

4/22/2022: This supplemental document was originally written and submitted to Claire Hertz by the SEGC on Feb. 24, 2022 as an addendum to the dissenting opinion statement. While the work of the SEGC volunteers has come to a close, we feel this document still provides important context and additional information regarding one of the biggest obstacles in the overall process.

SEGC Supplement (Inner SE School Exclusion)

The undersigned SEGC members are sharing this dissenting opinion statement to highlight what we believe has been a major roadblock to creating equity in the process of balancing enrollment across SE Portland. Namely, the limited scope the Board set which did not allow the SEGC to include all SE schools in our program location and boundary work. This has created a limited framework for the entire process which prioritized protecting the most affluent, predominantly white schools in SE Portland, and placed the burden of disruption and change on those the process purports to be in support of.

PPS's [RESJ Framework and Plan](#) states:

"We believe in the fundamental right to human dignity and that generating an equitable world requires an educational system that intentionally disrupts—and builds leaders to disrupt—systems of oppression."

The refusal by PPS and the Board to allow the SEGC to consider changes to inner SE schools fails to live up to the promise to intentionally disrupt the district's existing systems of oppression and is in direct opposition to their own stated RESJ goals. The geographic limitations placed on the SEGC's work only serve to sustain and entrench the institutional inequities already in place, and create a future of educational inequities for BIPOC students.

Not including all schools in SE has negatively impacted the work of the SEGC in multiple ways, as shifting boundaries eastward to distribute students from overcrowded inner SE schools to under enrolled outer SE schools is an obvious and vital step toward balancing and stabilizing enrollment across the entirety of SE.

Throughout this process, SEGC members have relied on guidance from PPS to work toward ideal enrollment numbers to better balance schools. However, it became clear that the numbers we were given to structure our work around were applied arbitrarily by the district. Per PPS and FLO, ideal building utilization is roughly 80%. To ensure robust programming and staffing, middle school enrollment should be a minimum of 500 students, and K-5 enrollment should be a minimum of 270. Pre-pandemic, Abernethy, a K-5 we were told was not included in our scope, consistently had over 500 students and over 100% utilization (including modulars). At the same time, and even in the SEGC proposal that is currently being presented to the Board, neighborhood K-5s like Marysville, Creston, and Arleta will all be at or below 50% utilization, and barely reach the 270 minimum enrollment target.

FLO and PPS models consistently demonstrate that outer SE elementary and middle schools are projected to decrease in enrollment over the coming years, and until broader boundary changes are implemented across the region, under-enrollment will continue to be an issue in outer SE. Though closing any of the K-5s in outer SE is not currently on the table according to PPS, the possibility looms large as projected enrollment drops and attendance continues to shrink. This will become an issue that has to be faced, all while overcrowded and affluent inner SE schools continue on untouched and bursting at the seams with students and educational opportunity. In order to create robustly enrolled schools for all students, the process should begin with the overcrowded inner SE schools. The alternative, waiting to change boundaries for inner SE until after the conclusion of the SEGC Phase 2 process, creates the potential for re-impacting outer SE students that are currently facing sweeping change and multiple transitions. In order to create robustly enrolled schools for all students, the process should begin with the overcrowded inner SE schools and spread outward towards enrollment-challenged outer SE schools.

While Hosford MS was included in our scenarios, its feeder schools (Abernethy, Buckman, and Grout) were left out, placing limitations on the SEGC's ability to fully balance enrollment across all SE middle schools. Sunnyside, another overcrowded school adjacent to both Mt. Tabor and Hosford Middle Schools, was also excluded. Two of Sellwood MS's three feeders, Duniway and Llewellyn, were left out of the Phase 2 process entirely, while the SEGC was barely allowed to consider changes to one side of Lewis's boundary. These restrictions greatly impacted the coalition's options to increase enrollment at Lane MS, in direct opposition to the charge given to us by the Board.

The SEGC was given an incomplete toolkit to do the job set before us, leaving us to create a proposal that forces more upheaval on the most vulnerable students, and upholds precisely the inequities in our educational system we have been tasked with repairing. The rationale behind excluding inner SE schools from the SEGC process was stated as limiting the scope so as to reduce the negative impacts of change during the pandemic. But as members of the SEGC and the broader community have repeatedly pointed out, that decision only limits change for a select group of SE Portland students, while increasing the likelihood that those involved in the current process will also face further changes down the road. How does limiting change for the highest SES students in the best performing schools while placing the burden of balance on the lowest SES students in poorer performing schools meet the equity goals set forth both in the SEGC charge and the district's RESJ policy? We have yet to hear a rationale for this prioritization.

We request that PPS and the Board either extend the SEGC process and include inner SE schools in our work, or have educational leaders give a full rationale that illustrates how the decision to exclude the most privileged students from this enrollment balancing process aligns with their own RESJ policy.

Signers

Note: While school affiliations are provided for reference, individuals are signing in their capacity as SEGC members, not on behalf of their school communities.

Alissa McMaken Roberts, Woodstock

Andrea Emerson, Whitman

Andy Jacob, Bridger

Beth Brett, Creston

Beth Cavanaugh, Hosford Middle School

Dee Reddy, Kellogg Middle School- Spanish DLI

Eddie Wang, Woodstock

Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong, Mt. Tabor Middle School, Franklin High School

Ellie Russell, Marysville

Harmony Quiroz, Atkinson

Josh Cody, Creative Science School

Martha Almendarez-Langland, Atkinson

Maya Mori, Mt. Tabor Middle School

Micah Chu, Sellwood MS/Lewis Elementary

Michelle Harada, Harrison Park

Sarah Kincaid, Kellogg Middle School- Neighborhood Program

Sondra Blair, Arleta