

SUBJECT: Student Reassignment Plan for the TEA-Required Contingency Plan for Possible State Closure of Pearce Middle School

PRESENTER: Steve West, Interim Chief Financial Officer
Paul Turner, Executive Director of Facilities
Joe Silva, Assistant Director of Planning Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Trustees review and comment on the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force (FUBTF) recommended student reassignment plan for the TEA-required contingency plan for possible state closure of Pearce Middle School.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Texas Education Agency annually issues state accountability ratings to public school districts, charters, and campuses. Campuses that do not meet the standards initially are examined for improvement over time and eligibility to have some cells excepted from consideration. If sufficient improvement is not evident, and the schools are not eligible for exceptions, then the schools are rated Academically Unacceptable (AU) for that year. Pearce Middle School is currently in its fourth consecutive year of Academically Unacceptable ratings, based on the 2007-08 TAKS data.

AISD is optimistic that Pearce will be successful on this year's tests and remain open. In addition, the District recognizes the outstanding efforts of the Pearce students, staff and community to make this a reality. Events, over the past academic year, support the District's optimism, improved performance on the TAKS test and current legislation that will likely allow alternatives to school closure. Nonetheless, a reassignment plan must be in place in preparation for the possibility a state-mandated closure.

The FUBTF met on May 7th, 12th, and 14th to evaluate the "Choice" option and to develop a boundary reassignment plan. These options were presented for public comment in a community meeting on May 14, 2009 at Pearce Middle School.

On May 4, 2009, the Board discussed the contingency plans for Pearce Middle School and directed staff to work with the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force (FUBTF) to develop two options for

the Board's consideration: a "Choice" option and a Boundary Reassignment option.

In the event that the State Commissioner of Education mandates that the District close Pearce Middle School, Pearce students will be able to choose as their home school any middle school that:

- Is not rated "Academically Unacceptable" (AU),
- Meets No Child Left Behind (NCLB) AYP (Adequately Yearly Progress) standards, and
- Has sufficient capacity (not exceeding 115% of functional capacity).

AISD transportation services would be provided if a student resides greater than a two-mile distance from the school. In addition, if students choose a school that is not designated a Title I school, as their choice school, these students would not benefit from the additional funds provided to Title I campuses; however, if the choice school is designated a Title I school, the same Title I benefits would be available.

The remaining campuses would receive students until it reaches 115% of functional capacity. Murchison and Kealing middle schools currently exceed this limit and would not be included as an option.

The schools available for choice include: Bailey, Bedichek, Burnet, Covington, Dobie, Gorzycki, Lamar, Martin, Mendez, O. Henry, Small, and Webb.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Advantages and Challenges of "Choice" option

During the FUBTF May 12th meeting, members evaluated the "Choice" proposal. The following advantages of the proposal include:

- AISD transportation would be provided to eligible students;
- Choice could provide students with opportunities for variety, growth and ownership of their future;
- Choice provides parents and students the power to decide;
- Receiving schools could benefit from a more diverse population;
- Additional access to academic and extracurricular programs could result.

The FUBTF also identified the following challenges:

- Increased transportation costs and travel time could result;

- Distance could limit participation in after school programs, such as sports, due to transportation issues;
- Distance could be an obstacle for parental and Pearce community involvement, access could be more difficult;
- School overcrowding could result.

Advantages and Challenges of Boundary Reassignment Plan Option

During the FUBTF May 12th meeting, members developed a geographic boundary reassignment plan. The following advantages of the plan include:

- By dividing Pearce attendance zone among the three schools, the number of new students going to any one school is decreased;
- Fewer Webb students will be reassigned, resulting in more stability of assignment;
- Students attending Winn ES and Andrews ES would all track to Dobie MS;
- The total number of students attending Dobie, under the proposed option, is substantially less than other geographic options considered.

The FUBTF also identified the following challenges of the boundary plan:

- Some students would travel longer distances.
- Lamar MS is currently not a Title 1 school; therefore, Pearce students assigned to Lamar Middle School would not have access to Title I resources unless Lamar's Title I status changed.
- Significant changes in student body composition would likely occur.
- There may be a need for additional resources, without Title 1 funding to provide for the needs of incoming students.

A public forum was held at Pearce Middle School on May 14, 2009 to present the two options and receive public feedback on these options. The comments from the community can be summarized as follows:

- A clarification should be made to ensure references to student choice should indicate parental participation in the processing choosing.

- There were two comments about the need for the District to address the issue of “classism”.
- Concern was expressed about schools available for choice and that students should not have to choose a struggling school.
- Another comment expressed concern that receiving schools did not receive choice about having additional students added to the student body.
- There were comments about equity and funding and that Title I funding should follow students.
- There were questions about the schools available to be chosen if choice was adopted as the plan.
- Another question was about what use would be made of the Pearce facility should the school be closed.
- Comments about the process included:
 - The process was too rushed.
 - Meetings should be scheduled at the beginning of the school year to provide sufficient time to study the complicated issues more comprehensively.

After considering this feedback, and discussing the advantages and challenges of the proposed option, the FUBTF made the following recommendation which is a hybrid of the two options presented.

RECOMMENDATION

Pearce students would have either the choice option or the boundary reassignment option described above with on revision to the choice option. Students living in the current Pearce attendance area would be able to exercise a choice to schools that were not AU or NCLB for a transitional period of three years. At the end of that period of time, unless directed otherwise by the Board of Trustees, the boundary reassignment option would then describe the attendance area for all students living in the current Pearce boundary area.

Rationale:

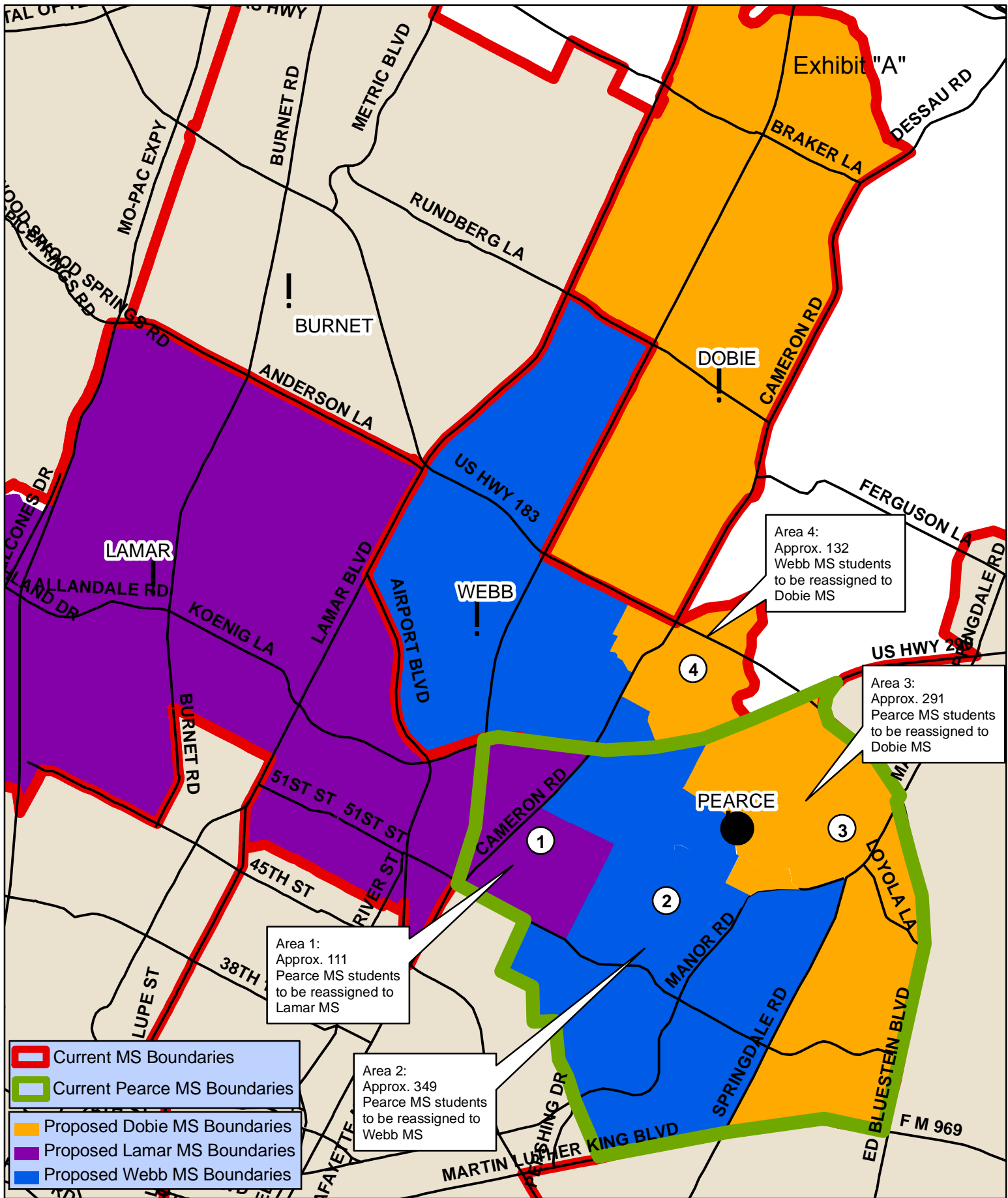
The task force felt that it was appropriate to provide all reassignment options available to the current Pearce students. Moving to the boundary reassignment option after a three-year transitional period retains defined attendance areas for the determination of Title I status. In addition, the group felt the choice option to three years provides the District time to decide and plan for a repurposed or alternative instructional program to achieve effective utilization of the Pearce Middle School facility.

ACTION REQUIRED

Board review and comment

CONTACT PERSONS

Steve West
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Joe Silva



Austin Independent School District
 Student Reassignment Boundary Option for
 Pearce Middle School Contingency Plan - 2009-10

Exhibit "B"

Current MS Boundaries	2008-09 MS Population			2008-09 MS Membership			
	Permanent Capacity	Population	% of Perm. Capacity	2008-09 Functional Capacity	Membership	% of Funct. Capacity	2008-09 Net Migration Rate
Pearce	1,061	697	66%	1,090	516	47%	-25.97%
Dobie	918	695	76%	1,040	566	54%	-18.56%
Lamar	979	573	59%	979	780	80%	36.13%
Webb	755	679	90%	938	522	56%	-23.12%

Proposed MS Boundaries	2009-10 Projected MS Population			2009-10 Projected MS Membership			
	Perm. Capacity	Proj. Pop.	% of Perm. Capacity	2008-09 Functional Capacity	Projected Membership*	% of Funct. Capacity	2008-09 Net Migration Rate
Dobie	918	1,060	115%	1,040	863	83%	-18.56%
Lamar	979	710	73%	979	967	99%	36.13%
Webb	755	950	126%	938	730	78%	-23.12%

Proposed MS Boundaries	2013-14 Projected MS Population			2013-14 Projected MS Membership			
	Permanent Capacity	Proj. Pop.	% of Perm. Capacity	2008-09 Functional Capacity	Projected Membership*	% of Funct. Capacity	2008-09 Net Migration Rate
Dobie	918	1,050	114%	1,040	855	82%	-18.56%
Lamar	979	805	82%	979	1,096	112%	36.13%
Webb	755	1,288	171%	938	990	106%	-23.12%

* Membership projections based on the 2008-09 school year net migration rates.