about different ways to solve a problem. Any time a partner helps your school, make sure they get a thank-you note; a card featuring student artwork is always appreciated.

As your list of partners grows, you may want to ask for additional parent or staff volunteers to serve as contacts for individual partners. If you develop a large group of community partners, you might decide to set regular meetings for the entire group, as has proved successful for the St. Johns Community School Association (see attached information). The more you communicate with your partners, the more they will feel a part of your school.

5. WHAT ABOUT PARENTS?

A strong school needs strong parent involvement, too—but they can't be involved if they don't know what's going on. Think about the best ways to reach the families in your school. Do most people have email or is a paper newsletter that goes home with students a better way to reach them? Perhaps you have parent volunteers who are willing to make phone calls to other parents or your school has a marquee sign where parents know look for information. If your school has a high number of Spanish-speaking families, don't forget local Spanish-language radio stations; they may be willing to run announcements for you as a public service. If your school does not have a regular newsletter, you might consider this as a possible class project for older students. You may find a community partner who is willing to help with this or to provide paper and printing.

We hope these tips will get you started thinking about new ways to communicate with your school families and community partners. Please contact the DAC staff coordinator at 414-9961 to let us know what works for you so we can share your good ideas with other schools.

Appendix Q
Suggested Community Partners

The following is a list of suggested district-wide partners that should receive all AISD communications, as well as campus-level communications at the discretion of individual Campus Advisory Councils. Please note that this list is by no means exhaustive, but is merely a starting point from which to build a comprehensive list of possible partners. Additions to this list are both welcome and expected. Any omissions are purely unintentional.

Austin City Council, Travis County Commissioners, Austin Independent Business Alliance, City of Austin Planning Commission, City of Austin Zoning and Platting Commission, City of Austin Transportation Commission, Austin Neighborhoods Council, local neighborhood associations identified in the City of Austin's Community Registry as serving the school's zip code, Austin Interfaith Alliance, Community Action Network, Education Austin, Liveable City, E3 Alliance, Austin Voices for Youth and Education, LULAC, NAACP, Urban League, Austin Area Interreligious Ministries, St. Johns Regular Baptist Association, Austin Latin Ministerial Association, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Capital City African American Chamber of Commerce, Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Asian Chamber of Commerce, El Buen Samaritano, Communities in Schools, Partners in Education, and any other organizations that request notification.