

**Statement by the Port Angeles School District Board of Directors
Regarding the Elimination of Options of the
Facilities Efficiency Task Force**

Background

At a study session on February 23, 2004 held at Franklin Elementary School, the Board of Directors arrived at a consensus regarding the recommendations of the Facilities Efficiency Task Force (FETF). First, due to declining enrollment and projected loss of revenues, the board determined that closure of a small elementary school is necessary. Second, the board reached consensus that closure should occur beginning with the 2004-2005 school year. Third, the board limited its consideration to closure of either Fairview or Monroe elementary schools. In making this determination, the board rejected seven of the nine options included in the Facilities Efficiency Task Force report.

The board gave careful consideration to the recommendations of the Facilities Efficiency Task Force, followed up by communication with task force members at a work session on February 9, comments made by the public at a special community forum on February 12, 2004 at the PAHS Library, and numerous letters and emails received from staff, parents, and other interested community members.

In making these difficult decisions, the board recognizes that each school community in our district is unique and valuable. The board attempted to base its decisions on objective factors, rather than emotions. The board did not make an evaluative determination as to which school was "better" than another. The board did take into consideration the impact closure would have on current school reinvention work and the effect of moving special education services and other programs from one facility to another.

The board also considered other factors in making these determinations, including, but not limited to, potential cost savings, number of students moved to other schools, transportation costs, impact on other facilities and instructional programs, geographic balance, cost and feasibility of renovation, potential loss of students to the district, and risk of future levy failure.

Closure of a facility is a wrenching experience for students, families, and staff. However, the board shared the unanimous consensus of the Facilities Efficiency Task Force members that to do nothing was not an option. We heard from many community members the desire for the board to take action, make a clear decision, and to make it soon, so as not to prolong the agony and uncertainty of staff and families.

The board takes full responsibility for the decisions it makes regarding use of district facilities during a period in which Port Angeles schools have lost 640 FTE's and is projected to lose 341 more in the next 6 years. For the previous two years, the district has been forced to make budget cuts in the amount of approximately 2.2 million dollars. The board does not believe it is possible to sustain further cuts in operational expenses without causing serious harm to the quality of educational services provided by the district. *No attempt has been made by the superintendent or central services administrative staff to influence our decision.* We reiterate that the consensus reached and the decisions made by the board are our own.

No doubt, there will be members of the community who will disagree strongly with whatever final decision the board makes regarding school closure. This is both expected and understandable. Our commitment to district staff and families and to the community at large is to act in good faith, based on the most accurate information available at this time, using our best judgment to determine what is in the best interest of the school district as a whole. Our obligation is to be open, honest and transparent about how we arrive at our decisions. With that purpose in mind, the board would like to provide a concise explanation of our reasons for eliminating from consideration seven of the nine options presented by the task force.

Reasons for Rejecting Task Force Options

Option #1 – Four School Renovation Task Force Ranking* 1.21

This proposal is both original and creative. Option 1 would postpone the decision on whether to close a school (Monroe) to allow the possibility of future increases in student enrollment while at the same time providing for comprehensive renovations of both Franklin and Monroe elementary schools during the periods when the schools are unoccupied.

However, the consensus of the board was to reject this option for the following reasons:

- Impact on large number of children having to change schools over a two year period was unacceptable (462, with some changing schools twice)
- Task force determined renovations could be done over successive summers
- Postpones decision to close a facility for two years when the consensus was to attempt closure in fall of 2004 if possible
- Negative impact on Jefferson School which would place students in portables permanently
- Fails to take into account educational and emotional impact on children having to change school community more than once (Franklin to Monroe, then Monroe to Franklin)
- Expectation of enrollment increases of 125+ during the renovation time period too uncertain.

Option #4 – Close Franklin Ranking 5.00

- Option not favored by Facilities Efficiency Task Force.
- Closure of large 3-unit school would disrupt too many students (462)
- Would result in loss of a centrally located school with historical significance
- Would eliminate facility with the most flexibility and classrooms
- Would necessitate too many boundary changes
- Closure would have a negative impact on Jefferson School, which would need to absorb influx of Franklin students (1-1/2 units) and to permanently install two double portables.

Option #5 – Close Hamilton Ranking 5.53

- Option not favored by Facilities Efficiency Task Force.

- Closure of large 3-unit school would disrupt too many students (660)
- Location of school on west side of Port Angeles important in an area of expected population growth
- Closure would mandate boundary changes for every elementary school in the district.

Option #6 – 1 Unit Monroe + CSB

Ranking 6.00

- Option not favored by Facilities Efficiency Task Force.
- Does not meet the board's decision to reduce the number of elementary schools from 6 to 5.
- Fails to save enough money in operational expenses to be viable.
- 1-unit school would make mainstreaming of Special Education students difficult.
- 1/2 time principal would not adequately support school needs.

Option #7: Merge Fairview & Monroe

Ranking 6.00

- Option not favored by Facilities Efficiency Task Force.
- Does not meet the board's decision to reduce the number of elementary schools from 6 to 5.
- Fails to save sufficient amount in operating costs to be viable.
- Based on history, shared principal between schools is a bad model.

Option #8: Close both Fairview & Monroe

Ranking 6.86

- Option not favored by Facilities Efficiency Task Force.
- Leaves east side of district without any school.
- Eastside of Port Angeles an area of expected population growth in the future.
- Would likely cause loss of students from the district so that financial savings would not be realized.
- Large number of students would have to change schools (660)
- Leaves little room for absorbing increases in enrollment or added classrooms for extended day kindergarten.

Option #9: Do Nothing

Ranking 9.00

- Unanimously rejected by Facilities Efficiency Task Force
- Does not meet the board's decision to reduce the number of elementary schools from 6 to 5.
- Requires an immediate cut in next year's budget estimated at \$300,000, and another \$250,000 each succeeding year where enrollment declines by 50.
- Necessary cuts would significantly impact class size and the quality of teaching and learning in the district.

**Lower number indicates greater consensus of task force members.*

Adopted: 03/08/04