

05-079

Des Moines Public Schools
Schools First
Mid Program Review
Community Forum
Questions & Answers

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Contact: Duane Van Hemert

Responses to Community Questions

What has been the timeline for discussion and public input?

This process began with a report to the board on October 5, 2004 about Schools First. The report included information on the revenue and the rising construction costs and it was agreed to undertake a mid program review. In April, the district held a series of meetings in each high school to provide information on the issues and get ideas from the community. The proposal was released on May 31, 2005, with a goal to adopt a plan by June 21, 2005. In response to this concern the board lengthened that timeline so that no decision will be made until July 12, 2005.

Why is the district doing this? Why close a particular school?

The district has made this recommendation because of several things:

- Excess student capacity in the elementary schools
- Inadequate sales tax revenue to meet all the needs
- Dramatic escalation in construction costs that compounds the problem of meeting all the needs

Particular schools were designated to close based on:

- Enrollment, enrollment trends
- Site
- Condition of building
- Location
- Capacity and space available in nearby schools

What has been the impact on neighborhoods and property values?

This is always a concern. The neighborhoods where schools have closed or merged recently do not seem to have had issues develop, especially if the school site is taken care of or redeveloped. It is the district's intention not to leave closed schools in rundown condition or leave sites unkempt.

Will the fine arts program at Edmunds remain?

Any change in the fine arts program will have to be discussed with parents and staff at Edmunds. Eliminating or otherwise changing the fine arts program is not a part of this proposal.

What will happen to the Edmunds School name?

The plan is to maintain the Lillian Edmunds name on the site.

Can the Edmunds building be modified?

That is true, but we have to consider the cost of the modification and how well it would work after modification.

Why should I support a sales tax extension if this plan is adopted?

That is the choice of the individual voter, but we would ask you to consider the result of no additional revenue on the entire city before you would make that choice.

Can students be moved into our school from another school?

Moving kids really just moves the problem to another school, it does not solve it. If there is more capacity than needed, the only way to take care of that is to adjust the space.

Why are the plans changing, and why are they not getting what was originally proposed in the Ten Year Plan?

We truly wish it did not have to be this way. It would have been ideal to proceed as planned, but the revenue will not be there to support it. Many schools would not be were we all want them to be in terms of 21st century schools. While because of our attachment to our schools this may be acceptable to those attending them now, over time this will become a problem as new families wonder why there is such a difference from the condition of one school to the condition of others.

The capacity issue is a part of this too. Operating in more space than really needed saps resources that should go for things more directly related to instruction.

Have other options been considered, would they be considered or is this a "done deal"?

The purpose of the meetings is to have staff and board hear and consider the concerns and ideas of the community and that they have served that purpose. The board will discuss the proposal, and weigh the decision. No decision will be made until July 12, 2005.

Are there going to be more school closings in future years?

Schools opening and closing are a part of the cycling of responding to changing needs. Schools have to be located where there are sufficient student enrollments to justify having them. While what that number is may not be an area of agreement, it is clear looking at the history of the district closing schools is part of it. This adjustment should be enough for the next ten years.

Why hold four meetings on one night? Was this divide and conquer?

Rather than have a meeting, we decided that by having them separately we could keep the focus on the one school. We had them the same night because we were able to get them all in and start working on responses and information requests as soon as we could. There was a fifth meeting and June 16th is the sixth meeting.

Do smaller schools make a difference in learning?

Some data do support this, and some do not. When reading any study it is important to see how the researcher defines "small" and whether the study was looking at elementary schools or not. We did put together a small bibliography of articles on this topic. In Des Moines, the size of the school does not appear to have a relationship on the achievement of the students.

What about neighborhood turnover, when families with children move in, has this been considered and will the board have this information?

Neighborhoods do recycle. That is why it is important to look at the enrollment trend line to help project which way a school is going in terms of enrollment. That has been considered and is on the charts the board received.

Why were we given only one option is there a way to keep these schools open?

We proposed what we believe to be the best option. Other options have been proposed by various community members and may be discussed by the board.

Why do families want to go to the Downtown School?

The instructional philosophy is attractive to many families and for some the location is also a draw.

Why can't DMAACC be used for some Central Campus Programs?

The district does have a relationship with DMAACC and students do earn DMAACC credit for some programs. It is the plan to continue and even expand that relationship.

Why did the district tell us a year in advance about closing our schools?

In order to bring forward a comprehensive plan for the community and the board to consider, it had to address the whole district picture and look forward in time. This also allows families time to prepare for the change and prepare students for the change.

If we fill schools to capacity, how can Des Moines grow and bring in new families?

What a wonderful problem that would be to have! We would address it as has been done in the past, adjusting boundaries, adding temporary classrooms, then building new schools as there are enough students to fill them. That is why we did not propose to tear down all the schools closed. That allows for change.

Several Parents were concerned about the teaching staff as a result of school closings.

We have a teacher comprehensive agreement with the teacher union that the district must follow in the transfer and placement of teaching staff. All teachers in the spring have an option to request a transfer to a school/grade of their choice. We attempt to honor the requests if at all possible.

Teachers that are affected by a district decision such as a school closing are given an opportunity to indicate their preference for assignment within the district and they are given priority preference in placement in accordance with the teacher union contract.

Have we been spending dollars before we had them?

No, to date the district has been funding the Schools First Renovation Plan on a "pay-as-you-go" method. This means that the construction schedule has been set to match the timing of when the district receives its portion of the local option sales taxes.

How can we increase retail sales in Polk County so as to increase sales tax revenue?

Interesting question but unfortunately increasing retail sales is not really within the purview of a school district. This is more of an economic development question. Of course, the very obvious non-economic answer is that everyone should encourage everyone to purchase more goods and services within Polk County. But again, when economic times are tough, as they have been, then retail sales go down.

Please help us and find a way to get the money.

The district wishes it could find a way to get the money. However, sales tax receipts are down in Polk County. Original estimates prepared by Polk Des Moines Taxpayers Association were based on the assumption that retail sales would increase in Polk County 5% each year. When the original estimates were together in 2000 that was a reasonable assumption given that sales tax receipts had climbed 5.6% each year from 1990 – 1999. Sales taxes have not grown that much each year. In addition the cost of construction is up. When the original plan was put together construction inflation was 1-3% per year. Last year construction inflation was 9%. Therefore we have less money than anticipated to cover construction that costs more than anticipated.

Where did money go from the sale of Brooks?

By law, any money received from the sale of property (land and/or buildings) must go into the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) Fund. The proceeds from the sale of Brooks of approximately \$200,000 were placed in the PPEL and used for “facilities, grounds and equipment,” such as geothermal systems in schools that have been renovated as part of the Schools First Plan.

Will staff be reduced with the merger?

As the district has done in the past, teaching staff will continue to follow the students. Class size should remain comparable to what it is today. Other operating staff will be assigned based on industry standards, such as square footage, condition and age of buildings.

Is the mortgage paid after 50 years ownership of the property at 1800 Grand formerly known as “Tech High School”?

Expenses associated with the original purchase of 1800 Grand have long since been paid.

What will happen to other schools listed for renovation if there aren’t funds?

There are several funding options that can be pursued – renewal of the county local option sales tax; implementation of a statewide sales tax; and/or increasing the voted Physical Plant and Equipment levy (PPEL).

What is the plan if added funding is Not Obtained?

See answer above.

Ask for .02 and get 2x as much \$ for projects.

By law, “a local sales and services tax for school infrastructure purposes may be imposed by a county on behalf of school districts... The maximum rate of tax shall be one percent.” (423E) Therefore, the schools in Polk County by law are precluded from asking voters to agree to a two cent sales tax.

Will our taxes be raised?

The overall tax rate for the district did not go up for next year. In fact, the overall rate went down by one penny. At this time, there are no plans to increase the district’s overall tax rate. However, you should know that In some cases voters must agree to tax rate changes, and in other cases, the School District Board can authorize tax rate changes.

Can we raise money to renovate Moore?

Past practice has been that fundraising efforts have been done to supplement a renovation effort not to pay for the entire renovation itself. For example fundraising has been used to add a community center that could not be done within a school’s renovation budget.

New funding source? How about "Wells Fargo Elementary?"

The district has partnered with businesses in the past with great results.

I am also concerned with sales tax increases.

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Are larger schools better for students? Where’s the data? How about Brubaker?

Research states mixed reviews. Generally speaking, midsize schools (400-800) are considered optimal sizes for student achievement.

4th Grade Reading/Math (% proficient) for 2004-05

Brubaker	638
Capitol View	577
Monroe	506
Morris	562

Are smaller schools safer?

Safety is of prime importance in all schools. Each school, regardless of size, makes rules, guidelines, procedures that keep students safe. Most of our schools have most doors locked during the school day, ask for visitors to sign in at the office, require visitor passes, instruct adults to ask “May I help you?” if adults are in the building. Location and sheet access differ for each facility. Size is not the only factor in school safety.

Buildings don’t help teaching.

Facilities are important safety factors in a student and teacher environment. The quality teacher in every classroom is the most important factor in student learning.

Eventual size of combined schools and its impact on class size and learning?

Projected enrollment for 2005-06 for:	Adams/Garton	667
	Moore/Hillis/Woodlawn	1071
	Howe/Park Avenue/_____	627

Teachers at the elementary level are assigned based on a district formula. Class size does not increase because of merged schools. Teachers are assigned according to enrollment. Class size is only one factor in student learning. The quality teacher has the most impact.

How can we increase the attendance at Adams?

There is already a large ESL enrollment bused into Adams. Students that live in the area but choose to go to another school could be contacted about coming back to the neighborhood school. Encourage more open enrollment into Adams.

Is the proposed school too big?

Proposed enrollment for 2005-06 is 727 if boundaries and programming remains the same. Both of these may change in the process. This still fits into the research definition of a midsize school.

Our reading of the research is that small bldgs (under 400) and small classes best facilitate learning and development.

There is a lit of research available about small school size and low pupil teacher ratios. Much of the research states that lower class sizes to make a big difference need to be 15 to 17 students. Research is still not conclusive that smaller class sizes guarantee increased student achievement.

What happens to individual attention in a larger school?

Larger schools often have increased personnel because of their enrollment. Class sizes are consistent with smaller schools. The leadership and culture of a school determine individual attention given to students in schools of all sizes.

When we moved to this school (Adams) the teachers and staff knew us the first week.

We encourage all school staff to learn the names of students quickly.

I baby sit a boy that goes to Brubaker. They are so large that after a year there is no connection at all.

We would want all students and parents to feel connected at their schools. The principal and staff need to accept this responsibility in all schools.

Why not take Phillips back as an open school?

The staff and community at Phillips are committed to the traditional school concept. This opportunity came about at the research, feedback and input from the Phillips neighborhood. Classes are full with some waiting lists. No other requests to change this program have been brought forward.

Shouldn't quality of education also be a consideration?

Quality of education is the priority of our school district.

Classroom size has to be a consideration.

Classroom size is important in our decision making. Class sizes at Edmunds this year (2004-05) were 14 to 19.

What year did the district stop funding the top notch Fine Arts program here?

Fine Arts Funding.

Originally Federal Magnet dollars then district magnet dollars. This year's (2004-05) magnet budget for Edmunds--\$50,000

"If my children are bussed here and they were go downtown, would they continue to be bussed?"

Children that live in the neighborhood that are bused to Edmunds would be bused to the Pomerantz Center or wherever boundaries are established if it is over two miles or there is a safety concern.

Only 30% attend Home Area 363-

Where are 252 going and why?

Parent choice, babysitter option, open enrollment, voluntary transfer.

Why not have ESL here?

We look at where ESL students reside and provide service as close to their homes as possible if space is available and minority enrollment is within the acceptable range.

What happened to all the fundraisers and fun nights?

Each school and their parent group make decision about fundraising and fun nights.

What about an adult fun night at Wells Fargo Arena to raise money?

To have an adult fun night at Wells Fargo Arena there would need to be a sponsoring group to plan and execute.

What is the average class size at Edmunds?

16

What today is different about Edmunds educational philosophy?

The educational philosophy at Edmunds is to improve academic achievement in reading and math for every student.

What programs are currently a part of the Edmunds fine arts curriculum?

"Also, the enrollment might be down because the kids have not had consistency."

Enrollment decline at Edmunds has been accruing for the past eleven years. Consistency occurs when staff stay in place for several years.

"In the time that I have been, there have been 3 different principals."

Principals are transferred to new assignments periodically.

The kids have a hard time to adjust to change. We need to have more consistency.

Edmunds students have had both consistency and change in the past years. Staff may request transfers as they choose.

The Fine Arts should definitely be integrated into the curriculum.

Fine Arts is integrated into the curriculum this year.

Why is this affecting other schools like Callanan?

Students from Edmunds may attend Callanan for middle school.

Why is there no summer school? There is no summer school this year and I need help.

Most schools do not have funds for summer school. Both Magnet and Title funds could be used for summer school if it is planned into the budget.

Will all of my three children be sent to the same schools when they are reassigned?

We will keep families together if changes occur.

I researched schools to best meet the needs of my children.

The offerings at Edmunds will be continued as proposals are approved and schools engage in planning for student moves.

" I chose Edmunds because of the fine arts, diversity, and educational philosophy. "

These factors of fine arts, diversity and educational philosophy will be included in planning if the proposal is approved.

I am concerned that the fine arts programs had not been thought out that well.

The Fine Arts Program can be moved to other locations and should be integrated into any other setting that students attend.

What is the level of commitment to maintain programs as they are for next year?

Program commitment for next year remains the same.

"I came from Carroll Kemper, where they have a fun night and fund raiser to support the schools."

Fundraising is one activity that parents can use to support students and staff.

"Where will our students go to school, if Howe closes?"

Howe students will attend Lovejoy, Park Avenue, Granger/Mitchell neighborhood schools. Some may be assigned to other neighborhood schools based on their home addresses.

What about safety of students crossing major intersections/roads?

Safety of students is very important to us. The transportation and police department will assist in making safe routes for students. Parent input will be available.

What will happen to class size of schools that Howe students will attend?

Class sizes will be relatively the same as other schools. Teachers are assigned according to school enrollment. Currently, Howe sizes are 16 to 23.

What about a guarantee that our teachers will follow our students?

Teachers will be assigned to schools where the students attend and according to school enrollment data.

How will it be determined where students will go?

Students will be assigned to schools where space is available and closest to their home. Boundaries will be redesigned.

How do you prepare students (in large classes) to attend large middle/high school?

We have begun transition activities this past spring in elementary, middle and high schools. They will continue through summer and fall each year.

When will we be told where our students will go?

We have started to look at student assignments. We will be gathering parent input and have definite information to you after the proposal is approved.

"If something happens when my child walks 2 miles to school, is the district legally responsible?"

Bus transportation is provided for students who live two miles from their elementary school.

What exceptions re: bussing will be made?

Individual exceptions to bus routes will be reviewed by the transportation and elementary department.

Will students be allowed the exception to OE into their "future school?" or school of choice?

Open enrollments into "future" schools will occur if space is available.

How will teachers stay with students since students will go to 2-3- or more buildings?

Teachers could be assigned to any one of the two or three schools in the proposed plan. Teachers will meet with Human Resources personnel to determine their assignments

Have the teachers been talked to regarding what is best for the children?

All elementary schools operate in the best interest of students for purposes of student achievement. Each elementary has high expectations.

Why not make minor boundary changes to get enrollment up.

The proposed plan was developed from historical data and future projections. Minor boundary changes will not result in cost savings that are needed.

Adjust boundaries to add children.

Boundaries will be adjusted to add students to surrounding schools.

"Who put statistics together about enrollment, and how current are they? "

Enrollment statistics are gathered by the student data center. The enrollments are as accurate as building staff report. Enrollment figures are kept historically and current. Beginning in August after registration, we review enrollments by school daily and weekly.

How were projections calculated?

Projections are calculated from the city and our data.

Questions of accuracy of enrollment? Numbers? How were they calculated?

Enrollment statistics are gathered by the student data center. The enrollments are as accurate as building staff report. Enrollment figures are kept historically and current. Beginning in August after registration, we review enrollments by school daily and weekly.

If we questions enrollment, we go out and count.

What are the requirements for children to be bused?

Children in elementary schools are bused when they live two miles from school or live in an unsafe area. Special needs students may be bused if Individual Education Plans state this need.

Why are McKinley and Jackson not options for Howe students?

Jackson's enrollment has been climbing steadily for several years. If the proposal is approved, these schools may be options for parents depending on where students live.

Need small classes & relationships to build a good foundation.

Class sizes vary in all of our schools. We assign staff where enrollments are highest, space availability and special building needs.

5 yr old walking 2 miles to school?

Children are provided bus transportation if they live two miles from school.

"Lower enrollment is due to other circumstances (e.g., administration, ")

Low enrollment may have many different causes.

"With tax abatement on SE Side, where will \$ to run school come from?"

There need to be adjustments in the school facilities budget because of more elementary school capacity available than need. Many may come from extending the sales tax, bond issues and other sources that public and boards agree upon.

Won't parents pull their kids out now?

Some parents may wish to enroll their children elsewhere. Open enrollment allows this to occur with space available and adherence to the school district's desegregation policy.

Did you think about the impact changing schools will do to the kids?

Children are always are prime concern. A lot of thought has and will go into changes for students. Staff will receive support to accomplish this task.

What research supports quality of change?

When adequate time, research and input are part of a plan for school closings, the quality of the change is positive.

Current class size vs. projected class size? Student / teacher ratio?

Class sizes at Moore this year were 20 to 29. Projected sizes are relatively the same. Class size is a different calculation than pupil teacher ratio.

"Will the district provide door to door bus service, for free, and before and after childcare for displaced Moore students?"

Student transportation guidelines will be followed for Moore students. No door to door bus service is planned. Only students who have this need in their Individualized Education Plan might have this. Before and after childcare will be arranged as close to the Moore area as possible.

What assurances can you give to Moore students that they will receive a quality education?

Quality education is available and will continue to be available in all of our elementary schools.

What assurances can you give to Moore students that they will be able to attend a neighborhood school?

Students in the Moore boundary areas will attend nearby elementary schools referred to in the proposed plan. Parent input is part of this decision.

"Teachers are great at Moore, why take that away?"

We have outstanding teachers in all of our elementary schools.

What happens to the playground that the PTO purchased and library materials?

Playground and library materials will be distributed to the neighboring schools where students attend. Playground equipment must be inspected for the possibility of moving. Some equipment moves well, other equipment does not.

"How will additional improvements affect over all crowding re: Specials/Art/PE? Will it reduce the "Specials?"

Art, Music, and Physical education teachers are assigned by a formula that calculates how many sections of each grade level are in each building. Specials will not be reduced unless the number of sections in each school are less than what Moore currently has allocated.

How can Hillis/Woodlawn and Monroe accommodate all of Moore students? How will this effect class size?

Classroom spaces will be added at each of the schools to accommodate the incoming students. Teachers will be assigned by the number of students enrolled in each school.

"Where would the boundaries be drawn for Woodlawn, Monroe and Hillis?"

Boundaries have not yet been drawn. They have been reviewed. We have a map that shows where students live in each school boundary area. We will use public input as we establish new boundaries if the proposed plan is passed.

Will ESL students be taken from Hillis to make room for local students?

We constantly look at where ESL students live and try to assign them to schools closer to their home. ESL students may attend other sites if this plan is passed.

Will busing be provided for Moore students to other schools?

Students who live two miles from school will receive busing to their school.

Would like to know when the boundaries are determined.

The boundaries have been examined. If the proposed plan is passed there will be time for public to have input into the boundaries. They will be established by fall.

Where will kids be sent if there is a shortage of space in this area?

Students will most likely be accommodated within schools in this area.

When will the boundaries be determined?

See question 38.

How can you project Moore enrollment? They added a Kindergarten class in 2004.

Enrollments are projected in several ways. Our student data center projects students ahead that are currently enrolled, we monitor enrollments daily beginning in August and weekly and monthly at all times of the year.

Why don't you change the boundaries and then decide on school closures?

Changing boundaries is a very hard task. First it would seem likely to see if the proposed plan is passed and then determine set boundaries with public input.

If the boundaries change can students move to a new school?

Students will be assigned to a school most likely closest to where they live. If that school is full the other school or schools in the area may be an option. Open enrollment is also another option.

Or are they forced to attend or can they stay at the original school?

See question 43

Would like to know more about Full day/part day kindergarten.

Every elementary school in Des Moines has at least one section of all day Kindergarten. Some schools have all full day Kindergartens and others have a combination of full and half day programs. If all of the Kindergartens are not full day a lottery is used to select all day students.

What happens to the teachers/staff?

Teachers and staff will be assigned by Human Resources. They will have the opportunity to follow students where possible if that is what enrollment dictates.

What happens to the items that the PTO purchased over the past few years?

See earlier question

What are current student/teacher ratios?

Pupil teacher ratios are different than average class size. Moore class sizes this year ranged from to .

Pupil teacher ratios are calculated by putting all adults in the building into a formula and dividing by the number of students. This does not show how many students are in each class.

How will the closures change that?

Staffing at all elementary schools is done by a formula.

35 kids in the kindergarten class is this standard? Does it sound like a reduction in enrollment?

There are no kindergarten classes with 35 in a class.

What happened to year round schools in Des Moines?

We have several schools with extended learning calendars. They are: Capitol View, River Woods, Downtown School, and Moulton. Any school wishing to do so should contact the elementary department for details to study and implement.

I question the accuracy of enrollment projections.

Enrollment projections are calculated by two different entities. Historically the figures are quite accurate unless housing disappears or there are other circumstances.

There is no reading program at Hillis. Can we choose where they go between the three schools?

There is a very fine Literacy Program at Hillis. We will assign students in most cases to the schools closest to their homes. We will seek public input into making those decisions.

Can you guarantee that our kids will be given the same attention elsewhere as they do at Moore?

We have very fine staff that gives students great attention at all of our schools.

How can you use enrollment data because Howe had “special circumstances” regarding enrollment?

We keep historical enrollment data on all of our schools so that enables us to be quite accurate.

Are there adequate playgrounds for the schools downtown?

Playgrounds have been provided at both downtown school locations, however they are considered small and both schools have learned to develop other similar activities for the children at other nearby locations or within the building itself.

Why do we need to separate central academy and central campus? Will they keep the radio station?

The current Central Academy and Career Technical programs are currently together because adequate space was available. The programs are not dependent upon each other and do not require that they be in the same location. The radio station will be maintained.

What do they mean that North will not get any money?

The North High School project was placed in Phase 3, which means that the project will be completed when an additional funding source has been secured. It was determined, and supported by community conversations, that this project and others would be better served by waiting and doing the project correctly that to do the project with very limited resources.

What improvements will be made to Hillis, Woodlawn, Meredith and Hoover?

Hoover will be a phase three project but will be renovated in the same manner as the other high schools. Hoover has already received a substantial classroom addition, a new roof, a new fire alarm system and new air conditioning equipment. Woodlawn and Hillis will both receive site improvements, classroom additions and complete building upgrades and renovations. Monroe has been completed and Perkins will be completed next year.

How were building capacities determined?

Building capacities were determined by looking at the actual physical space and number of classrooms. Allowances were made for Libraries, Music Rooms, Art Rooms, Cafeterias, Gymnasiums, ESL Classrooms, Special Needs Classrooms and Regular Classrooms.

Some schools and buildings are used in different ways or have different classroom structures but it was determined that a standardized capacity measure should be applied to all buildings to allow for maximum flexibility in future planning. The capacities are not an indicator of student/teacher ratios but rather an indicator of the number of students that could be placed in a building based on the space available.

Why spend the money for adding classrooms to Woodlawn, Hillis, or others, why not spend it on Moore or another closed school?

The district currently has excess capacity at the elementary school level and the consolidation of buildings and classrooms will allow the district to operate more efficiently and thus be able to offer better services and instruction to the students. Building will be reduced, but teacher/ student ratios will not be increased because of it.

Will the newly renovated schools be safe?

The most significant advantage of having adequate funding for projects is the ability to make site and building improvements that will enhance the safety of our buildings. All renovated buildings will be brought up to modern building, safety and fire codes and all sites will have additional parking and parent drop off areas. These are sometime difficult to achieve with very limited budgets.

Will the new Career Center at the Edmunds site have enough parking or cause congestion near the Sherman Hill neighborhood?

The Edmunds School site is 8.24 acres or 358,805 square feet.

We are tentatively planning on a 200,000 square foot facility which would be a two story structure and have a 100,000 square foot footprint. We would maintain a minimum of 25% in green space and landscaping which is 89,700 square feet or 2.06 acres.

This would leave us 169,105 square feet, or 3.88 acres available for parking, walkways and or service drives as needed.

The current Central Campus holds several different and distinct programs along with some central support staff. The student programs are the Central Academy, Career & Technical Programs, our alternative high school known as SCAVO, World Languages and smaller English as a Second Language program. All but the Career and Technical Programs would move to other facilities.

The total student count for Career & Technical is 1109; however, these are the total career students. They typically attend half days, so the new facility at Edmunds would have on the average approximately 600 students or less on site at any given time. Staff would be 80 or slightly fewer.

The site would allow for a total of 500 + parking stalls, which is far more than required but a very desirable number to allow for vehicles expected at this site.

This building would be located so that the vast majority of students from around the city could travel to this site using I-235. It is expected that they would exit on the new MLK bypass and enter the school site from the west and not have the need to travel through the Sherman Hill Neighborhood.

What plans are in place for parents and students to transition and adjust to the new school, including building relationships with teachers and peers?

Our schools are committed to building a community where all students feel safe, supported, and respected. A variety of organized activities will be held before students transition to a new building. For example, the counselors will have classroom guidance lessons on moving to a new school, making new friends, and dealing with change. Students will have opportunities to visit the new school and talk with students who attend this school. Upon arriving at the new school in the fall, students will participate in community building activities that will build a sense of belonging and connection to their new school, such as open house, assemblies, and parent involvement activities. It is also likely that many of their teachers will also transition with them to the new school and support them in their transition. Parents will be invited to attend an information meeting at the school to ask questions and meet with new staff. Parents will be given information on how to help their children handle this transition in positive ways.

How do we explain to our children why our school is closing?

Change in life is inevitable. It is amazing how resilient children are in the face of change. A large percentage of students change the school they are attending each year. It is important that parents talk with their children, that they ask questions and then listen to their children's responses and concerns. If the parents respond in a trusting manner and encourage their children to benefit from this opportunity to establish new relationships, the children will likely be better able to handle change in the future. School counselors and teachers will also be available to provide additional support if any children do experience any difficulties.

How will my children react if they are bussed to the new school?

Riding a bus to school may foster student independence as well as provide an opportunity for students to make new friends and experience social interactions that they would not otherwise experience. Bus transportation is a very safe way to travel to and from school.

Several parents have expressed concern as to how their children will adapt to a new school. Parents seem worried and are looking for reassurance.

It is understandable for parents to be worried and concerned. We appreciate that parents want what is best for their children. Please know that counselors, administrators, teachers and other school staff want this as well. We will do whatever is needed to make sure the children's transition is as smooth as possible.

Will teachers and staff move to the new school along with my child who know and trust these staff?

Many teachers and staff will likely move to the new school along with your child. However, due to the collective bargaining agreement, teachers and other school staff will have the option to transfer to another Des Moines school. Doing so is the option of the individual teachers or staff, depending on vacant positions within the district.

Will my child be in a larger class? How will my child's special issues be addressed?

Because the teaching positions will transfer along with the students, class size will remain comparable.

Will you create problems if you pack classrooms with behavior issues?

When assigning students to classrooms individual needs will continue to be considered.

Will my child who receives special education services receive the same services in the new school?

Yes. Every school in the Des Moines district has special education services available. The type of service is determined by the individual child's needs per the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Where will my children go to school since they are open enrolled to Edmunds?

The plan is for most Edmunds students to attend Walnut Street School. Unless parents request otherwise, the open enrollment students will transfer to Walnut Street School.

Why wasn't Orchard Place considered to be closed?

The school building is not a property of Des Moines Public Schools. Instead, the Orchard Place agency provides the classroom space and pays for all of the building costs needed to provide the educational services to the children and youth accepted into treatment. Des Moines Public Schools pays only for the teachers, staff and educational materials which are provided through special education funds.

Will my children still participate in the voluntary transfer program?

Yes. This program will continue as part of the Des Moines Public Schools desegregation plan.

Where will the Early Childhood Special Education classes move?

The Early Childhood Special Education classrooms will move to other available space in schools in the same part of the city.

What is the cultural diversity of the surrounding schools? How will the minority percentage (quota) affect the school students will attend?

Based on the September, 2004 enrollment the following is minority percent per school:

Moore: 24.5% minority
(Hillis: 31.8% minority; Woodlawn 32.5% minority)
Howe: 19.7% minority
(Park Avenue: 20.5% minority; Lovejoy: 54.9% minority (cluster program for ESL)
Adams: 56.0% minority
(Garton: 45.5% minority)

Moore students attending Hillis and Woodlawn will not significantly affect the minority percent in these schools. Attendance of Howe students in Park Avenue and Lovejoy will help balance the enrollment. The merger of Adams and Garton will also help balance the enrollment.

Why is my community school being closed?

We are operating more classroom space than we need in the district. It appears the trend will continue. It is costly to operate with additional excess space. If we were to keep it, the space will need to be remodeled. We need to correspond the space we need with the number of buildings necessary to educate our students.

How do you calculate how many students per classroom in determining capacity?

We counted all the classrooms in each schools setting aside the common areas that we have. We determine the educational needs for the classroom. We assigned the number to each room based on the kinds of class being held – regular education, special education, ESL, etc.

Why are there 27 and 30 kids in the lower elementary grades at my school?

Class sizes will vary from 18 to high 20's in our schools. We have an elementary allocation formula for each school. Each school makes decisions about how they want to distribute the staff allocation based on the needs of the building. We monitor the enrollment and make adjustments based on the number of kids who show up.

Why do we have 30 kids in the kindergarten class? (We are getting our budget mixed up with our schools first study. Research says the appropriate size for an elementary school is 300 – 400. 1,000 kids is too big for an elementary school. I do not get the math when we spend so much for two buildings and then a merged building is proposed that will cost more than if we did them individually.)

30 to 50 % of students in the combined attendance areas do not attend the schools. The numbers represent the number of kids who live in the area not who actually attends those schools. Schools First information said the numbers allotted to each school needed to be lowered by 19%. After 911, the budgets were lowered again. The budget allocation was not the cost to repair the buildings. \$8million was the assessed cost and what it would cost to repair the classroom. It is too different numbers. There is one budget to pay teacher and one for the buildings.

My child had 36 kids in the kindergarten class. Then why do you want to close Moore?

Last fall, we responded to the numbers and Moore received another teacher. We monitor classes and move staff around. We also look at reconfiguration of classes that sometimes result in multi-age classrooms. We also look at enrollment over time to examine what the pattern has been.

Is there a written policy pertaining to the request for information who is responsible?

We try to respond as fast as we can. If someone has an information request and have not received an answer, please call me, 242-7763. We try to reply within 24 hours. Our policy states that we should respond within 10 days.

We should not have bought the Colonial Bakery. We should spend money for secondary schools and on neighborhood schools.

DMPS has thirteen production kitchens. If we upgrade it will cost \$750,000 for each elementary kitchen and higher for middle and high school kitchens. The thought was to have a central kitchen that would serve 60 schools. It cost \$28 million which would be the cost of 13 kitchens.

Edmunds is being left out. Money spent on Central bakery but no money spent on Edmunds. Other schools are in the all white areas. We have spent millions on eight schools but why do we not spend money on an African American school?

We have spent money on schools with high minority percentages such as Moulton \$7 million and Longfellow-Wallace. King will have a major addition. King is full.

How did they come up with the \$352 million?

Polk County Taxpayer Association did the projection. They said how much each school district would get from the penny sales tax based on school enrollment.

Moore has more square feet and it is cheaper to renovate. Why close it then?

Moore is in the middle. There is too much capacity. It has declining enrollment. Moore is a better site than Hillis. Hillis is a better building and bigger than Moore.

Did the construction company pull out on Goodrell? Did we have a performance bond?

The firm that submitted the low bid they made a mistake in their calculations. It would cause them to go bankrupt if they won the bid. They could not meet it the specifications. No construction had started. We were able to release them and not award them the low bid.

It seems that the school board is closing schools to save money for personnel budget.

Class size is in the instruction budget. There is a cost to operate any given school. It will reduce cost but the instructional staff will need to serve those schools. The savings is not as great as some would think. There is savings in the facilities, utilities, and some savings in staff. There 14 elementary schools who share principals. We should not overstate the savings.

How much will we spend on busing if the schools are closed as opposed to the cost of busing if the schools stayed open?

We have been looking at the boundaries and looking at safe walk areas. We will be able to project the costs.

Why was the Federal Home Loan Bank Building purchased? What are the long range plans for the facility?

The current tenants are covering the cost of the entire buildings. We acquired space that would have cost \$12 million to build. We are trying to locate sites where there is a demand. It is in the Edmunds attendance area and there is a waiting list for the downtown school. The Edmunds Schools will cost a lot to be renovated as an elementary school. The Downtown School has 21% of the enrollment from surrounding districts.

This year 10 teacher transfers came in at once from Adams. I have kids at 1st and 4th. Sounds like you need to hire more teachers?

Many teachers request transfers every year and it is not uncommon for several teachers to make requests from the same schools.

Why close schools when you are going to build more schools on the south side?

We looked at west of E.14th and east of E.14th. They are different scenarios. On the west side of E.14th Street, the enrollment has dropped dramatically. On the east of the street, the enrollment has gone up dramatically. It is a balancing act and we have to look at capacity. In the next few years, the growth will continue to increase on the east side of the street. Of all the schools on the south side, Howe has the most restricted site.

If there are other sources of funding for Phase 3 schools, why not get that money now and keep schools like Howe open?

Sales tax renewal must be supported by the surrounding school district. Statewide sales tax may also be an option if the legislature passes the legislation.

The bussed kids will move also. Will our kids get to go the closest school? My child will start kindergarten at Moore, then she could go to Woodlawn. After that, Woodlawn will be renovated and she will go to another school. She will be at a different school for the next three years?

We are taking a little longer looking at the boundaries. We will have input on the boundaries. We want to have the most continuity for kids.

We have moved kids for renovation purposes before. We will use a good communication system with students. If students are feeling stressed, we will use our counselors.

We had 4 swing schools to send whole schools during the construction time.

We need to capture the students across the street from Hoover who are going to Johnston schools. Can we recapture those students? We need to extend the local option sales tax?

The only way to change the boundaries is that the boards of Johnston and Des Moines make the deal. It must be generated from the board level. Funds have been used to make renovations at Hoover.

Why are the apartments on Hubbell which are close to Adams being bused to Brubaker?

What are Mr. Van Hemert's qualifications?

Mr. VanHemert has experience in construction. His expertise is coordinating the construction.

The principal at Adams said the YMCA could partner with Adams. Administration said no to the idea. Was this partnership with the YMCA looked into for the east side?

Are we making the buildings handicapped accessible?

How will 250 kids at Adams go to 4 classrooms at Garton?

We do have partnerships like the one at Wallace-Longfellow.

I do not understand how that was communicated that we said "No." We always welcome discussions regarding partnerships.

What is the information on small school research?

I have information on the research. The research said 760 students is a good size for academic achievement of students. 200 – 800 is still an OK size for elementary schools.

There are a lot of assumptions closing 5 schools. Is there any way the public can approve your plan? Why close a special needs school?

Administrators answer questions on the plan because we developed the plan. The school board has not made up their minds. They scheduled the meetings and have asked for your input.

How many GT, Art and PE teachers that will be added to each school?

Staff according to the number of students we have and the needs of the students.

What are we doing to seek alternate funding? Partnerships, corporate funding, lobbying for more money?

The district has actively pursued and been very successful in obtaining local, state and federal grants in addition to corporate and private donations.

Hillis has safety issues, how can they be corrected?

The site issues, such as parking, parent drop off areas, accessibility issues are all addressed with the renovation process.

Will the advance of \$400,000 to North short other schools in Phase I and II?

The \$400,000 that North used to build their stadium was part of the original funds allocated for the North High School project. It should have little affect on the other high school projects.

Explain how renting and busing children to the Pappajohn center for years is more cost effective and convenient than having the programs in one building we own?

The use of the Pappajohn Center is a collaboration with seven universities and the cost of using the building is shared by all. The attraction for our students in being able to use state of the art classrooms and lecture halls and the educational benefits the center offers is worth the minimal cost of bussing.

It will not be Central Campus if the programs are in separate locations. Currently Central Campus is using facilities at several locations, such as the agriculture lab, the horticulture lab, and the aviation facility. The campus concept is a collection of facilities that meet the needs of the students. The new proposal will better define those facilities.

Explain where and what classes are in the Pomerantz building? Is there a Pomerantz I & II or one at 907 Walnut?

The Pomerantz Center is located at the Walnut Street School, 907 Walnut, and it is an early childhood center. The building also has the capacity to develop a regular elementary school program. We own the Walnut Street School building.

If there is a water problem at Edmunds what steps will be taken so it does not affect the new proposed building?

The problem with Edmunds is the type of construction and its location on the site. A new building will better address these issues.

What about boundary changes and program changes as suggested at the June 7 board meeting?

Proposed and preliminary boundary changes will be presented to the school board on June 21st.

I would like to tour the Pappajohn and Pomerantz Centers and all down town schools. I do not feel I can make good decisions without seeing them

Tours are always available upon request with the appropriate building administrator.

Why close Adams and not Garton?

When comparing the age of the building, the type of building and floor plan, the overall site conditions and the needs of the building, the Garton building is a superior facility.

Can the district annex more space to the North and the East?

School districts can not annex unincorporated land in the same manner as the city. All areas of the state are already assigned to a school district and district boundaries can only change when two or more districts agree to do so.

Are we wasting the investment already made at Adams? Howe?

We routinely invest funds to keep buildings from deteriorating over time. At both Adams and Howe, improvements, such as roofing and Tuck pointing, were made in the late 90's and in 2000 to keep the buildings from falling into a state of disrepair and unusable for staff and students.

Building at Garton will lead to street blockages and congested traffic.

We have found that making traffic and safety improvements is required on most projects. Garton is no exception and DMPS will work closely with the City of Des Moines to make those improvements.

What are the enrollment trends for the affected neighborhoods?

The enrollment information has been provided with the Schools First Mid Program Review Recommendations

If Garton is on a flood plain, what costs does this add to the Garton site and what are the federal requirements for building in a flood plain?

Part of the Garton campus along I-235 does touch the 100 year floor plain line. The building itself does not. The City of Des Moines has invested considerable resources in developing a permanent detention basis just northwest of the school site. This site did not flood during the 1993 flood. There are no federal regulations that affect the Garton building as it is not in the flood plain.

Garton will soon be swallowed up by commercial and industrial development. Does it make sense to move/build there?

The Garton site is in a residential district and it is not anticipated that there will be any commercial development next to the site.

How does closing schools make sense?

The district has excess capacity at the elementary school level and enrolment projections are not expected to increase significantly to reduce the excess capacity. By reducing capacity, general fund dollars can be used for instructional purposes.

How has money been spent regarding the North stadium?

The North High community spent \$400,000 of the allocated sales tax dollars for their project. The remaining \$900,000 was paid for by private contributions.

Are vacant or closed buildings going to become the same kind of eyesore that Douglas now is? What is going to be done about that?

The Douglas building is currently being used as a swing school location for other schools during renovation. The building has been maintained and is in the same condition as the day it was closed. Several of the buildings being used for swing schools and /or vacant buildings will be removed at some point.

Is it worth rebuilding Adams and Howe school?

Any school building can be rebuilt or renovated but it may not meet the long term capacity or location needs of the school district and its students.

"Is the Pappajohn Center being expanded already, as we speak? Who is doing it?"

The construction work taking place next to the Pappajohn Center is park work being done by the City of Des Moines in the Gateway West project.

What are the elevator requirement for elementary schools?

The requirement for an elevator or ADA access is a district standard by which all school buildings will be made accessible to the public.

The physical condition of our building does not merit closing.

The recommendation for closing a building is based on several factors. The physical condition is just one, enrollments, district capacity, student locations and population trends are other considerations.

With the local option sales tax promise, why open Southside schools and close eastside schools?

The original plan did allow for the plan to be modified for demographic changes in the city. The southeast side of Des Moines is growing at an accelerated pace while other parts of the city have remained stable or even declined.

When replacing new roofs, what is the bidding process?

All construction projects in the district are put out for a public bid process as prescribed by Iowa law.

The numbers don't add up how can \$3million now be \$8 million?

The original numbers were budgets that were assigned to each building based on the original DLR assessments and reduced by sales tax projections. The numbers being presented as part of this report and recommendation are actual estimated construction costs based on 2005 costs and inflated to the actual year of construction. The original assessments if increased for construction inflation are remarkably close to the numbers being presented in the report.

What will happen to real estate values when schools close? How will this affect the neighborhood, property values, etc?

School closings in other parts of the city have not led to declines in the neighborhoods or to property values. Many facilities have been converted for other uses such as day care and pre-school facilities and social agencies which have been positive for the neighborhoods.

What influence do school closings have on the future demographics of the neighborhood?

Neighborhood changes are more a function of an aging population and housing stock, than the location of a school. Neighborhoods do recycle and that process can take 50 years or more.

What is the condition of the structure at Adams, Cowles, Howe and Moore?

They are all structurally safe buildings but all have some real needs in terms of accessibility and modern systems such as mechanical, plumbing, roofing, windows and electrical systems.

What has been the role of inflation in making projections and planning?

Inflation and the anticipated growth of the economy have both been factored into our estimates for sales tax revenues and construction expenses.

What's the status of the Central Campus building?

The recommendation calls for the building to be used until 2009 and then be replaced with a new Career & Technical Center.

Why was the heat left on last February at McKee?

All unoccupied buildings in the district are maintained at a level required to protect the building from freezing and damage.

How is it cost effective to rent space at the Pappajohn Center?

The district is not renting space at the Pappajohn Center but it is contributing to the operations cost of the building by making an annual dues payment to the Higher Education Collaborative as do all of the other 7 University school members.

If \$10 mil from selling CC is estimated, but it will cost \$20 mil + to build plus demolition costs, how is that cost effective?

The cost to renovate the existing Central Campus has been estimated to be \$40,000,000. By building a newer and more efficient building and then selling the older building the overall cost has been reduced to \$23,000,000

Did the district buy and then spend millions refurbishing into a central kitchen the old Colonial Bakery? Was the 1 cent sales tax money spent on the kitchen supposed to bring all DSM schools up to 21st Century quality?

The district did purchase the old Colonial Bakery and convert it into a new central kitchen facility. The district had 13 satellite production kitchens. The new central kitchen will make meal production more efficient and safer than older methods. The sales tax and is also being used to modernize all of the smaller school serving kitchens. Each building does not have a complete kitchen, but rather a finishing kitchen for heating foods only. The school building facilities are used for final preparation of foods not from scratch food preparation. The central production center is used to prepare all bakery items including rolls, muffins and rolls, main dish items like turkey and gravy, spaghetti with meat sauce, soups, chili, etc. The central facility also ships all foods to the school for the meal services for the week.

What will be the consequences on busing with the Adams and Garton merger?

In 2004-05, there were seven buses servicing Adams and Garton each morning and afternoon (3 for Adams, 4 for Garton). We would not anticipate more than seven being needed for the merged building – since the neighborhoods and areas bused are nearly identical, it would even be safe to say there should be a reduction in buses needed and a corresponding reduction in busing costs associated with Adams & Garton students.

What are the consequences of the MTA Phase 2 research and collaboration is being conducted to potentially expand the use of MTA buses for middle and high school students?

The research timeline extends through December 2005 to determine if additional middle and high students can utilize increased MTA services, and how any changes would benefit the students of Des Moines as well as the general tax-paying public.

How do we know that the renovations will be done on a timely basis?

Every project to date, once committed, has been done on time and on budget.

Can dividers be installed at Edmunds and King like many office buildings?

Temporary walls are not the desired construction for school construction because of sound and fire code issues. The Edmunds building and other open space classroom buildings like King are not easily updated with walls because they adversely affect the operation of the heating and cooling systems which then adds significant construction costs.

What about of the kids going to Central campus from middle school?

It is not anticipated that the programming at any of the new Central Campus locations would change and that middle school students will continue be a part of that school.

Could you give me more information on the vocational technical facility?

We are planning for a 200,000 square foot facility that would be a 2 story building. It will house the career and technical programs now housed at the Central Campus location.