

**Pros/Cons**  
**Questions/Answers**

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**Concerning the Possible Closure**  
**of Clover Valley Elementary**

## **Closing an Elementary School Pros & Cons**

### **Background**

Oak Harbor is facing an estimated \$3.5 million budget shortfall for the 2007-2008 school year, driven by successive years of decreasing enrollment. The full time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment in '99-'00 was 6,036. Using the current trend, enrollment projections for '07-'08 will be 5,265, a reduction of 771 students in eight years.

During that same period, our elementary schools are down by 500 students, which is more than the populations in five of our six elementary schools. Throughout the district, at least 12 elementary classrooms will be empty next year. Kindergarten alone is down by 65 students this year, which means we already know we will have 65 fewer first graders next year compared to this year's expectations.

### **Proposal**

Reduce the number of elementary schools from six to five.

**Pro:** This will result in savings of more than \$540,000 as well as improved economic and program efficiencies in operating the remaining five schools. Given the budget constraints, fewer schools will mean better educational opportunities for children, smaller classroom sizes, and improved educational support.

**Con:** This will result in a significant boundary change, causing disruptions to families and staff in several schools as they transfer to new schools.

### **Other Options**

1. Continue funding six schools.

**Pro:** The status quo will keep families and staff in the school they are used to.

**Con:** In addition to \$3 million being cut from school services, programs, and functions, more than \$540,000 additional cuts will have to be made those areas. This would result in fewer programs, fewer support staff, and smaller school budgets. The financial impact will be felt throughout every school in the district.

2. Close an elementary school in 2008-2009, thereby providing a one-year grace period for families to prepare.

**Pro:** A one-year grace period means this year's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders will have advanced to middle school and incoming students would know upfront they will change schools. The impact on students/families will be lessened.

**Con:** To date, the message from teachers and parents is, if a school is going to be closed, they'd rather it be done quickly. Also, delaying the closure for a year would result in the same funding crisis described above for the coming budget year.

3. Move the sixth grade back to the elementary schools and ninth grade back to the middle schools.

**Pro:** Elementary schools would filled, leaving all six open.

**Con:** This idea has surfaced repeatedly for a variety of reasons and rejected each time: 1) state match for OHHS modernization depends on 9<sup>th</sup> graders at the high school; 2) elective programs at both the high school and middle schools would be adversely affected; 3) curriculum and instruction would be adversely affected as we choose either 7 x 45-minute periods or 6 x 55-minute periods; 4) middle school shop and science facilities do not accommodate high school courses; 5) activity programs would be more costly or reduced; 6) future capacity for full-day kindergarten would be eliminated; 7) balancing class sizes in K-6 would be more difficult; 8) the high school would have 60,000 sq. ft. of unused space.

4. Create two small schools which share a principal, librarian, and counselor, as well as art, music, and P.E. instructors.

**Pro:** This would keep all six schools open and result in considerable savings by eliminating/sharing the six positions mentioned above.

**Con:** It would create two schools with inadequate resources and attention and the shared professionals would lose a lot of time in traveling between schools. The costs of office staff, copiers, utilities, custodial, and such would continue at both schools, eliminating that opportunity for saving money.

5. Delay any closure decision until the district enrollment is reduced to a specific number.

**Pro:** All six schools would remain open. A closure decision would become a certainty when enrollment reaches a specified “trigger” number.

**Con:** Delaying closure also continues anxiety. Costs of keeping all six schools open would have to come from elsewhere in the budget (equal to about \$100 per student districtwide). We have already had an enrollment decline greater than the size of a school, so what would the target be?

6. Start full-day kindergarten or preschool.

**Pro:** We could fill our schools if enough students enrolled.

**Con:** In the last six years, we have not had more than 50 families request full time kindergarten when we charged tuition. There are no state funds, so the program would have to be funded entirely by tuition or by diverting other resources to the program.

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## Closing an Elementary School

### Q & A

#### 1. Why is Clover Valley Elementary the school to be closed?

- **Smallest Population:** CVE is our smallest school, with a full-time-equivalent population of 300. With 50 fifth graders moving into middle school, the change will impact 250 students, the least impact of any school.
- **Busing:** More than 80 percent of the CVE population is already bused or driven to school.
- **Classrooms:** CVE is one of only two schools with only 16 classrooms. The other school with 16 classrooms is Broad View, but BVE is a neighborhood school with no busing. It doesn't make good economic sense or good logic to close a walking school.

#### 2. Where are the empty classrooms?

Based on maximum enrollment projections and current class sizes, we anticipate a minimum of 12 extra classrooms next year: 2 at Broad View; 3 at Clover Valley; Five at Crescent Harbor; and 2 at Oak Harbor Elementary. The number of “empty” rooms will increase to the extent that budget reductions result in fewer elementary classroom teachers, which is expected.

#### 3. What would happen to class sizes?

With five schools, average class sizes should be the same or lower than they would be with six schools. By eliminating some specialist positions, more regular classroom teaching positions can be retained, helping keep class sizes low. Similarly, by balancing among five larger schools instead of six smaller schools, class sizes will be easier to balance.

