



## SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

### Overall Approach: Build New Schools

#### WHEN WE PLAN

The Task Force carefully examined ways to plan school facilities effectively. It focused on strategies to reduce the need to build new schools and opportunities for additional funding to reduce the burden on district communities, in accordance with its values. The Task Force also emphasized the importance of accurate enrollment and capacity projections and efficient use of space. Finally, it remained attentive to the issue of equity: facilities planning must meet the needs of all students in the district.

#### 5, a. Accurately Assess Enrollment & Capacity

**Background:** The Task Force reviewed and discussed the district’s methods for projecting enrollment and capacity. Throughout its deliberations, the Task Force returned repeatedly to the issue of how to use classrooms and other spaces in district schools efficiently and effectively. Members of the Task Force learned that the Standard of Service is used as a planning tool to calculate needed capacity.

A subgroup further explored ways the district could efficiently use space. Some members of the Task Force expressed concern that actual school classroom usage did not always seem to align with

the number of classrooms accounted for based on the Standard of Service used in the Capital Facilities Plan. Concern was also expressed that the community needed to feel confident the district was transparent and accountable in how school spaces are used.

#### 5, a-1. The Task Force recommends the district incorporate the following components in determining long-term facilities capacity needs:

Regarding enrollment projections, the district should continue using its current methodology with some refinements, i.e., look at district birth rates, not just those of King County. The district should use additional tools, e.g., refined census queries, the latest information, and specialized expertise, e.g., staff or consultant demographer, to refine models and project at a finer grain to better predict future growth and changes in enrollment. The district should plan to a range of possible scenarios to take into account the changing, dynamic nature of the district and educational practices and thereby provide some flexibility in terms of capacity needed.

*The methodology should not limit flexibility, constrain required programs, or unfairly limit space for any segment of the student population.*

The district should ensure appropriate connections to cities and planning commissions to represent school interests regarding zoning and other development activities that could impact school facilities.

## **5, a-2. The Task Force recommends the following to address efficient use of facility space across the district:**

### **I. Standard of Service - Computer Labs**

The District should remove dedicated computer labs from the elementary school Standard of Service, specialized spaces category. The district should include those computer labs as regular classrooms when calculating available capacity.

### **II. Standard of Service - Room Requirements Methodology**

The district should develop a methodology for calculating required program space needs that considers the number of students served, time spent in the required program's room per student, group sizes, number of groups served, and additional required program space needs. The methodology should not limit flexibility, but should serve as a proxy for capacity requirements for required program space long-term planning (Special Education, ELL and Safety Net program spaces). This methodology would replace the district's current practice of relying on professional judgment alone to calculate space needed for required programs included in the Standard of Service.

The district should develop the methodology in consultation with program directors, principals, teachers, the community and relevant experts. The methodology should take into consideration the findings of the Special Education Program review currently being conducted. The methodology should be tested by running the calculation for all of the existing schools and comparing the results to the capital planning numbers and actual room numbers currently allocated to those purposes. Variation between these numbers should be analyzed on a school-by-school basis to determine where systemic bias or error in the formula may need adjusting. Variances may arise because the school has had to compromise the Standard of Service based on enrollment, increased demand for those programs locally, or other conditions that drive use higher or lower than projected.

The methodology should not limit flexibility, constrain required programs or unfairly limit space for any segment of the student population.

For short-range room allocation decisions, the methodology should provide general targets that can be adjusted using the inputs of professional judgment on actual needs within the school.

### **III. Annual or Semi-Annual Use of All Space Auditing**

The district should develop and conduct a regular review of facility use across the district and across room types. This annual or semi-annual audit would assess how all facility spaces are used (classrooms, shared instructional spaces, teacher planning rooms, portables, etc.). The results of this review should be compared with Standard of Service targets. If variation exists, the district should change how the local school is allocating rooms to various activities to ensure that it is more in line with the Standard of Service, make adjustments to methodologies or refine the overall Standard of Service.

