

Long Range Planning Process and Parameters

An ICCSD Board Document

Approved April 11, 2000

Long range planning. We want to take advantage of this somewhat unique opportunity to begin an ongoing effort to envision many aspects of the ICCSD five to ten years out, not merely come up with “boundaries” and lines on a map. Many of these options or proposals will have implications for buildings, boundaries and programs; others will not.

Research. We want our decisions, and those of the Superintendent, to be research-based. By this we mean not only the best demographic projections and other District data available, but also the alternatives, experience and best practices reflected in the literature and Internet-published material.

Optimum school size. The Board expressly requests from the Superintendent a research-based report regarding the optimum range of elementary and secondary schools’ enrollment from the standpoint both of cost (schools that are too small) and educational and social values (schools that are too large).

Community communication and concerns. We want to make every effort to minimize unnecessary community concerns during the course of our deliberations and those of the Superintendent. We need the freedom to be able to consider the widest possible range of options while reassuring stakeholders that it is not our intent to implement any option without thorough discussion with the community. As always, the Board and Superintendent welcome public input and will develop a communications plan to ensure that end.

Timing. The Board is looking five to ten years into the future. It recognizes the difficulty of doing so with any precision. But it believes it is in the District’s interest to have such a plan, even if it needs to be revisited and revised every year. It will seek to minimize disruption on District families by notifying the community as far in advance as possible of impending changes. Such advance notice makes planning and transitions easier for everyone.

Board decision-making responsibility. The members of the Board have the ultimate, personal and political responsibility for developing the policy and parameters that will be used to guide the long range and boundary planning process. The Board seeks input from the community and administration, and envisions an ongoing, back-and-forth dialogue and regular revision. It expressly requests the Superintendent to inform the Board, as promptly as possible, if and when he believes a Board-established parameter is seriously flawed, impossible of attainment, or

simply unwise. But the policies will be worked out by the Board. It will not merely approve a Superintendent's recommendation. The decision regarding the determination of boundaries will be that of the Board.

Superintendent's responsibility. The Superintendent is responsible for completing the long range and boundary planning process. While doing so he will provide the Board with such data and research as it may need for its deliberations. He will keep the Board informed of the progress of the long range and boundary planning process. He is expected to guide the process in accordance with all relevant Board policies and parameters. Prior to implementation he is expected to bring the final plan, including the implementation schedule, to the Board for its approval.

First option: Present Schools. An option that must be considered is the use of existing schools. Any and all other options may also be considered.

The first boundaries option as to which the Board requests input from the Superintendent involves full utilization of the District's present buildings with no new buildings or major additions. The 2004 projections indicate that some of the east side elementary schools will then be at 40-60% of capacity. Many of the west side elementary schools will be nearer 100% of capacity. One (Wickham) will be at 153% of capacity. (Kirkwood will be at 111%, Coralville at 109%.) What would be the cost – in increased busing expenditures and increased student time on buses – of shifting students from west to east? The Board cannot declare in advance how much such cost is “too much.” But it believes its responsibility to property tax payers is such that, if the additional cost is not too much, such a solution is preferable to a multi-million-dollar construction program for new school buildings while existing buildings remain underutilized.

The Board encourages the Superintendent to examine the feasibility of options such as (but not limited to) magnet schools, middle schools, age-grouped schools (*i.e.*, all-kindergarten or K-3 schools), year-round schools, increased job shadowing or independent research (to reduce high school crowding), to use existing facilities in the most cost effective manner.

Second option: New buildings, building remodeling and expansion. Another option is to remodel and expand the District's present schools. (Of course, some remodeling may be a part of long range planning even if not necessary to reduce overcrowding.) The Board requests from the Superintendent in this connection (in addition to the “optimum school size,” above) information regarding the capacity, present and projected enrollment of each school, along with information regarding the amount of available land for expansion. It will then consider a parameter that will produce the maximum benefit (in terms of reduced crowding, and optimum school size) at the least cost (in terms of quantity of construction, adverse impact on families,

and lengthened bus rides).

New buildings. Only if the present buildings are inadequate – with or without remodeling and expansion – will the Board consider the option of building a new school. “Inadequate” includes the conclusion that the use of present buildings will “cost too much” as defined above.

Closing schools. The Board’s preference is that all present schools continue in use – subject to being persuaded that such a preference makes no educational or economic sense.

Low income students’ distribution. The Board’s present intuition is that there are educational and social benefits from elementary school students’ exposure to a diversity of classmates. (As with any other intuitive beliefs of Board members the Board invites the presentation of research findings that either support or challenge its assumption.) At the present time, with a District average of 17% low income students, the proportion in each elementary school varies from 2% to nearly 50%. The Board expressly requests the Superintendent prepare for its consideration a number of alternative models reflecting the implications (economic costs, number of students bussed, time spent on buses) of a more equal distribution of students. Prior to knowing those costs the Board expresses no view as to its preferred range of the percent of low income students at each elementary school.

Occupancy as percent of capacity. The Board wants to maintain an equivalency of educational opportunity between buildings.

Impact on junior and senior high schools. The Board presumes that any boundaries or long range planning decisions will result in a roughly equal allocation of students among the two junior highs and two high schools. If this is not the result of its decisions it will want to revisit them.

Neighborhood schools. To the extent consistent with the Board's preferences and options, above, it would like to maintain the concept of neighborhood schools, keep attendance areas contiguous, keep families together, and limit students to one forced transfer during their elementary years.