We currently have 30 specialist teachers and 115 regular classroom teachers. Next year, with approximately 100 fewer students, we could have: five schools, 25-26 specialist teachers and 110 classroom teachers; or six schools, 30 specialists and 105 or fewer classroom teachers.

#### 4. What would happen if we closed a school, but we had larger enrollment than expected?

- With five schools at current class sizes, we will have 117 “empty” seats. Even if we ended up with 100 more elementary students than expected, class sizes would remain at our current typical level
- We are expecting a reduction in teaching positions based on budget reductions. This alone will increase average class sizes. The result, however, is added “empty” rooms and an increased ability to add classrooms if enrollment increases by up to 300 students –an unlikely situation.
- If a surprisingly large number of students enroll in K-5 and they cannot be accommodated in the five schools, CVE could always be reopened to handle overflow. Again, we expect an enrollment decline, not an increase in enrollment.

## 5. How much money is actually saved? Where do the savings occur?

*Projected Cost Savings – Minimum\**

*(Salaries and Benefits based on 2006-2007)*

Principal & Front Office	\$ 175,120
Utilities**	36,383
Custodial	90,277
Library	82,355
Art, PE, Music, Counselor	218,441
<u>(added HCE Specialist)</u>	<u>(56,000.)</u>
<b>Expected Savings</b>	<b>\$ 546,576</b>

\* In addition to personnel costs, there will be savings in library, lunchroom, grounds, maintenance, computer and other building costs

\*\* Utilities estimate is based on no occupancy and with building temperatures maintained between 55° and 60°.

## 6. What other uses for the building are being considered?

So far, there are six. The district still has 20 years left on a 25-year renewable lease. The lease requires the building be used for educational purposes. Potential uses of the facility include:

- a. A school for HomeConnection.
- b. A home for Midway High School
- c. Temporary use by 9<sup>th</sup> graders during construction at Oak Harbor High School.
- d. Full-day kindergarten/preschool (this would require state funding or 2009 local levy increase)
- e. An expanded grade six-12 alternative school
- f. A combination of two or more of the above

## 7. What are the actual savings if the building is used for other programs?

- a. If the building is used to house OHHS students during construction, these costs would be paid from Capital Projects (in lieu of installing portables or double-shifting or longer construction period). There would be no General Fund expenditures.
- b. If the building is used by HomeConnection and/or Midway High School, we would not save costs in utilities and custodial services. With additional space, however, HomeConnection and Midway HS would have room to grow and increase revenue. 20 additional students would bring in \$90,000, easily paying for the utility and custodial costs.

## **8. What will be the impact on educational programs throughout the district?**

### **a. Full Time Day Kindergarten**

- The district currently has one full-time kindergarten. It is tuition-based. Until we know total district enrollment, we will not be able to determine if we will have a full-time kindergarten. We expect to have several kindergarten rooms that are used only half of the day. We could use those rooms to create full-time kindergarten opportunities.
- The governor is requesting funding for full-time kindergarten in districts with the highest levels of poverty. Oak Harbor will not qualify for these funds.
- If the legislature eventually funds full-time kindergarten for every student, we may need the classrooms at CVE. The possibility of full funding for all-day kindergarten is still a minimum of three years away.

### **b. Preschool**

CVE does not house any preschool services. If CVE is not used as an elementary school, there would be no impact on preschool services. As described earlier, however, there would be the potential of using CVE to bring all preschool programs together into one facility.

### **c. Before and after school care**

- We have before/after school care at BVE and HCE. The Navy has services at CHE and, for kindergarten, OHE. OVE students are served by the Navy facility at Saratoga Heights. The Navy is withdrawing these services at the end of this year in order to more efficiently use their center.
- Any CVE students assigned to BVE or HCE will have before/after care available on site, which they do not currently have. Further, we will again seek bids on before/after school care in our remaining schools. We do not know if we will have bidders wishing to provide before/after care at any of our other schools next year.

### **d. Art/ Music and PE programs**

- In several ways, our specialist programs will be improved. Four of the five remaining schools will have adequate staff to continue with the same quality specialist support. Specialists will no longer have to travel from “undersized” schools to HCE.
- We would need to add one specialist to HCE. This might be in a fifth specialty area (added to library, PE, art, music), such as science. Costs associated with supplies, equipment, offices, etc. will be reduced without a reduction in program quality.
- The schools using art, PE, music and library certificated staff for non-specialist work (such as helping in Title I or LAP) will need to use specialists for nearly 100% of their time doing specialist work.

### **e. Special Education and Remedial Programs**

- The cost of providing special education services will go down without a decrease in service or quality across the district. In many ways, special education and remedial programs will improve, as resources are consolidated.
- CVE has 23 resource students and 10 Life Skills students. The Life Skills class would (most likely) be moved to CHE. The RR students would be absorbed into their new school boundaries. School psychology, speech/ language, occupational therapy and physical therapy services will be more efficiently delivered, as one school will be removed from case loads, reducing the number of team meetings, pre-referral conferences, transportation to/from the school, equipment, storage/filing, and more.
- Title I funds can be reallocated to the remaining three Title I schools. This will enhance services and support. We may be able to reduce the number of certificated staff required while increasing classified support to and maintaining program quality in the remaining schools.

