

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM #220 (2005-2006)

April 10, 2006

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: BOUNDARY CHANGES FOR BEAR VALLEY, WILLARD L. BOWMAN, HUFFMAN, O'MALLEY, AND RABBIT CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (FIRST READING)

ASD Goal: *Ensure public accountability through effective communication with students, staff, parents, community and government at all levels.*

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve on First Reading the following attendance boundaries for the 2006-2007 school year for Bear Valley, Willard L. Bowman, Huffman, O'Malley, and Rabbit Creek elementary schools (shown as Attachment A).

BEAR VALLEY

North Rabbit Creek, from the northern extension of Evergreen Street to Our Own Lane (including all residents addressing on Our Own Lane); Our Own Lane, from Rabbit Creek to the southward extension of Saunders Road; Saunders Road, from Our Own Lane to South Park Drive (excluding all residents with addresses on Saunders Road); the eastward extension of South Park Drive, from Saunders Road to Talisman Road (excluding all residents with addresses on South Park Drive); Talisman Road, from the eastward extension of South Park Drive to Jeanne Road (excluding Turks Turn Street, but including Cardinal, Talisman, Neher Ridge, Benjamin, and Jeanne); Jeanne Road to Upper DeArmoun Road to Canyon Road to Chugach State Park (including the intersections of Jeanne Road and Canyon Road south of Upper Huffman Road).

East Chugach State Park

South Potter Valley Road, from Old Seward Highway to Potter Heights Drive; Potter Heights Drive and its eastward extension, from Potter Valley Road to Chugach State Park (excluding all residents addressing on Potter Valley Road, Potter Heights Drive, and their intersections--except Feodosia, England, and Finland).

West The northward extension of Evergreen Street between Rabbit Creek and Woodhaven Avenue (including all residents on Woodhaven Avenue); the westward extension of Woodhaven Avenue, from Evergreen Street to Elmore Road (including Shandy Court); Elmore Road and its southward extension, from the westward extension of Woodhaven Avenue to Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue; Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue, from the southern extension of Elmore Road to Old Seward Highway (excluding all residents addressing on Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue); Old Seward Highway, from Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue to Potter Valley Road (excluding Hyannis Cir, Windjammer Cir, Landings Cir, Brothers Ave, Nystrom St, Sage Cir, Tideview Dr, Virgo Ave (4500 block addresses)).

BOWMAN

No change to the boundary attendance area.

HUFFMAN

No change to the boundary attendance area.

O'MALLEY

North Abbott Road, from Abbott Loop Road to Chugach State Park.

East Chugach State Park

South Klatt Road, from Cange Road to Our Road; Our Road from Klatt Road to Lilac Road; The eastern extension of Lilac road from Our Road to Birch Road; Downey Finch Road, from Birch Road to Rockridge Drive (excluding all residents with addresses on Downey Finch Road and including all residents with addresses on Rockridge Drive); Rockridge Drive, from Alatna Avenue to Upper Huffman Road; and the northward extension of Langman Circle, from Upper Huffman Road (including all addresses on Langman Circle) to Algarin Circle (from Nenana Place, including all residents addressing on Algarin Circle, to DeArmoun Road); DeArmoun Road to Tahoe Circle; Tahoe Circle to Rabbit Creek; Our Own Lane, from Rabbit Creek to the southward extension of Saunders Road

(excluding all residents addressing on Our Own Lane); Saunders Road, from Our Own Lane to South Park Drive; the eastward extension of South Park Drive, from Saunders Road to Turks Turn Street (excluding all residents with addresses on South Park Drive); Turks Turn Street, from the eastward extension of South Park Drive to Upper Huffman Road; Upper Huffman Road, from Turks Turn Street to Toilsome Hill Drive (including Ginami Street and Ridge Place, but excluding Jeanne Road); Toilsome Hill Drive, from Upper Huffman Road to Glen Alps Road to Chugach State Park (including Tower Estates, Meadow, Alpweg, Sunshine, Main, and Bach)

West Abbott Loop Road, from Abbott Road to O'Malley Road; O'Malley Road from Abbott Loop Road to Cange Road.

RABBIT CREEK

North Hamilton Drive including Brant Way and Elmhurst Circle (from Old Seward Highway to New Seward Highway); Sue's Way, including Nancy Circle, from New Seward Highway to Lake Otis Parkway; Legacy Drive, excluding all addresses on Legacy Drive, and Chesapeake Avenue (excluding all addresses on Chesapeake Avenue) and its extension to Leyden Road (excluding all addresses on Leyden Road) from Lake Otis Parkway to Bragaw Street/Elmore Road; Bragaw Street/Elmore Road, from Leyden Road to DeArmoun Road (excluding all residents with addresses on Bragaw Street/Elmore Road); DeArmoun Road, from Bragaw Street/Elmore Road to McDonell Road (excluding all residents with addresses on DeArmoun Road); east from McDonell Road to Rabbit Creek, Rabbit Creek, from McDonell Road to the northward extension of Evergreen Street.

East Langman Circle (excluding all addresses on Langman Circle) to Algarin Circle (from Nenana Place, excluding all residents addressing on Algarin Circle, to DeArmoun Road); DeArmoun Road to Tahoe Circle; Tahoe Circle to Rabbit Creek; Rabbit Creek to the northward extension of Evergreen Street; the northward extension of Evergreen Street between Rabbit Creek and Woodhaven Avenue (excluding all residents on Woodhaven Avenue); the westward extension of Woodhaven Avenue, from Evergreen Street to Elmore Road (excluding Shandy Court); Elmore Road and its southward extension, from the westward extension of Woodhaven Avenue to Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue (including all residents addressing on Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue); Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue, from the southern extension of Elmore Road to Old Seward Highway; Old Seward Highway, from Ptarmigan Terrace Avenue to Potter Valley Road

(including Hyannis Cir, Windjammer Cir, Landings Cir, Brothers Ave, Nystrom St, Sage Cir, Tideview Dr, and Virgo Ave (4500 block addresses); Potter Valley Road, from Old Seward Highway to Potter Heights Drive; Potter Heights Drive and its eastward extension, from Potter Valley Road to Chugach State Park (including all residents addressing on Potter Valley Road, Potter Heights Drive, and their intersections--except Feodosia, England, and Finland).

South McHugh Creek

West Old Seward Highway, from Hamilton Drive to intersection of the Old Seward and Seward Highways; Seward Highway, from the intersection of the Old Seward and Seward Highways to McHugh Creek.

PERTINENT FACTS:

A task force made up of parents and principals from Bear Valley Elementary School, Bowman Elementary School, Huffman Elementary School, O'Malley Elementary School and Rabbit Creek Elementary School began meeting in January 2006. Also attending all of the Task Force meetings were representatives from the Transportation, Demographics, and Elementary Education Departments. Special Education and IGNITE representatives attended some of the meetings. Members of the Bear Valley Area Community Council were notified about the boundary review, but a representative did not attend any of the meetings. (Attachment B)

The task force met on January 25, February 1, February 8, February 10 and March 15, 2006. During the meetings, task force members reviewed current and projected enrollment, school capacity, the distance to schools, transportation and demographic information. Summaries of the task force meetings are in Attachment C.

The task force followed the Superintendent's expectation that the boundary change recommendation would reduce the overcrowding at Bear Valley, balance the enrollment at the neighborhood schools, and accommodate for projected growth in the area.

Public hearings were held on February 23 at Huffman Elementary School and February 21 and March 14 at Bowman Elementary School. Attachment D highlights many of the comments and concerns shared during testimony at the three public hearings.

The task force presented three scenarios (1, 2, 3) at the public hearings on February 21 and 23. (Attachment E) The scenarios reduce the enrollment at Bear Valley Elementary School and allow for the anticipated growth in the area.

During the public hearing on February 21, 2006, Steve Kalmes, Anchorage School District Director of Transportation, reviewed with those in attendance the concerns and challenges that the Transportation Department had with the scenarios. He explained to the task force and the audience that the Buffalo/ Shoshoni bus stop was split between Bear Valley and Rabbit Creek which requires duplicating bus stops. He recommended that the boundary line be changed to make a shorter, safer and a more timely bus ride for those students.

Parents spoke about their concerns: their child(ren) going to other schools, difficulties in making and keeping friends, the possibility of having to go through future boundary changes, zone exemptions, grandfathering, and the use of relocatables.

On February 24, 2006, the task force met at Bowman Elementary School to consider input from the public hearings. After reviewing information gathered from the public hearings, the task force developed three new scenarios (4, 5, and 6 - Attachment F). The Superintendent asked the task force to schedule another public hearing to share the new scenarios and gather public input.

The hearing was held at 6:00 p.m. on March 14 at Bowman Elementary School. After introductions of the task force members, and a brief overview of the boundary change process, the three new scenarios were presented to the audience.

