

School Closures and Boundary Adjustments Superintendent's Final Recommendation Response to Commissioners' Statement



Proposals that extend the consolidation process over multiple years place increased strain on our citizens, students, and teachers.

The Superintendent's recommendation reflects months of discussion, research, reporting, and public comment since the BAC was originally formed. Moreover, the creation of the BAC followed years of public discussion and debate over the efficient and effective use of school facilities. The final recommendation is thoughtful, measured, and considered. It represents a compromise through a considered approach based on the public process.

The Superintendent's recommendation is a two-year approach to resolving a situation that is decades in the making. While it may be ideal to limit strain on all stakeholders, the reality is that a challenge this great brings significant change and stress for the entire community. It is unavoidable.

It is more important that this amount of change be implemented well. A two-stage approach ensures that the plan can be well-implemented to avoid additional stress on the back-end of the process. Much of the public comment received has addressed the need to take a careful approach. This recommendation takes careful approach by moving in stages to ensure that decisions are thoughtful and implementation is successful.

Not performing a comprehensive system-wide redistricting will yield insufficient savings.

As has been discussed several times, the only true savings are tied to core building and staff costs at each school. This plan will save the core costs noted for each of the three schools. It will also gain efficiencies in operations by significantly improving educational opportunities, especially at the high school level, and achieving staffing efficiencies at each level.

The Superintendent's recommendation is clear that full implementation will be addressed during the second stage. The initial stage represented in this recommendation ensures less disruption to families and students in the next stage of the process.

Creative, substantive alternatives such as repurposing a school for different grade levels or combinations of grade levels should be considered.

As has been discussed in multiple Board meetings and work sessions, the BAC was not limited in its ability to explore options. The BAC informed the Board that they had considered a variety of options that included schools-within-schools, K-8 schools, 5-8 schools, and 6/7-12 schools. Ultimately, none of those concepts were recommended. The Board specifically discussed these concepts with the BAC at one of the work sessions.

A fuller response has been offered in the FAQ's on the Board's BAC website:

Yes, the BAC did consider alternative grade level configurations, other than those which presently exist in CCPS. For example, the BAC analyzed concepts that included grade 6- 12 schools, grade 7-12 schools, and grade K-8 models. Ultimately, the BAC did not endorse any of these models in its final report.

In large part, the reason for not recommending different grade configurations was the potential effect on the delivery of instructional programs. Such configurations would have been located inconsistently across the school system, impacting how we staff schools, provide professional development, and deliver instruction. The BAC concluded that the instructional goals of CCPS could be met differently through closing the schools recommended and by balancing enrollment for more consistent facility utilization across the system.

The decision of which schools to close should take into consideration all potential costs, including the cost of repairs, modernizations, remodeling, and refunds to the State.

The decision as to which schools to close has taken into consideration all factors and impact, including potential capital costs. Considerable time and attention has been given to addressing this topic at the work sessions. The impact on students and system efficiencies has been detailed if only the top priorities for modernization were closed.

Additionally, this recommendation addresses the concept of capital cost avoidance and frames it in the more realistic view of what is likely to be funded. There are no modernizations recognized by the Commissioners and none anticipated. Capital costs can only be saved if the money exists, and the Commissioners' capital plan is clear that no such money exists or will exist. Therefore, the only true savings is in the form of system renovations – roofs and HVAC – that every school needs.

Resulting school utilizations after redistricting should leave sufficient reserve capacities for future municipal growth (Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance).

The only APFO that truly matters is that of the County, which is 125%. This plan does not impact the County APFO. APFO levels at the municipal level are a decision of those municipalities that may be adjusted as the elected leaders of the municipalities determine.

Moreover, this recommendation suggests that this plan does not consider potential growth. A honest review of the data indicates that unprecedented, never-before-seen levels of growth and yield would be required to offset the plan. This argument of growth was applied by the communities in the time period when MVHS was constructed. It is paradoxical to see the Commissioners now simultaneously lament the decision to build MVHS while giving credence to the theory of growth.

CCPS needs to make a concerted effort to reap additional operating and personnel efficiencies as part of the closing and redistricting process.

The Board, Superintendent, and staff have addressed this concern time and again. More than any agency, CCPS has found efficiencies and savings in the years since the recession. The level of cuts to expenses has been well-documented and rival any steps undertaken in this county or in the state.

Despite negative consequences to the system, the Board has taken these difficult steps already and continues to make hard choices. Every efficiency gained has been applied as a budget expenditure reduction to offset declining revenues from the State and County. The Board would be quite comfortable conducting a side-by-side comparison with other agencies where there are similarities, such as like functions, departments, programs, and rates to appropriately examine efficiencies and successes.

Decisions during this process should specifically address the problem of attracting entry level, and retaining mid-level, teachers.

The Board is fully committed to addressing employee compensation, which we have highlighted repeatedly as a priority. Equally, the Board is committed to addressing this priority in the bilateral process of collective bargaining with our employee units.

Given the emphasis the Board has placed on this topic and the number of years that the Board has highlighted this growing concern to the Commissioners, sometimes in response to contradictory statements, the Board is encouraged to see that the Commissioners now all recognize the severity of the problem of employee compensation. The Board has appreciated the effort of the joint sub-committee on funding and looks forward to a resolution to work that includes a firm five-year funding commitment to public education from the Commissioners. A firm five-year plan will do much to assist the Board in resolving the priority of employee compensation.

Continued Commitment to Education Funding Plan

The Board of Education looks forward to continuing our work with the Commissioners to develop a plan for appropriate funding for public education. The Board of Education is elected to make the policy and governance decisions that allow CCPS to provide the best possible educational system for our students. The Commissioners are elected to provide adequate funding for our public education system. We have begun important work together over the past few months to align these two charges and look forward to developing a funding plan.