## **9. What is the effect on staff? Will people be laid off?**

- It's possible some staff will not be able to transfer to other jobs in the district. This is due more to the district-wide staff reduction than to the CVE closure. We anticipate that normal attrition (retirements, relocations) will be adequate for most or all certificated reductions, but cannot guarantee this.
- Dr. Schulte has formed a district budget committee to review all expenditures and make recommendations about certificated, administrative, and classified reductions. The closure of CVE would result in some specific reductions as displayed under the "cost savings" question.
- People may be laid off for budget reasons, but rarely due to school closure. A few positions can only be reduced if CVE is closed (such as building principal, librarian, school secretary). If these positions are not eliminated, other positions in the district will have to be cut.

## **10. If CVE is to be used for transitional housing of 9<sup>th</sup> graders during the OHHS remodel, what will be the impact?**

### **a. Is Clover Valley physically suitable for a 9<sup>th</sup> grade program?**

- The feasibility of using CVE for 9<sup>th</sup> graders has not yet been thoroughly studied. It's expected, however, that it could save the district a great deal of money by a) speeding up construction at OHHS, therefore saving on inflation and construction efficiencies, and 2) eliminating the need to rent and install portables.
- Most of the CVE furniture will likely be allocated to the schools receiving CVE students; other K-5 furniture would be stored or placed in surplus. We would move OHHS furniture to CVE if we used it to serve 9<sup>th</sup> graders.
- It's expected that ninth graders would each spend half-days at OHHS and half-days at CVE, using morning and afternoon shifts. Science, vocational arts, NJROTC, PE, and lunch would all take place at OHHS.

### **b. How much will transportation costs increase if students are bused between campuses?**

There is no estimate, yet. Transportation costs, however, would be covered by Capital Projects funds (in lieu of installing portables, double shifting, and/or increased construction time).

### **c. How will counseling, special education, and other special programs be affected?**

Again, we have not yet made plans for using Clover Valley to house OHHS students. We would expect, however, to assign existing OHHS staff to Clover Valley, at least part time. Because these students would spend half days on the OHHS campus, all services will be available, including counseling, the library, and electives. If CVE is closed in 2007, the district will have one full year to prepare for using CVE.

### **d. Will additional HS administration be necessary if we house 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at an alternate site?**

No. Existing administrative staff will be responsible for supervising the facility.

## **11. Is CVE suitable for other uses without modification to the facility? (All Day kindergarten, or Midway HS or Home Connection?)**

If we consolidate to five elementary schools, we will study all possible uses and make recommendations. We fully intend to continue using the facility for educational purposes. Our agreement with the Navy requires it. Any alternative use will require minimal facility changes.

## **12. Who makes the decision, and how?**

Ultimately, the Superintendent makes a formal recommendation to the School Board. The School Board makes the decision. We will be holding several information sessions and multiple input sessions, including holding at least one public hearing (*see timetable, next page*). Both the OHSD Boundary Committee and the OHSD Budget Committee will consider the question and provide input to the administration and the Board.

### **Tentative Boundary and Facility Use Timetable**

December 28, 2006 –	School board requests information (provides questions) concerning impacts of closing an elementary school.
January 17, 2007 –	Special CVE staff meeting with district administration to provide factual information and answer questions.
January 23, 2007 –	School boundary committee meets to discuss possible closure and how that impacts families and schools.
January 24, 2007 –	Special PTA all-school meeting at CVE with district administration to provide factual information and answer questions.
January 29, 2007 –	School board receives and reviews documents, including answers to their questions, as well as input from meetings with the CVE staff, parents, and boundary committee.
February 2007 –	(Date and place not yet determined) Special public hearing in front of the school board.
February 26, 2007 –	Superintendent makes a written recommendation to the school board concerning closure of CVE.
February 26, 2007 –	School Board discusses closure. A vote to accept, change, delay, or deny the superintendent's recommendation could be made.
March 2007 –	If superintendent recommends and the School Board approves closure, the Boundary Committee would meet throughout the month to draw five elementary boundaries.
April 2007 –	School Board would hold public hearing concerning boundary changes and vote whether to accept the recommended changes.
April-May 2007 –	After board approval, families of affected students will be notified in writing of boundary changes.
May-August 2007 –	District accepts transfer requests and applications for School of Choice.
Late August 2007 –	Transfer committee meets to accept or deny transfers, based on availability in the schools.

## **13. Should schools be configured as K-2 and 3-5 schools? This would help avoid split grade-level classes.**

No. This would take away the neighborhood school concept. Students who are now “walking” students would have to take buses for 3 of 6 elementary school years. It would be cost-prohibitive and bad for neighborhoods.

## **14. What is the number of rooms needed for full-time kindergarten?**

Estimated at 9-11 additional classrooms

## **15. Should we hire a consultant for demographic forecasts?**

No. Demographics experts would have to relearn everything the district has learned about the comings and goings of Navy personnel. Given the Navy factor, there is little that a demographics contractor could add to the picture.