Declining Enrollment Advisory Committee Recommendations

Presentation to the Board of Education
June 2, 2022
Topics

➔ *Review*: Understanding the challenge

➔ *Present*: Declining Enrollment Advisory Committee Criteria Recommendations
Review: Understanding the challenge

- Declining Enrollment challenges on students, teachers, & leaders
- DPS enrollment trends & impact on district budget
- Change in additional budget assistance requested
- Choice Enrollment: Are Denver students choosing DPS schools?
- City of Denver:
  - Denver’s Population of School-aged children
  - Denver’s birth rate
When school are under-enrolled/declining, what does that mean for students, staff, & leaders?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent elective courses</td>
<td>Teaching multiple grade levels - limits ability to focus on standards &amp; assessments</td>
<td>Covering for operational needs - lunch duty, recess, subbing, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELA-S/ELA-E combined or grade levels combined, or unstable bilingual/ML programing</td>
<td>Single grade-level teacher limitses collaboration and PD/DDI/Coaching models of district</td>
<td>Programing based on staffing constraints rather than based on student needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient opportunities for intervention/extension. Students unidentified or misidentified for additional services due to lack of resources</td>
<td>Lack of mental health/ student supports to align to Whole Child efforts and MTSS models</td>
<td>Difficult to maintain leadership roles, difficult to staff with teachers, staff turnover high</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oftentimes, in very small classrooms that can not offer the instructional models of fully enrolled schools.</td>
<td>Face reductions with declining enrollment and low projections</td>
<td>Must make difficult decisions about what programs to cut or maintain.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Must run processes to reduce staff annually based on low projections.</td>
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Elementary enrollment peaked in 2014 with 43,851 students; current enrollment is at 37,931, which is a difference of 5,920 students that equates to ~$53 million less funding.

Middle School enrollment peaked in 2018 with 20,263 students; current enrollment is at 19,391, which is a difference of 872 students that equates to ~$8 million less funding.
Change in Requested Budget Assistance

Financial Assistance provided to Schools with <275 K-12 Enrollment*

- **2019-20**
  - Subsidy <215: $1.4M
  - Budget Assist <275: $0.8M
  - Stimulus <275**: $2.2M

- **2020-21**
  - Subsidy <215: $1.7M
  - Budget Assist <275: $1.4M
  - Stimulus <275**: $3.1M

- **2021-22**
  - Subsidy <215: $2.1M
  - Budget Assist <275: $1.6M
  - Stimulus <275**: $2.9M

  Financial Assistance in $

- **2022-23**
  - Subsidy <215: $4.6M
  - Budget Assist <275: $2.9M
  - Stimulus <275**: $2.2M

  Financial Assistance in $

Notes

*Excludes Charters, Pathways and ECE Centers

**DPS did not adjust school budgets at Fall Adjustment in 2020-21 due to enrollment & staffing impacts of COVID, so minimal additional budget assistance was needed at that time

*** 2022-23 Budget Assistance includes only the amount awarded during Budget Development, and will increase with awards provided in Sep 2022 at Fall Adjustment

****Federal Stimulus funds first added to school budgets in 2021-22
What Percent of K-12 Students in Denver Attend a DPS School?

DPS loses a very small number of students to private schools and other school districts.

- Attend a Private School: 6.6%
- Attend another Colorado District: 8.0%
- Attend a DPS School: 85.4%

*Data for K-12 only; does not include homeschool students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Denver Students enrolled in Homeschooling</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>491  (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data for K-12 only; does not include homeschool students.)
Under 18 Population Change

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020
Denver - Births by Year

Note: data from Colorado Health Department shows no indication of an increase in births after that pandemic, as noted in the 2022 DPS SRA.
Thank you to the Declining Enrollment Advisory Committee

Declining Enrollment Advisory Committee Recommendations

Presenters:
Tomi Amos, CEO, KIPP Colorado
Moira Coogan, Principal & DSLA rep
Onsi Fakhouri, DPS parent
Guiding Principles

A number of Guiding Principles emerged as the Declining Enrollment Advisory Committee considered how best to approach school consolidation. These guiding principles are outlined below:

- Focus on creating quality schools with robust programming that supports our students, families, staff, and the community.
- Equitably apply the criteria outlined in this document across all school governance models.
- Continue to support schools where viable and consider consolidation as the last option. We do not recommend closure, but rather that schools are always considered to be consolidated.
- Actively encourage families to remain in DPS.
- Ensure that equity for all students is centered by honoring current laws and guidelines for serving Multilingual Learners, Students with Exceptionalities, and other unique needs, including the Modified Consent Decree, special education and 504 guidelines, and student support programs.
- Ensure a fair, and empowering, process for local communities and leaders to plan and implement school consolidations.
The Criteria Overview

We propose three criteria for identifying Elementary and Middle Schools that are potential candidates for consolidation. Criteria 1 and Criteria 2 only apply to District-run schools. Criteria 3 only applies to Charter schools. These criteria are applied independently - any school identified by one or more of these criteria is considered a potential candidate for consolidation.

Note that this set of potential candidates must then be further refined by applying the Equity Guardrails in the next section. This is an important step as the Equity Guardrails ensure the process for identifying schools aligns with our guiding principles.
...and all guardrails...

Schools matching any criteria...

Three Criteria

Criteria One

Criteria Two

Criteria Three

District-Managed Schools

Charter Schools

Equity Guardrails

Ensuring Appropriate Programming

Providing Access

Promoting Equity

Community-centered process for designing healthy consolidation plans among neighboring schools

Local leaders & Community Members

Foster Ownership & Buy-in

...are potential candidates for consolidation.
# Criteria Overview

<table>
<thead>
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<th>District-Managed Schools</th>
<th>Criteria Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria One</strong></td>
<td>Identify Schools with <strong>Critically Low Enrollment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Criteria Two</strong></td>
<td><strong>Proactively</strong> Identify Schools with <strong>Low Enrollment</strong> that are <strong>Projected to Continue to Decline</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria Three</strong></td>
<td>Identify <strong>Charter Schools</strong> that are <strong>Not Financially Solvent</strong></td>
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- Charter sector, Collaborative Council & district will design process.
Criteria 1: Identify District-run schools with critically low enrollment

**What** - Criteria 1 identifies District schools with critically low enrollment that are unable to provide quality programming without budget assistance or external sources of funding.

**Why** - We want to ensure that all district schools are proportionally funded to provide quality services and programming for all our students.

**How** - Any District Elementary or Middle School with fewer than 215 students (not including ECE students) is considered a potential candidate for consolidation with neighboring schools. Consolidation decisions should ensure that students have safe walking routes/transportation options to schools.
Criteria 1: Commentary

Commentary - The district provides budget assistance to schools with fewer than 215 students. This results in an inequitable, disproportionate, distribution of funding. Instead, budget assistance should be prioritized for schools (particularly small schools in the 215-350 student range) needing support for centrally/state/federally mandated programs (e.g. Modified Consent Decree programming and Special Education centers).

Although some schools under 215 have been able to operate without budget assistance due to fundraising and non-competitive grant funding, the committee believes that this may unduly privilege schools in higher-socioeconomic areas and therefore the enrollment of 215 is the most equitable measure.
Criteria 2: Proactively Identifying District-run Schools with Declining Enrollment

**What** - Criteria 2 proactively identifies District schools that are declining in enrollment *before* they enter a state of critically low enrollment.

**Why** - We want to preserve existing programming and proactively avoid schools getting to a state of critically low enrollment.

**How** - Any District Elementary or Middle School with fewer than 275 students and projecting an approximately 8-10% reduction over the next 2 years is considered a potential candidate for consolidation with neighboring schools. Consolidation decisions should ensure that students have safe walking routes/transportation options to schools.
Criteria 2: Commentary

**Commentary** - Schools that are approaching critically low enrollment end up having to make difficult decisions about their programming and services. We want to proactively preserve these existing programs by encouraging schools with declining enrollment to consider consolidation *before* they need to make unsustainable cuts and/or receive disproportionate funding.
Criteria 3: Identify Charter Schools that are not Financially Solvent

Criteria 3 - Financially Insolvent Charter Schools

What - Criteria 3 identifies Charter schools that are failing to remain financially solvent.

Why - We want to ensure financial accountability for all schools, regardless of size, to protect programming and foster equity.

How - Any Charter Elementary or Middle school that is not financially solvent for two or more years, and identified as “High Risk” according to their Financial Performance Framework (FPF) and the Enrollment sub-section:

1. The charter school has been “red” overall on its two most recent Financial Performance Frameworks (FPFs); and
2. The charter school has been operating under a financial notice of concern during its most recent fiscal year; and
3. The charter school has been rated “red” overall on the enrollment sub-section of its two most recent FPFs.
Criteria 3: Commentary

Charter schools engage in a contracting process, and this criteria would be highlighted in that contracting and renewal process. Due to state statute and charter contracting, Criteria 1 & 2 are not applicable for charters.

**Timeline**: negotiating with Collaborative Council about when the criteria could impact schools, and would become part of the contracting process.

**Process**: Similar to district-run schools, the charter sector would like to be a part of the discussions about how this would be implemented.
Equity Guardrails

The three criteria described above generate an initial list of schools that are potential candidates for consolidation. This set of candidates must be further refined, however, to ensure that consolidation is equitable and in the best-interest of our students, staff, and communities.

To that end, **all** of the following **Equity Guardrails** must be satisfied when making decisions about which schools to include as potential candidates for consolidation. We group these Equity Guardrails thematically:

- Ensuring Appropriate Programming for Students with Unique Needs
- Providing Access
- Promoting Equity
Considerations for Implementation

The Criteria and Equity Guardrails listed in this document help generate and refine a list of Elementary and Middle schools that are potential candidates for consolidation. We believe this forms an equitable starting point from which to pursue a Process that is centered on the communities that will be impacted by any consolidation decision. While the Declining Enrollment Advisory Committee has not been tasked with defining this Process, it has naturally come up repeatedly as we consider how to apply these Criteria and Equity Guardrails most equitably.

- **Adjusting School Models** - consolidation can include mergers of elementary and middle schools into a K-8; or middle and high schools into a 6-12. Similarly, a K-8 school that is a potential candidate for consolidation could consider joining separate K-5 and 6-8 schools.

- **Collective Bargaining** - Positions in the new consolidated school should be guaranteed for employees of the identified schools for consolidation. There should be Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with all bargaining units and boards. There should be staffing processes and MOUs for consolidating district-run & charter schools.

- **Consent Decree and MLE Programming** - ensuring the Modified Consent Decree is satisfied must be understood as a key factor in any decision making about school consolidation.

- **Consolidation Radius** - the steering committee should feel empowered to expand the set of schools being considered for consolidation based on their understanding of local context.

- **Facilitating the Transition** - there should be two years for consolidation with the Principal on Special Assignment and/or Teacher on Special Assignment in order to manage the logistics of the transition separate from leading the school.

- **Identifying Facilities** - schools could be consolidated into a building based on facility readiness and we should strive for consolidated schools to be in the best condition possible once the consolidation occurs. If facilities are similar, we believe that - as a matter of equity - schools that serve the largest FRL student population should house the newly consolidated school.

- **Timeline** - steering committees should be given adequate time to help the community process and plan for any consolidation. A year of preparation followed by a year of implementation could be feasible.

- **Preserving Programming** - where feasible, schools that are consolidating should plan to provide the different models and special programs students were previously being served in one consolidated school. Special programs can include Special Instructional Models such as Montessori, Dual Language, STEM/STEAM focus, etc.; Community/Family Supports such as Food for Thought, Discovery Link, etc.; Supplemental Instructional Supports such as Math Fellows, City Year, etc.; and Institutional Partnerships such as Teacher Preparation Programs, etc.

- **Preserving Unique Programming That Depends on Facilities** - a school that has unique programming would not have priority to house a consolidating school, however all efforts should be made to ensure the program is maintained. If the facilities are equitable and the school with the unique program has facilities that enable that program, then consolidation into that school should be considered.

- **School Choice** - when schools are consolidated students will be opted-in to the newly consolidated schools and will still have the option to choice out using the standard choice process. The district should consider prioritizing the choice preferences of families in consolidating schools.

- **School Missions and Visions** - consolidation provides an opportunity for the new consolidated school to craft a mission and vision tailored to its new student body. Planning and preparation for this should be done through a joint community process.
Appendix
Financial Performance Framework (FPF)

What: Annual analysis of charter schools’ risk of financial insolvency

When: Completed annually in December

How: Analysis of each charter school’s financial risk based on five key categories: enrollment, occupancy, costs per student, balance sheet, and operating margin.

Ratings: the analysis designates a “financial risk rating” of low, medium, or high risk for each school.