Many of the public comments focused on concerns about the boundary change, not the three scenarios presented at the meeting. Some parents spoke about keeping neighborhoods together and the importance of not breaking up friendships started in elementary schools. A comment was made that Bear Valley School had been overcrowded for a long time, "so why not just leave it as it is and add another portable." Some parents of Bear Valley students support this view because Bear Valley has been overcrowded and "we are doing ok." "Our efforts and energy should go to working on building a new school."

A "bottoms-up grandfathering" proposal was presented and supported by many people in the audience. This proposal would reduce the percent of capacity at Bear Valley to below 100% over several years. Grandfathering for all present Bear Valley families would be allowed and acknowledged. The Bear Valley redistricting lines would be redrawn, cutting deeper into the current Bear Valley district. Each time a house is sold to a new family, those new elementary students would go to the new school. Another proposal was presented that gradually reduces Bear Valley enrollment by leaving things as they are and allowing change to happen slowly. (Attachment G)

After the final public hearing, the task force met on March 15, 2006, to discuss the suggestions and comments heard at the public hearing. It was stated again that the goal of reducing the overcrowding at Bear Valley was the charge from the Superintendent.

The task force reviewed the “bottoms up” proposal. They did not support recommending this proposal to the Superintendent. It does not significantly reduce the overcrowding at Bear Valley or allow for projected growth.

The task force considered and discussed the idea of not doing anything. Task force members believed that if they didn’t do something they would be back at the same place in one or two years. The Demographer reminded the task force again that a new school was at least a good seven to nine years away. The task force agreed unanimously that it would not recommend doing nothing or leaving things as they are.

In response to grandfathering and zone exemption requests, the task force reviewed School Board Policy.

School Board Policy 444.24 states:

"When the School Board changes attendance boundaries, no zone exemptions for the affected schools will be allowed for one school year, with the following exceptions:

1. Students in the final grade of elementary, middle, and high school.
2. Students enrolled on a continuing basis in a specific educational program that is not offered at the new attendance area school.
3. For extreme hardship related to a student's educational program, medical condition, or the family's personal situation.
4. In order to utilize program space for an under-utilized or under-enrolled schools."

It was explained that siblings of sixth graders would not be granted a zone exemption. Transportation of sixth grade students would be the responsibility of the parents.

In response to questions about zone exemptions, the task force referred to the March, 2006 Zone Exemption Summary provided by the Data Processing Department.

	TOTAL OUT	TOTAL IN
Bear Valley:	115	16
Bowman:	59	123
Huffman:	91	51
O'Malley:	96	8
Rabbit Creek:	123	33

The task force reviewed both the advantages and disadvantages of Scenarios 4, 5, and six.

The pros and cons of Scenarios 4, 5, 6 and Scenario 4/6 are listed below:

SCENARIO 4

PROS:

- Enrollment percentages at all schools are balanced provided that the preschools are moved out of O'Malley
- An acceptable percentage out of Bear Valley allows for future growth
- Northern boundaries of Bear Valley have been moved south and allow students to be closer to home schools
- Potter Valley is closer to Rabbit Creek Elementary School
- Increased enrollment at Huffman, O'Malley and Rabbit Creek
- Room for growth at Bear Valley
- Relieves overcrowding at Bear Valley

CONS:

- Impacts four schools
- Rabbit Creek – moves one group out, two groups in
- Impacts the O'Malley preschool program
- Sends bus up Rabbit Creek Road

SCENARIO 5

PROS:

- No impact to Huffman
- Relieves overcrowding at Bear Valley
- Balanced enrollment allows for growth
- Potter Valley not impacted
- DeArmoun not impacted
- Impacts fewest children/families
- Bear Valley loses 111 students; to 89%
- Balanced distribution
- Contiguous geographic boundaries
- No moves for current Rabbit Creek families
- Reduced likelihood of second move for Potter Valley if/when a new Anchorage elementary school is built in the area

CONS:

- Transportation issue with Potter Valley going up Rabbit Creek to Bear Valley safety issue
- travels through Rabbit Creek boundary to get to Bear Valley
- Does not leave as much room for projected growth

SCENARIO 6

PROS:

- Bear Valley loses 131 students; this scenario would leave Bear Valley close to 85%
- IGNITE could be housed at Huffman and O'Malley; on site programs allow for collaboration among regular education and IGNITE staff
- Room for growth in all area schools

CONS:

- This scenario does not meet the goals of the Task Force to balance the enrollment at the schools if preschool remains at O'Malley
- Rabbit Creek does not help with the overcrowding at Bear Valley
- Transportation issue: distance of travel from Potter Valley to Bear Valley vs. Rabbit Creek. 4.9 miles vs. 3.8 miles

SCENARIO 4/6

PROS:

- Relieves overcrowding at Bear Valley and allows for projected growth
- Bear Valley loses 150+ students; Bear Valley would be at 79%
- IGNITE could stay at O'Malley; on site program allows for collaboration among regular education and IGNITE staff
- Takes an acceptable percentage out of Bear Valley and allows for future growth
- Enrollment percentages at schools are balanced provided that preschools are moved out of O'Malley
- Northern boundaries of the Bear Valley attendance area have been moved south and allow students to be closer to home schools
- Potter Valley is closer to Rabbit Creek Elementary School
- Increased enrollment at Huffman, O'Malley, and Rabbit Creek

CONS:

- O'Malley's preschool program is displaced
- Students are moved out of Rabbit Creek to accommodate students from Bear Valley

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION TO SUPERINTENDENT
(Attachment H)

After discussing input, scenarios and information, the task force unanimously recommends a modification of Scenarios 4 and 6, which is presented in this document as Scenario 4/6, and Scenario 5 for the following reasons:

Scenario 4/6:

- Relieves overcrowding at Bear Valley
- Takes an acceptable percentage out of Bear Valley and allows for projected future growth
- Addresses under enrollment at area schools
- The preschool will be moved out of O'Malley
- This option will significantly reduce the enrollment at Bear Valley Elementary School

Scenario 5:

- Relieves overcrowding at Bear Valley
- Balanced enrollment allows for growth
- Impacts fewest children/families
- No moves for current Rabbit Creek families
- Adds children to O'Malley and Huffman

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS:

I would like to thank the Task Force for their conscientious work on this very difficult and emotional task. I know that no one wants to change school boundaries when they are heavily invested in their child(ren)'s schools, but at the same time, my professional opinion after many years of experience is that the quality of education goes down as overcrowding increases in a school. Adding relocatables to avoid changing boundaries is not acceptable when there are excellent schools available to house and educate students. I believe the public expects that we maximize our space first, prior to requesting capital funding for a new school.

I have reviewed the recommendation from the task force with supporting data, testimony, public comment, and information gathered from emails and phone calls. I appreciate very much the thoughtful communications, though I am troubled by some of the comments relating to other schools in the area...we do ourselves no favor by alleging that one school is performing less than another as the rationale for never changing boundaries. All of the schools involved in this boundary study have excellent staff and are high achieving schools; students for years have had an excellent education in all of them.

I have driven the boundaries of the involved schools, spoken with the Anchorage School District Demographer and the Director of Transportation, and my staff in Elementary Education about these recommendations. I believe that we have fully reviewed all alternative proposals put forth by the Task Force and by the public during the hearings and via emails.

After this review, it is my determination the School District must reduce the over crowding at Bear Valley Elementary School at this time. I think it is irresponsible to delay the inevitable; Bear Valley needs room to grow as construction continues now and will continue. Rabbit Creek and O'Malley can comfortably house the former Bear Valley students and still accommodate future growth.

The proposed Superintendent's Scenario relieves the overcrowding at Bear Valley and allows for projected growth in the area. This will provide for an improved learning and teaching environment for students and staff. In addition, school safety will be increased by reducing the number of cars in the parking lot at Bear Valley with fewer students; pupil transportation costs will be used more efficiently when duplicate bus runs are not the norm.

The Bowman and Huffman boundaries are not changed in this scenario. Students will be added only to O'Malley and Rabbit Creek elementary schools.

This recommendation will reduce Bear Valley Elementary School by approximately 139 students; no other schools will lose students. This scenario addresses the under enrollment at area schools.

With this recommendation, the schools will have the following enrollments:

	Projected Enrollment	Capacity %
Bear Valley	421	83
Bowman	461	86
Huffman	384	88
O'Malley	386	88
Rabbit Creek	404	92

Finally, I do hope that parents will work with us to assist our students in making this successful transition to their new schools. Children succeed best when the adults in their lives help them adjust to changes such as these with a positive outlook. Experience has shown that children adjust quickly when they move with their neighborhoods.

CC/PM/JG/EL

Attachments

Prepared by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent
Patricia McRae, Executive Director, Elementary Education
Julie Ginder, Supervisor, Elementary Education
Eunice Long, Supervisor, Elementary Education

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent