

Tuscaloosa City Schools
Board of Education
Open Work Session
Dr. Joyce Levey, Superintendent
Demographic Study Committee Proposal
April 19, 2007

This is an exciting time for the Tuscaloosa city Schools. The school system is growing! We are growing in every cluster. For the last four years we have increased with an average of 100 – 150 students. This growth is in all three of our clusters—in the West, East and the North. This is truly an exciting time for us. We have a city that is growing in population and we have developmental plans that are growing.

Tonight, I have a Demographic Study Proposal for the Board Members to receive. This document maintains its fluidity – it is a work in progress.

The charge was to have a planning consultant work with the Tuscaloosa City School district. This was engaged over a year and a half ago. This was to consider our demographic facilities and our student assignment plan. Our present plan was prepared in 1995 to successfully attain Unitary Status in our court ordered desegregation plan. Since that time our demographics have shifted and grown. The vision of this planning process was to look comprehensively at the school district and say, “Can we achieve equitable educational programs?” “Can we integrate the school district planning with the city planning?” and “Can we make sure that we have the highest quality educational program for all of our children?” We looked at comprehensive data. We collected data. We sent the data to our consultant. The data is our growth, our populations, our facilities, and our capacity. This is truly a partnership looking at actual data and growth in our city.

The Mayor and City Council have been a partner allowing us to work with the City Planner, Mr. Bill Snowden. This has given us an insight into the growth of our city with the Tuscaloosa City Schools, the hub of the city. We wanted to be able to afford quality education to all the children in the city. This comprehensive plan addresses our facilities and student assignment plan representing a very detailed and multi disciplinary process. This is a fluid document. This is a process gathering data.

I was given the charge to work with the Demographic Study Committee and to look at options that were from our Planning Consultant after receiving the data from our city schools. We have met on numerous times to look at these options, to see what would work for our system, where we were increasing in growth, where we had capacity in facilities, and how to utilize those capacities in all three of our clusters. The proposed plan was presented to the Board of Education in November, 2006 from our consultant with information from our Planning Consultant. We were again given the charge to go back and review the options to see what was working in the best interest of our children, our facilities, and where the demographic growth had changed. The Demographic Study Committee consisted of the Board Chair (Mr. Dan Meissner), the Board Vice-Chair (Ms. Ninette Cannon), the Board Secretary (Ms. Earnestine Tucker), the Central Office Administrative Team (Ms. Dorothy Richardson (Assistant Superintendent of General Administration), Ms. Margaret O’Neal (Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction), Dr. Mike Daria (Executive Director of Personnel), Mr. Jeff Johnson (Executive Director of Facilities), and Mr. Patrick Conner (Chief School Financial

Officer), Mr. Bill Snowden (Tuscaloosa City Planner), Mr. Kelley Carey (our outside consultant and educational planner), Mr. Rusty Gibson (our attorney), and the superintendent.

Since our last Open Work Session, we have attended numerous community meetings with stakeholders, posted our documents on the website, made all documents available for local school sites and central office. Our new maps are currently on the website and all documents from tonight will be placed on the website by tomorrow before the close of the day.

We need to note this is a comprehensive plan and again it has been a fluid document that is growing and we are extremely excited about the opportunities that we are afforded in the city schools. This is a complex linkage in the elements of the program with looking at the assignments of our students and looking at our facilities. These linkages are related to our local government growth and the corridors that we are seeing as commercial sites and growth areas in the city of Tuscaloosa.

The Demographic Study looked at the continued growth in our city and in our city schools to provide equitable facilities and to assure that we included equitable programs both academic and extra curricular, and assess the demographics. This is a process. It is a partnership with our planning consultant, city planner, Tuscaloosa City Schools, and our stakeholders. We will continue to meet; to listen; to question. We will look at different options to see how it would be used effectively, efficiently, and work along side curriculum and administration teams. This process is ongoing and the objectives are to make sure that we are affording the best education to a growing city school system.

Our planning team has been reviewing the plan and we have continued to critique all the components. We are listening to our community. They want community schools, small classrooms with a low teacher/student ratio. This way, we can meet the individual needs of our students. We also understand this process and implementation will take time and planning and each part revolves around each other and the whole.

To look at urgent needs, we looked at two schools that were overcrowded. One of those is Skyland Elementary and the other one is Woodland Forrest Elementary. The plan we are proposing is to look at removing some of the students from Skyland Elementary and from Woodland Forrest Elementary and move those students temporarily into the Northington Elementary School. This would relieve some immediate pressure from Skyland and Woodland Forrest. Northington has the capacity K-5. We will continue our process for Pre-K classes - they are placed where there is capacity and need. Northington Pre-K may be moved to a different location. The second year we would be looking at removing an additional 100 students developing a K-5 / 6-8 for South Skyland. This would serve children at south end of the district that travel to TMS.

This timeline states the implementation, if approved, would happen over a year to two year period of time. We have marked and noted that depending on land sites and designing facilities, and curriculum, this may be a longer process. This flowing timeline illustrates the time to allow for community stakeholders to develop the specifics. There are many components that the task force will address.

We are also looking at part of the north to south corridor options that would include a middle school at Rock Quarry. These facilities would include a clear cut elementary component on one side, and a middle school component on the other side with shared common areas. It would also look at the SDE requirements for our career-tech opportunities for our middle schoolers. We would have an elementary school and a middle school. We are calling these additions to the current K-5 modules. Again, all of our K-5 could easily become Pre-K-5 depending on the capacity of the facility and the need of the community. Having a smaller group of middle school students at one site, coupled with the curriculum opportunities, we see as all positives to address this concern. The task force will assist us with the areas of transportation, scheduling of the common areas, and the curriculum.

With Woodland Forrest Elementary School over enrolled, I stated we would move over 100 students in the first year to give relief to Woodland Forrest Elementary School. Over the next two years, we are looking to provide a K-5 and 6-8 south central school. This new school will take over 24 months to design and build. All of our processes that we have range from 1-2 years allowing for multiple task groups whether it be for academic or extra-curricular opportunities for all schools. This would allow input from the individual districts, clusters, bringing together the different stakeholder groups so that we would have district input from all of our schools. Northington Elementary has the capacity for the students from and Skyland Elementary assisting us in utilizing the capacity at Northington Elementary School. It is important to note that with the reduction at Woodland Forrest Elementary School within two years we see approximately a 200 student reduction. This in turn over the next two years would relieve Eastwood Middle School approximately 200 students and Paul w. Bryant High School in a similar timeline the same reduction. The reduction in students would allow for the growth that is in the eastern cluster. As a system we will monitor the eastern growth seeing if additional elementary of K-5/6-8 facilities are needed.

Rock Quarry is continuing to grow in the north and Tuscaloosa Middle School is large for a middle school. Its location requires long travel for those students that live on the north and south of the river from this middle school. We also want to invite public support for our public schools and we want to continue the growth and support we have. We are looking at having Rock Quarry a K-5 and adding a module for the 6-8. Those children south of the river/Rock Quarry would be a Rock Quarry choice zone. This is one of the two choice areas that would have the option of attending RQ choice, UP zone, or first preference for the magnet school. If Rock Quarry K-5/6-8 continues to grow, Rock Quarry could be the new middle school and this would aide in the cost of construction in that we would not have to build a complete new middle school. This would also possibly lead to a future construction of another elementary school depending on the continued growth north of the river. The choice area south of the river/RQ would continue to have the choice with a new elementary school if it is constructed.

Verner School Elementary – We first looked at one of the options for Verner Elementary to be a middle school. We do not see that it has the capacity as does Rock Quarry Elementary. We will not recommend an additional for a middle school component.

We are looking for around 100 students that are now south of the river/Verner as our second choice area. They would have the choice area western cluster or Verner zone. This same area would have the choice for a middle school, western choice, or RQ zone.

At University Place Elementary School, this school is an excellent building that we also see as an aide in our overcrowding with the large numbers at TMS by putting a K-5/6-8. This development would address our issues of capacity and would also include the excess capacity at Westlawn Middle School. This development would address our issues of capacity and also would include the excess capacity we have at Westlawn Middle School. There is an area in the University Place around the 10th Avenue corridor which has a great commercial growth for the city of Tuscaloosa that we would move from that area west of 10th Avenue. This plan would shift students that are living west of 10th Avenue and south of 15th Street. The shift creates opportunities at this point for University Place. This also would show that we would reduce numbers that we have at Tuscaloosa Middle School and opportunities would arise in that area for a community K-5/6-8.

With the reduction at the Tuscaloosa Middle School, we would have a building that would have an opportunity to become a magnet school in the city of Tuscaloosa. With the Rock Quarry K-5/6-8, South Skyland K-5/6-8, and University Place K-5/6-8 neighborhood schools serving their communities, a district-wide K-8 magnet school would be recommended. We would look at considerations of enrollment capacity options for our students. We would want to recommend that this be them based, one that is broad and that has proven appeal. We would look at this as an academic academy. We would place a cap on this school so that the basis of the program would bring in children from the new university demographic zone and also children throughout the district and the city limits. We are looking to ensure that this is a program that is to enhance learning through exploring, questioning, experimenting, and researching. The curriculum instruction would make and test theories acting purposefully to find answers. It would be inquiry-based. We are looking at possibilities of an unlimited talents program. We are looking at the International Baccalaureate Primary Program and Renzulli school-wide enrichment. Again, we would have one to two years. We would have a task force that would assist with not only educators but with the parents and stakeholders in the area.

We also see this as an invitation to invite students that are not presently taking advantage of the public school system to do so and to be an enrichment and academic program for all of the children that are attending our city schools from all clusters in the district.

In summary, this plan is innovative. We are looking at individual children. We will be meeting with parents. We will be looking at curriculum, personnel, administration, and financial data. We will get additional input from the community on April 24, 2007 before the presentation at the Called Board Meeting on April 30, 2007.

With the proposed demographic and capitol plan, there would be a savings of \geq \$5M. The shortfall would be covered by the state bond that we see as being approved this legislative term. The estimate for our school system is conservative. I also see difference being by our public school funds over time. We are excited about our relationship not only with the community and looking at our schools and the services for our children, but with our partnership with the City of Tuscaloosa that we are paralleling the growth and the areas and the corridors that they have in their planning. This concludes my proposed recommendations to the Board Members.