

South Whidbey School District Long Range Facility Planning Committee

A long-range plan for the school facilities is being studied because of ongoing, sustained, declining enrollment in the South Whidbey School District. The school district's enrollment will require less space than current district capacity. In addition, some facilities are in need of significant renovation and/or remodeling. The committee's charge is:

1. To study the way the SWSD uses its facilities to provide educational and support services to its students.
2. To gather data and input on enrollment, finances, staffing, facility capacity, instructional strategies, student groupings, curriculum, property value, demographics, population, growth or decline.
3. To make recommendations to the superintendent and school board for the optimum configuration and use of facilities to enable the highest quality services for the students of the district.

The committee is made up 18 members representing each school building and the community. Meetings are the third Monday of the month from 7- 9 p.m. at the District Service Center.

Timeline & Reporting

January 2007:	Committee begins
June 2007:	Mid-project report
January 2008:	Final report/recommendations

Current Status

- *January Orientation Meeting:* The committee reviewed and discussed our committee tasks. An overview of the district's school capacity, student population, facilities and enrollment projections and projections formulas was reviewed and discussed.
- *February Meeting:* The committee discussed what information was needed for the committee to do its work and to make recommendations to the school board. A long list of items was compiled. Commons themes from the discussion were for the committee to focus on what was best for students, to look at the nuts and bolts of facility costs, to take into consideration underlying values (monetary, community, historical, emotional), and to look at the opportunities versus looking at the problem. The committee's homework was to boil down the discussion points into four groupings and bring these to the next meeting.
- *March Meeting:* Shared and discussed committee member ideas about the four groupings. Formed four subcommittees to begin gathering data to present at the next meeting: 1) Factors that Influence Enrollment, 2) Current Operating Costs/Budgets, 3) Best Practices in Student Groupings, 4) Use of Facilities & Assets.
- *April Meeting:* Each subcommittee shared and discussed initial data. Issues included:
 1. SWSD's decreasing enrollment is primarily driven by the Baby Boom dynamic population trend. We are probably hit harder by this trend because of limited jobs and lack of affordable housing.
 2. The operating cost per square foot for each facility is fairly similar. It is difficult to make an exact comparison because some costs are kept on a district-wide basis and not by individual school.
 3. For the first seven months of this school year, community groups have utilized the school facilities about 1600 hours, or 228 hours/month.
 4. We did not find conclusive research on the most effective student groupings for school performance. The research does point to minimizing the number of transitions students experience (switching between schools and teachers).