

**Denver Public Schools
Board of Education
Shared Campuses**

Background

In recommending to the District that it consider closing schools in July of 2007, the A+ Denver Committee emphasized its concern about underutilized classroom space in the District and the significant ramifications of such unused space on the District's budget and educational offerings. A+ noted: "The maintenance, utilities, and other associated costs expended on the district's excess capacity or excess real property assets, compounded by the fact that the average DPS school is 50 years old and inefficient by today's building standards, results in a substantial expenditure of funds that would be much better spent improving programs and services for students." (A+ Denver Findings; July 27, 2007). In response to these findings, the District closed eight schools at the end of the 2007-08 school year.

In the current environment, to open new schools in new facilities or non-District facilities will only compound the problem of underutilization that the school closings sought to address, as students in existing facilities move out to attend the new schools. As a result, in the Request for Proposal for new schools approved by the Board in March of 2008, the Board referenced the findings of the A+ Committee and stated: "In response to this situation, the district will work with applicants to determine existing facility options and, following national best practices, discuss with existing schools that have significant available space, and identify an appropriate match in terms of facility and co-location school. Further, the district will provide appropriate ongoing supports to ensure that the facility sharing process is run according to best practice and is mutually beneficial to both occupants." The RFP noted that new school applicants were therefore "encouraged to express their interest and requirements as they relate to facilities, and willingness to co-locate with existing schools."

Shared Campus Policy

The Denver Public Schools Board of Education recognizes the need for co-locating schools within a common facility, thereby creating Shared Campuses.

It is in the best interest of the students and the community DPS serves for the District to identify the DPS buildings that are operating at significantly below full capacity and to improve the utilization of those facilities by establishing Shared Campuses. Note that the question here is not whether to approve new schools but whether those new schools should be allowed to locate in underutilized District facilities or required to locate elsewhere.

Sharing campuses helps defray the very large costs of underutilized space (enabling a greater proportion of our budget to be spent on classroom instruction), avoids unnecessary new construction and maintenance costs, and promotes choices for students and families. In

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addition, it allows for the creation of new schools without the need for the sizeable expenditures associated with buying or building new facilities.

The Board of Education expects the following principles will guide the creation and operation of all shared campuses:

1. Underlying the creation of Shared Campuses is a commitment and focus on the part of the Board to support ever-increasing achievement for all students and a commitment to the equitable use of the facilities to accrue the greatest benefits for students.
2. Increasing high-quality school choice options within the larger Denver community, as well as within each neighborhood, is an essential component of the Shared Campus initiative.
3. The District shall assess facility use on an ongoing basis and will assign schools to Shared Campuses after carefully analyzing:
 - a. the space available within facilities
 - b. regional demographic data and trends
 - c. enrollment and performance data and trends in potentially affected schools
 - d. community views
 - e. preferences of the new and existing schools
 - f. compatibility between new and existing schools
 - g. availability of school choices in each region
 - h. geographic feeder patterns
 - i. the ability to physically separate schools within the facility.
4. It is the goal of the Board in most circumstances to determine where a new school that wishes to have a Shared Campus will locate at the time approval for that new school is granted.

Structures must be in place to support the schools in Shared Campuses to address any disputes that might arise. In collaboration with all schools sharing a campus, the District will prepare a binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be signed by the schools sharing the campus that specifies how the schools will operate on the Shared Campus. The MOU shall establish the space and services exclusively available to each school and the processes and procedures for sharing space and services designated as common or shared. A Memorandum of Understanding and accompanying Annual Sharing Agreement must be signed by all schools within Shared Campuses each year.

These documents will detail the operating principles for the Shared Campus and a dispute resolution process, as well as detail the specific areas within the building that will be shared and

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those areas to be used by only one school. Additionally, school leaders of each school in the Shared Campus must establish and participate in a Building Team which will focus on effective coordination on issues relevant to the schools within a Shared Campus. (See “Structures and Mechanisms to Support Cooperation and Enable Effective Dispute Resolution” section below for more detail.) In situations where a charter school operates on a Shared Campus, a Facility Use Agreement between the charter school and DPS shall be used in addition to the MOU.

Structures and Mechanisms to Support Cooperation and Enable Effective Dispute Resolution

Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”)

A MOU shall be prepared by and shall be binding on all individual schools sharing a DPS facility. The MOU may be amended to accommodate changed circumstances or agreements between the individual schools. All MOUs shall include the following components:

1. Memorialization of Mutually Agreed Upon Principles. This section of the MOU shall state the overarching principles by which the individual schools shall operate as a whole.
2. Plan for Regular Communication Among Schools. This section of the MOU shall set forth a mechanism for regular communication among the individual schools.
3. Dispute Resolution Process. This section of the MOU shall detail a process for the equitable resolution of any conflicts.

Sharing Agreement

The MOU shall also include, as an addendum, a Sharing Agreement that is signed by representatives from each school. The Sharing Agreement shall identify what portions of the campus shall be occupied by each school and what portions of the campus shall be shared or designated as common areas. The Sharing Agreement shall also include a labeled blueprint or map of the Campus which details the space to be utilized by each individual school. Any amendment or alteration to the MOU or Sharing Agreement must be memorialized in writing and submitted to the New Schools Office or its designee.

Building Teams:

The Building Team shall be comprised of the Principals/School Leaders of each school as a minimum and may include others as agreed by the Principals/School Leaders. The Building Team assumes responsibility for the operations, scheduling of the Premises, and mediation and resolution of disagreements between schools. This team will work simultaneously to support each individual school and to serve in a neutral facilities coordinative role for the entire premises.

The Building Team shall be guided by the facility occupants’ MOU and Addendum/Annual Sharing Agreement. General responsibilities of the Building Team include:

- Management of any operational or budget issues facing the shared facility (e.g., transportation schedules);
- Implementation and execution of the MOU and Addendum/Annual Sharing Agreement;

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- Mediation and resolution of disputes among the individual schools at a Shared Facility;
- Management and supervision of shared staff members, if any.

Additionally, each Principal/School Leader is expected to participate in the Building Team and to make decisions in the best interest of all students in the building. Principals should be transparent with each other about when the Building Team is not meeting their expectations. Decisions that should be discussed and managed at the Building Team level include, but are not limited to:

- Space allocation and programming (adjustment of room allocations – i.e. swaps, shared space, scheduling of shared space).
- Internal and external communications practices.
- School/building safety (i.e. security/safety personnel, fire drills).
- Facility Manager oversight.
- Access and use of the building after hours, on the weekends, and in the summer.

Dispute Resolution:

It is the responsibility of the Building Team to the maximum extent possible to resolve any disputes in the Shared Campus on the basis of what is in the best interests of all the students in the facility. In cases where disputes arise that the Building Team is not able to resolve, these disputes will be resolved by the Superintendent or his designee. We expect the primary point of dispute resolution to be the New Schools Office, working with the schools and any relevant central office support organizations.