### **IV. Reporting on Use of Space**

The district should report out to the community on these space review data, implications, analysis of any differences between actual space use and the Standard of Service, and any resulting changes to the Standard of Service.

## **5, a-3. The Task Force recommends the district not rely on portables as a long-term strategy.**

The district should not include portables as a long-term strategy when planning for addressing lack of classroom capacity. However, the Task Force recognizes that existing and/or new portables may need to be used as a strategy to address the current need and/or changing conditions over the long term.

## **5, a-4. The Task Force recommends the district prioritize addressing aging facilities that increase capacity; however, if addressing aging facilities that increase capacity creates inequity across the district, then other aging facilities should be addressed.**

## **5, b. Continue Building Conditions Assessment Programs**

**Background:** The Task Force discussed aging facilities and learned how the district assesses aging schools. The district evaluates building conditions through: a yearly independent, third-party Building Condition Assessment evaluation, which is based on the State's Asset Preservation Program criteria and covers 19 major building systems and subsystems; district assessment of conditions of every school and portable, which goes beyond the state requirements; and an internal reporting system for maintenance needs.

5, b-1. The Task Force recommends the district continue using their existing building condition assessment programs and methodology.

5, b-2. The Task Force recommends the district incorporate a mechanism to share the assessment program methodology and results with the community and district staff.

### 5, c. Reduce Some of the Need for New Schools

To reduce the need for new schools, the district should strongly consider the following strategies, where viable, to provide additional classroom space in the district's current schools.

- Build additions at the schools identified by the district as having the ability to accommodate additional classrooms
- Rent or lease space for preschool classes
- Remodel existing facilities, such as the Old Redmond Schoolhouse for preschool classes
- Offer double-shifting at choice middle and high schools to increase available seats and to extend the option of choice schools to more students

### 5, d. Increase Funding Options Long-Term

**Background:** The Task Force learned and discussed how the district funds construction. School construction projects are funded through a combination of local and state sources. To receive state funding, the district must be eligible and be able to provide local capital funding, usually through voter approval of a bond measure.

The Task Force recommends the following in terms of funding these needs:

5, d-1. The district should consider pursuing an increase in the amount of school impact fees generated under the current impact fee formula implemented by King County.

5, d-2. The district should continue to urge legislators to increase the state's outdated construction funding assistance methodology by updating the state's school construction standards and formula and the construction cost factors set by the legislature.

5, d-3. The district should urge state legislators to remove sales tax from school construction costs.

5, d-4. The district should seek private funding, including donations and/or naming rights, as consistent with district policy and law, to support the capital funding program where viable.

5, d-5. The district should consider selling undevelopable and/or excess parcels, at fair market price, as a source of capital funding. For excess sites, the district could also attempt to trade the parcel for a site more advantageous to the district's needs. (See Appendix L for a map of the district's current facilities and undeveloped properties.)

## WHEN WE BUILD

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**Background:** The Task Force prioritized additional classroom capacity over addressing aging facilities (with some caveats). While encouraging efficiency and economy, it recommends the mid-range funding option with principles designed to reduce costs where possible without sacrificing cost/quality tradeoffs or reducing square footage per student. The Task Force also advises to prioritize building on school sites with the least development costs.

### 5, e. Select Projects that Increase Capacity

The Task Force recommends the district build new schools at the mid-range (current) investment level to address lack of classroom capacity (including cost reduction and other design principle measures as detailed in 5, f.).

### 5, f. Create Quality Design that Reduces Costs

**Background:** The Task Force considered different ways to reduce the cost of building new schools. It recognized the need for cost-cutting, but after tradeoff discussions, the Task Force determined it did not support reducing costs by means that could affect student outcomes, such as reducing square footage per student specifications. The group also did not want the district to use cost-cutting measures to reduce up-front costs, e.g., lower durability construction materials that might end up costing the district more over the lifespan of the building.

The Task Force recommends the following in terms of reducing cost:

5, f-1. The district should continue pre-design work to help identify ways to lower costs, test concepts and help the community understand what is being proposed with a new school building. If needed, some of the previously approved unsold bond capacity could be used to fund this work.