

**South Portland School Department
Redistricting Advisory Committee
Minutes**

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

These minutes were prepared by Steve Bailey to the best of his understanding. If you find any inaccuracies, please contact the Superintendent of Schools Office at 871-0555 within one week after receiving the notes.

In Attendance: Suzanne Godin, Lue Bagley, Diane Lang, Elizabeth Holland, Margaret Hawkins, Elizabeth Wexler, Angela Emery, Tap Fitzgerald, Sue Trout, Jim Frederick, Jennifer Kirk, Beth Penny, Ali Gant, Kathy DePhilippo, Kate Clark, Rick Carter, Steve Bailey, Marie Cross, John McHugh, Debbie Curry, Matt Green and Mike Eastman

I. Minutes from 1.16.08

Suzanne Godin, Superintendent presented and reviewed the following:

- Minutes from January 16th meeting (these are posted to the www.spsd.org site).
- K-5 school enrollment by grade by school as of January 2008.
- Color-coded maps of K-5 and middle school districts for 2007-2008.
- These last two documents represent the “what is.”

II. Guiding Principle Agreements

A. Balanced Socio-economic schools?

- A comparison of Skillin and Kaler Schools was provided through the eyes of a parent who has had students attend both schools—was redistricted three years ago. There are large discrepancies in what the PTA’s from each school can provide—had been much enhanced previously at Skillin School. The comment: equal opportunity should be provided to all students.
- Question from the group: Is it possible to accomplish this without forcing the issue, or can it be done more naturally by looking at geographic groupings?
- Comment: We don’t have neighborhood schools now—we do have five elementary schools with Kaler and Dyer School very close together—need socio-economics to be included in final conversation.

Summary statement: As much as we can balance, we should try to achieve socio-economic balance across the city. Group sense: All “yes” or “maybe,” with one “no.”

(The difficulty and problem of looking at socio-economic lines street by street was expressed—the issue could be addressed by looking at region, not street by street. The sense of the group was considered to be “good, but not great.”)

B. Same Elementary – Same Middle School

- Nice to have, not absolute
- Create new districts w/ option of attending either middle school? Can transportation be an option?

- If this can't occur, it can have impact on students—many friends attending the middle school on the opposite side of the city.
- Transportation is a huge district issue—has great impact financially.
- Question: How many students does this affect yearly? Don't have that information at this time.
- Reality is: we have 5 K-5 schools and 2 middle schools. Enrollment of the five doesn't allow for a 3 – 2 split within the middle schools without creating an imbalance of student population within the middle schools.

Summary: Mixed response to keep it as a Guiding Principle. Keep it, however, it will have lower weight on the list of Guiding Principles.

C. Grandfather grades 4 & 7? Gr. 6?

- Definition: If students are grandfathered in these schools, they would remain in the school for the next year (so there would not be two transitions in two years).
- Felt to be very important to parents voicing opinions to committee members.
- Make it an option → not waiving an entire family → families need to make a decision if more than one child at the school.
- Question: How many families are impacted—won't know until revised lines are created.
- This would be painful for whom? Students? (differs by child)
- Specific streets could not be identified.

Summary: Option to remain at current school for students in grades 4 & 7.

Consensus reached—full group decision.

D. Walkers vs. Bussing

- Take a geographic sense
- Policy is distance from school...not grade of student (K-12); requests for exceptions are carefully examined.
- Philosophical premise—prior districting had been created so that bussed students would not be bussed by a school to attend another school
- Problem of driving by a school to get to another school—hard to accept
- Difficulty of trying to merge a “neighborhood school scheme for walkers” within “a city with 5 elementary schools.”

Summary: As much as possible try not to bus students who can walk. No Decision.

The committee will return to this principle—no decision was reached.

E. Family Needs ← → Waiver Process

- Keep this in as a part of the process for “extenuating decisions/circumstances.”
- Not as an absolute.

Summary: Family needs and the Waiver Process will remain as part of redistricting considerations for extenuating circumstances. Consensus was agreed to.

F. Phasing

- Should this occur? Should it be incremental or all at once?
- What would it look like?
- Perhaps it could be a way to transfer from one ELL K-5 school to 2 or more?
- Can we do it all at once to “ease the hurt?”
- Special Needs? Should this be considered on a case by case basis?
- What is the level of needs? What are the #'s?

- How big should the ELL % population be at Brown School? We need to move forward at one time to remove the continual (year to year) stress on families—have the moves occur within the same year.

Summary: Recommendation not to create phased plan. Consensus—all “yes” or “maybe”—more “yeses”

G. Walking vs. Bussing – Revisited:

Statement: If students live within a mile of a school they should not be bussed to another school. Agreement by the committee could not be reached. This will not be a Guiding Principle at this point.

III. Next Meeting:

Monday, January 28, 2008

5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Memorial Middle School Library