

MEMO

To: Salt Lake City School District Board of Education
Dr. Elizabeth Grant, Superintendent

From: Brian Conley, Boundaries and Planning Director

Re: Approach to Further Study of Schools for Long-Term School Closure Discussion at Board Meeting September 5, 2023

Date: September 1, 2023

At the September 5th Board meeting, the district will present an approach to further study of schools for long-term closure and boundary changes. The memo provides information that will aid you in preparing for the upcoming discussion.

Approach to Further Study

In further studying schools, the district will again consider the factors named in G-5: Administrative Procedures and will be guided by the district's commitments.

First, the district has grouped the considerations into five primary categories that represent critical principles that will guide the development of recommendations to the Board. The five categories are:

- Student enrollment and residential population
- Proximity and availability of neighborhood schools
- Building and learning environment quality
- Strategic placement of district-wide programs for equitable access
- Community input and stakeholder feedback

Second, the district will compile and evaluate additional data related to each of the categories.

Third, the district will evaluate the implications of closing the schools recommended for further study. For example, the district will consider whether there is a large enough neighborhood population of students in the surrounding area to support a school at a right-size in the range of 400 to 550 students. As another example, the district will assess if there are alternative neighborhood schools that students can walk to and from safely. If a number of issues related to closure cannot be overcome, the school may not be recommended for closure.

Ultimately, in evaluating the five categories above, the district will take a holistic approach to determine which schools to recommend for closure. Through this approach, we will balance needs across the district to best serve our students.

Each of the considerations and how they will be used in the process of further study are listed in the tables below. There is one table for possible closure and one table for boundary adjustments. At the end of each table is a section outlining the considerations that are not useful in making that determination.

Table 1. Considerations and Their Use in Decision-Making Regarding Closure

| 1. Student Enrollment and Residential Population | |
|--|--|
| Enrollment data | The district will gather additional data on student residential population and enrollment, specifically, the number of resident students, number of students who live within a 1.0-mile radius, the total number of students enrolled, past enrollment trends—resident and overall, projected enrollment trends—resident and overall, and the 3-Year Cohort Rate for each grade. |
| 2. Proximity and Availability of Neighborhood Schools | |
| Student safety | One of the district’s goals is to ensure safe walking and biking routes for students. During further study the district will consider how to reduce the number of students who must cross major thoroughfares in walking to and from school, consider walkable alternatives, and anticipate possible transportation needs. |
| Transportation | We will further study current district and UTA transportation services and the transportation that may be needed if a school is closed and students require transportation to a nearby school. |
| Geographical features | We will further study major thoroughfares and natural boundaries that may impact student safety and transportation needs. |
| Environmental factors | We will further study whether any environmental factors—such as pipelines or high voltage power lines—may have been added near schools (since its construction) as well as possible changes to zoning laws that may have increased local traffic patterns. |
| Community and neighborhood identity | Consideration will be given to the proximity of other elementary schools and the desire to provide walkable alternatives for students and families, to the extent possible, to support neighborhood schools and neighborhood identity along with the sense of community. |
| 3. Building and Learning Environment Quality | |
| Facility capacity and design | Consideration will be given to the remaining useful life of buildings (projection), unique features of classrooms (the technological capacity/innovative educational features and the natural lighting in the classroom), the capacity of building and site, the known upcoming repair/replacement needs, the potential ongoing maintenance needs (based on previous work order history), ability of all students to have reasonable and equitable access to a school’s campus, the number and square footage of classrooms at that particular school, the amount of sufficient and appropriate off-street parking safety for staff and community visitors, the adequacy of existing drop-off/pick-up and bus loading areas, the current condition/adequacy of HVAC systems, and the condition/presence of vestibules to support safety initiatives. |
| Financial implications | During further study, the district will take a more in-depth look at the financial factors including operation costs, maintenance, repairs, and eventual replacement. |

| 4. Strategic Placement of District-Wide Programs for Equity and Access | |
|---|--|
| Special programs | Considerations regarding facilities, staffing needs, and past assurances will be given to how the movement of a district program (i.e., special education hub, extended learning program, dual language immersion) from a school designated for closure may impact the students within that program. |
| Special facilities for special programs | Consideration will be given to the learning environment and facilities created for special programs, particularly special education programs, and the availability of quality learning spaces for those programs in the current school or in an alternative setting. |
| 5. Community Input and Stakeholder Feedback | |
| Community input and stakeholder feedback | Community input is important to this process. As parents share support for their local school or concerns about it closing, we will be looking at whether those concerns and issues are applicable to any of the other seven schools. In this way we balance the feedback we are receiving regarding one school and apply it to all schools, even those where parents have not been able to voice their concerns at Board meetings or in other planned meetings. |
| Considerations not in primary use for school closure decision making: | |
| School feeder patterns | Middle School feeder patterns are based on place of residence rather than site of elementary school attendance, thus the feeder patterns of elementary school student to middle school will not change. |
| Federal, state, or court mandates | There are currently no mandates that would impact decisions regarding school closure. |
| School designations related to state-designated categories of performance. | Schools that are designated as needing comprehensive or targeted support will continue to be supported through the annual school improvement process. The district has chosen not to use this category as a primary consideration in school closure decision-making. |
| Student educational opportunities and performance | Increasing student educational opportunities and performance are fundamental goals of the SLCS. However, the current status of student performance within specific schools, as measured by student proficiency and student growth, is not a primary consideration in school closure decision-making. |
| Demographics | The district has chosen not to use current school measures of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status as a primary consideration in school closure decision-making. Demographic information related to residential patterns and enrollment are measured as described in the considerations above. |

As the district considers schools for further study, we will also be assessing possible boundary changes. As described above, the district will consider the factors named in G-5: Administrative Procedures and will be guided by the district’s commitments. The consideration and their use in decision making regarding boundary changes are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Considerations and Use in Decision Making Regarding Boundary Changes

| Consideration | Use in Decision Making Regarding Boundary Changes |
|---|---|
| Enrollment data | In determining boundaries, the district will aim for a range of neighborhood enrollment between 400 and 550 students. |
| Facility capacity and design | The increased or decreased reliance on portables for the neighboring schools will be considered (if a particular school closed). |
| Demographics | The impact on Title I funding and CEP (Community Eligibility Provision) status will be considered. |
| Community input and stakeholder feedback | As parents share support for their local school or concerns about boundary changes, we will be looking at whether those concerns and issues are applicable to any of the other seven schools. In this way, we balance the feedback we are receiving to apply to all schools, even those where parents have not been able to voice their concerns at board meetings. |
| Student safety | Student safety, especially as related to safe walking routes, is of primary consideration. |
| Transportation | We will further study current transportation services and future needs related to possible boundary adjustments. |
| Geographical features | Related to student safety and transportation, we will consider major thoroughfares and natural boundaries that may impact the safe passage of students to and from school. |
| Special programs | Special programs will be placed in schools that have the capacity to house the maximum of one special program along with a robust neighborhood population. |
| Financial implications | The district will assess the impact of boundary changes on transportation needs and costs. |
| Community and neighborhood identity | Consideration will be given to the proximity of schools and the desire to provide walkable alternatives for students and families to the extent possible. |
| Special facilities for special programs | Consideration will be given to the learning environment created for special programs, particularly special education programs, and the availability of quality learning space for those programs. |
| Environmental factors | These factors will be considered as they relate to student safety at school and in walking to and from school. |
| Considerations not in primary use in determining boundary changes: | |
| School feeder patterns | Middle School feeder patterns are based on place of residence, rather than site of elementary school attendance, so decisions around this may be minor or not needed. Future adjustments may be considered if the decision is made to close more than one school in a feeder pattern. |
| Federal, state, or court mandates | There are currently no mandates that would impact decisions regarding school closure. |
| School designations related to state-designated | Schools that are designated as needing comprehensive or targeted support will continue to be supported through the annual school improvement process. The district has chosen not to use this category as a primary consideration in boundary decision making. |

| | |
|---|--|
| categories of performance. | |
| Student educational opportunities and performance | Increasing student educational opportunities and performance are fundamental goals of the SLCSO. However, the status of student performance within specific schools, as measured by student proficiency and student growth, is not a primary consideration in school boundary decision making. |