



# ***Open Letter to Parents, Staff, and the Community***

## **Poudre School District: Facility Utilization Process**

**September 22, 2009**

**Dear PSD Parents and Staff,**

**Poudre School District wants to share with you information about an in-depth facility study underway.** Schools are important to neighborhoods and the community, and any study of school usage is a sensitive and difficult undertaking. Through school newsletters, email messages and website postings ([www.psdschools.org](http://www.psdschools.org)), we will keep you informed of each step in the process, including the dates for community input meetings to discuss recommendations.

**BACKGROUND: PSD is studying efficient use of schools and ways to balance enrollment due to the following trends and situations occurring in the district:**

- PSD has uneven growth and some schools have more space available than in previous years;
- Budget realities are requiring districts to look for more efficient ways to operate schools;
- Grade level changes resulted in lower elementary school enrollments;
- More families are exercising school choice, causing imbalances in enrollment that are difficult to adjust with boundary changes, given school choice; and
- Transportation does not provide bussing to choice students, creating inequities of opportunity.

**Following discussion with the Board of Education over the past year about community values regarding existing facilities, the district designed a Facility Utilization Process to develop recommendations for more efficient use of schools and to help balance enrollment across schools.**

**RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GATHERING:** To design a process, the district reviewed processes used in other districts (Denver, Littleton, Colorado Springs), and has conducted several studies:

- A **Facility Study Committee** (summer and fall 2009) examined building utilization and considered different scenarios in recommending optimal efficiencies.
- **Focus groups** (spring 2009) gathered stakeholder perceptions about closing, combining and/or repurposing schools.
- A **Transportation Study** (summer and fall 2009) considered the feasibility of offering bussing in zones to offer choice in zones.
- These studies built upon a **Small Schools Study** (2007-08) that designed a formula to fund programs at smaller schools, as well as a process to work with a community to evaluate small schools for consolidation.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION UPDATE: On Tuesday, September 22, district administration updated the Board of Education on the process, and shared the reports, recommendations, and next steps.** (These reports can be found on the district website ([www.psdschools.org](http://www.psdschools.org) under District Updates.)

To develop next steps, district administration drew heavily from the Board of Education's Executive Limitations policies that require the district to act prudently and to assure district stakeholders have a clear understanding of how educational services are to be provided.



**FACILITY STUDY:** When exclusively considering optimal cost efficiency of facilities, the **Facility Study named the following school facilities for possible consolidation or closure:** Lopez, Moore, Riffenburgh, Red Feather, and Stove Prairie elementary schools; Cache La Poudre Middle School; Barton and Fullana facilities (early childhood); Washington facility (Lab School for Creative Learning); and the Mountain View facility (Polaris Expeditionary Learning School).

- **The study's recommendations were based solely on facility issues, administrative, and program cost efficiencies.**
- **The Facility Study did not take into account multiple factors that must be considered, such as neighborhood/community needs, transportation, education programs, and geographic isolation.**
- **The options the Facility Study Committee developed have identified schools that will be studied for repurposing before any considerations of closure.**

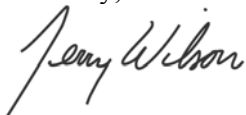
**NEXT STEPS IN THE PROCESS:** In order to consider the different studies and develop a plan that takes into account neighborhood/community needs, educational programming, transportation, geographic location, and other considerations, **district administration created several options for a Facility Design Feasibility Committee to begin working on plans and recommendations.** The committee will study the feasibility of:

- **Finding a location for Lab School for Creative Learning** that will result in acting on the 2006 district recommendation to close the Washington facility. When the Lab school is relocated, the Washington site would be offered for sale.
- **Placing Lab School in an existing school site** and not a stand-alone site like Barton, due to the increased cost to the district of operating an exceptionally small school that is not geographically isolated. In addition to Moore and Riffenburgh, consider the Cache La Poudre schools, given the Lab School's interest in moving to a K-8 configuration.
- **Moving Early Childhood Programs out of Fullana and Barton** to Moore, Bauder, or Riffenburgh elementary schools. Temporarily close Fullana and Barton for different programming considerations, to be determined. Through inclusion of early childhood programs in small schools, PSD can develop opportunities for consolidation of programs to support families with other community-based programs.
- **Moving Red Feather Elementary students** to Livermore Elementary.
- **Combining either Lopez or Riffenburgh elementary with other existing schools within the next 3-4 years to provide a site for a small specialty high school.** When the grade level changes were proposed in 2006, enrollment trends suggested a small high school of 400-500 would help meet secondary schools' space needs. The Facility Study identified two sites for consideration, based on location (accessible to large numbers of students), and school design that might be adapted for a specialized program.

The **Small School Study** conducted in 2007-08 provided a formula for understanding the costs of offering similar programs at all schools. At the time of the study, assumptions were made to provide a rational funding formula for all elementary schools with the exception of PSD's three Mountain Schools. **Given the need to continue to find efficiencies, the district will review the formula for small schools,** including Mountain Schools, independently of the Facility Feasibility Committee.

**The Facility Design Feasibility Committee will begin its work in the next few weeks.** *We look forward to sharing more information and involving you in this important discussion.* Please watch school newsletters and visit the PSD website ([www.psdschools.org](http://www.psdschools.org), District Updates) for in-depth information.

Sincerely,



Jerry Wilson, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools