



FINAL REPORT – COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Superintendent’s Proposal to Eliminate Busing for Desegregation in the Wichita Public Schools

This report reflects all feedback received during the Superintendent’s conversations with the Wichita community. Dialogue from the following community meetings is included:

- Jan. 8 – Boys & Girls Club
- Jan. 9 – Hamilton Middle School
- Jan. 10 – St. Mark United Methodist Church
- Jan. 15 – Wilbur Middle School
- Jan. 22 – Brooks Middle School

An estimated 325 people participated in the five conversations. Superintendent Winston Brooks presented the plan that he proposed to the Wichita Board of Education, followed by small group conversations facilitated by district staff. At the conclusion, Superintendent Brooks accepted questions from audience members during an open Q&A session.

Discussion was rich and highly instructive. Clear themes emerged upon review and analysis of the data from each session. Significant likes and concerns were registered by participants, with ideas for improvement being wide-spread. All of this information will be posted on the district’s Web site (www.usd259.com/news/busing).

Significant responses (those with more than 10 contributing comments) include:

LIKES	CONCERNS
Choices expanded *	Diversity *
Plan is a quality plan *	Capacity *
Diversity	Busing
Equity	Concerns associated with the plan
Increased parental involvement	Magnet concerns
	Student achievement
	Teacher quality
	Middle and high school impact
	Gordon Parks Academy
<i>Interest areas with asterisks represent the overwhelming top responses to each question.</i>	

LIKES

67	Choices expanded – continue at present school/grandfathering, attend neighborhood school, many options for elementary kids, expanded without sacrificing diversity, students may stay with friends and retain identities, magnet prioritization for kids most impacted, eliminates birthday lottery
23	Quality plan – no significant negative impact, less disruptive than I thought, follows the court’s ruling, doesn’t use race to determine where students attend, we are doing something, considering long-term, well research and initiated by BOE/driven by community and parents, recognizes that Wichita faces are changing, builds pride, less confusing, explains what busing <i>was</i> and <i>will</i> be like, like the plan for selecting students for Gordon Parks
13	Diversity – spreads around, helps to maintain, Gordon Parks diversity plan, keep schools from being segregated again, all races can attend neighborhood schools
13	Equity - More fair, kids will not be forced-bused their entire school career, addresses all students
10	Increases parent involvement – rebuilds community and family, easier to get involved
8	Busing – eliminate it, available to all who still might need it, should not force bus, may eliminate long bus rides
7	Magnets – will remain, priority option, strong program, pure magnets good
6	Community dialogue – likes taking it to parents, discussion timely, more opportunities for discussion and collaboration
3	Oversight committee – is a must
3	Student achievement – more accountability, high academic achievement, maintains quality education and standards (GPA)
3	Siblings not separated
2	Budget – will save money, won’t save money
1	Sense of security for families – close by to their kids
1	Saying now what African-American community said 30 years ago
1	Makes USD259 attractive to people new to the district
1	Buy a house in a neighborhood you can attend that school
1	I love that you are making phone calls and house visits to all homes where students are force bused. Thank you for valuing my input. Thank you for giving us choices. Thank you for valuing my children enough to keep their feelings, academics and best interest in mind at each and every point in the decision making process.
1	Problem is on administration and not on individual families.
1	At this time, I think it’s too confusing to say what I like about it or to object.

CONCERNS

43	Diversity – how does the plan demonstrate diversity, will we maintain diversity, it’s more than just race, long-term impact on diversity, will district have diversity standard, don’t return to segregated schools, concern for one-race schools (white, AfAm, Hispanic), separate but equal concerns, eliminating current plan may reduce diversity, schools that should be impacted won’t be, focus on diversity on new schools with bond issue, how will choice be used to support diversity, this plan will pull apart the progress we are now just making toward accepting diversity, no “illusion of inclusion”
35	Capacity – need schools in the area, crowding in classrooms as a result, strategic planning of facilities, over and under enrollment concerns, will new bond issue schools be in the Area, inadequate capacity in the Area/plan to address, impact of the plan on enrollment, impact of neighborhood students coming in on school capacity, will rooms be lost, what happens to buildings/teachers that will not be at capacity, will neighborhood kids get pushed out, if children opt out of a school will that increase numbers, when will projected enrollment numbers at each school be released, contingency plan in case the overcrowding issue happens at Mueller and Adams, need for new facilities dur to overcrowding at Stucky and Heights, redraw boundaries to address capacity concerns, future placement of current AAA students

23	Busing – Costs will increase, more buses on street, doesn't save money, lessen 2.5 mile provision, review hazardous routes, will we still provide for special ed, busing concerns for area/hazardous conditions, neighborhood kids will have to walk too far, redefine hazardous to fit more than traffic, rail crossings, etc., (crime rates, safety), use city bus when appropriate for transfer points
18	The Plan – what will monitoring intervals be, how will it be enforced, have we run through different scenarios to see if we considered everything, have we taken into consideration housing patterns, should not be about race any longer, do away with assigned attendance areas, have we considered everything/flexibility for things we missed, what is happening in Seattle and Louisville, community schools (Hyde, etc.) left out of the plan, community perceptions, specifics needed for each school, any and all proposed changes should be up front with no hidden agendas/put forth in all media for all to be aware/should be public prior to proposal being implemented, need policies to assure equity and equality in all schools, keep deseg committee to do this oversight work or include current deseg members on new group, should now be the “community's plan”
16	Magnets – will all new students/families buy into neighborhood magnet programs, will magnet schools get the same support, how many open spots will really be available/will there be too much competition for seats, will quality suffer, clarify neighborhood vs pure magnet concept, where are siblings considered in magnet programs, uncertainty about how the magnet lottery works, more neighborhood magnets
15	Student achievement – will return to neighborhood schools maintain student achievement, quality schools for ALL kids has not been addressed, what happens to achievement/how do you communicate, ensuring equal educational opportunities, concerns for school quality in NE and South areas of town, student-teacher ratio, measure school performance, quality of education received/creative teaching, keep ed standards in inner-city, concerns about student connectedness
14	Teacher quality – assigning highly qualified teachers equally, challenges of maintaining teachers in AAA schools, how will resources be assigned to schools that either lose or gain students, impact on class size, ability of teachers to teach “our students”/diverse classrooms, recruitment/retention, how qualifications determined, more diversity needed in school leadership
10	Middle and High School impact – concerned about options, impact on Heights/Stucky, are we really taking burden off AfAm students, not enough choices for AAA, will this plan maintain feeder patterns, area capacity
10	Gordon Parks Academy – what will the feeder school be, how will families choose, addressing safety/neighborhood concerns, recruiting diverse students (racially and socio-economically), clarify “testing in” policy, why is it a K-8, have IB program within the school as an elective track, more info on the IB program
7	Buckner – teacher quality, buy-in to magnet theme, resources, impact on programs, how will we handle students if overcrowding/will magnet kids get kicked out
7	Mueller and Adams – make provisions for diversity after Caucasians filter out, will non-neighborhood kids get to keep attending, make sure we keep from reverting back to all AfAm schools, how to attract diversity with no more lottery, long-term impact on Mueller
6	If families choose their neighborhood schools and don't like it they won't have the options to be transported back to the previous school (extended grandfathering), either within the first school year or after the first year.
6	Parent feedback – thought there would be more neighborhood parents attending, what do AAA parents think, not enough people informed, when do parents have to decide what they're going to do, communicate plan clearly and make sure parents understand
4	Resources – budget for long-term maintenance, concern for equitable resources at all schools, plan costs too much
3	Why change a plan that is working
3	Impact on operations – last minute decisions in August, uncertainty of enrollment and planning for next year
2	Mobility – what impact will this plan have on choices for students whose families are highly mobile
1	Investment in technology for schools
1	How does the plan fit in with the district's Mission and Vision Statement (philosophy)
1	Clarify K-5/K-12 differences

1	Have a meeting for just AAA people and leave educators out of it. Invite directly by phone or mail.
1	Priority of siblings (over neighborhood kids?) Would like some kind of visual to make that clearer.
1	Will Wichita support another bond issue?
1	Caucasian (new families) would have to drive to the school. Would they?
1	Integrity of this plan to give justice to African American students to attend neighborhood schools
1	Why do we need to have a special school for you to want to come to school with another race?
1	Gang affiliation occurring at one school

IDEAS TO IMPROVE

MAGNETS	
4	Change Buckner to a pure magnet
3	Make all magnets pure magnets
2	Consider creating magnet schools where current school may lose student population
	Make sure magnet programs remain
	Increase # of pure magnets
	Making all pure magnets may be exclusive
	Neighborhood schools should be neighborhood magnets
	Make all schools magnets with district wide diversity standards (socio-econ)
	Start magnet programs at existing schools to keep from having to do busing
	Most pure magnets are already in the NE area (Brooks, Isely, NE, Parks). Maybe magnets should be located differently.
	Guarantee that Mueller and Adams will be magnets in order to keep diversity and quality of programs
	If people choose to go clear across town instead of attend their neighborhood schools, make them pay
	Give parents a deadline for applying to new school (Gordon Parks Academy)
	More magnet options
THE PLAN	
13	Citizen oversight team to monitor and adjust in a timely manner, establish goals and milestones, share findings with the community prior to making any changes, appoint quickly after plan approval, every 9 weeks isn't enough, create "report card" to publicly communicate implementation
6	Annual assessment to make sure plan is working, continued assessment
2	Phase in the plan – pilot it for a year, revision and make modifications
	Chaos for the first year – what timeframe on balancing the change out
	Research other districts on their transitions
	More planning – what's going to happen next year
	We don't want another Edison project
	Implement it carefully
	Contingency plans to be proactive
	Don't put new wine in old wineskins
	Put in writing what choices are before hand
	Possible pre-enrollment in June
	Make sure real estate people are well informed
	Grandfathering – two years is long enough for grandfathering
	Transportation allowances to accommodate hardships and other considerations
	Guidelines on frequency of moves a student can make
	Plan needs to include communications
	Special transfers – continue to allow?
	Unlimited grandfather clause, i.e. if a student, after two years at a neighborhood school, could receive transportation back to the school they were originally bused to
	Continuing to grandfather all lottery students (or those who have volunteered) attending Mueller or Adams
	Make sure all worse-case scenarios are anticipated then the contingency plans put together

	Plan needs long-term vision to avoid creating current crisis
	Plan for extenuating circumstances
	We need to have another option if bond does not pass
BUSING	
4	Emphasize busing modification – for less than 2.5 miles
2	Provide busing for “volunteer” parents to schools currently in the plan (Mueller and Adams)
2	Hazardous bus routes criteria, redefine
	Parents need to know where hazardous busing will come into play
	Make stricter busing rules, stop busing to magnet schools, parents need to take more responsibility...quit spending taxpayer money
	Allow kindergarten students to be bused or attend neighborhood schools
	Monitor enrollment, allow busing where student population is needed
FACILITIES	
3	Need to build more schools
2	Timeline to add new schools is critical.
	Plan must address capacity issues better
	Facility and Busing planning go hand in hand – same page
	Set class size limits, don’t allow overcrowding
	There should be pockets of city owned land that can be used for schools
	Too many unknowns: what if there are no spaces available? Need more specifics
	As we address capacity issues, we should look at redrawing boundaries
	Build a new high school by Heights, include a Middle School while you are at it
	The bond should build new schools along peripheral boundaries of more than one neighborhood citywide (Heights, Belaire)
	New northeast high school
	Housing pattern – continue to look at it
	Don’t wait to build, find additional sources of revenue
	Delay the implementation of the plan until there are an adequate number of facilities in the area
	Build schools around edge of area – strategic locations
	At least one more elem school in “Area”
	Freeze middle school/high school students at current sites until facilities are available
	Move the students that are currently at Northeast Magnet to West, and create Northeast as a neighborhood high school
	Have students apply to neighborhood schools until facilities are available
	Be more strategic when placing new buildings to accommodate all races
TEACHERS/ STAFFING	
2	Recruit good, qualified teachers
2	Quality teachers for all schools.
3	Diversity of staff for all schools
2	Schools need more caring teachers
2	Incentive pay to maintain quality staff, esp. in low socio-economic areas
	Teachers must have control over students
	Teachers must challenge each child
	Add more teachers when larger class size
	Implement mandatory on Cultural Prof. for staff; learning styles – training

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	
	Increased parent involvement is crucial
	Parents should be informed <i>before</i> Choices Fair, have pre-CF meetings
	Be cautious of disconnect from culture and neighborhood
	Greater accountability for parents
DIVERSITY	
2	Focus on socio-economic factors instead of race
	Establish safeguards to make sure we do not have segregated schools
	Subject all races to the lottery
	Make the choices specific to prevent predominant race going to a school that is predominantly one-race
	Redraw boundaries instead of AAA – Eliminates stigma
	Examine boundaries – which may be problematic. Don't have data from all families on their socio-economic status
OTHER	
	Poll students
	Schools need more discipline; children need to want to learn
	Special Ed – provide adequate resources while moving up through the grades
	Be sure to get pre-enrollment to identify needs
	More ways to get the word out! To the schools? Churches?
	Park City, Belaire, Kechi – become their own districts
	Monitor when parents change from public to private to see if we lose students to private, home school and out of district
	Ongoing communication with the public
	Make sure community knows what's going on
	More comprehensive than AAA
	Continue to put the word out. Good communication is critical. One-on-one communication (live, in person)
	We need more dynamic schools – especially in the Area
	What printed info is available to people about graduation and enrollment