

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #252 (2003-04)

April 12, 2004

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: NEW EAGLE RIVER AREA HIGH SCHOOL BOUNDARIES
(FIRST READING)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve on First Reading the following attendance boundaries for the 2005-2006 school year for Chugiak High School, Bartlett High School and the New Eagle River Area High School (NERAHS). This is shown as Scenario #6 on Attachment A.

SCENARIO #6

To Chugiak High School

North - North boundary of the Anchorage School District (Knik River Bridge and Glenn Highway.) East - Chugach State Park. South - Eagle River Road between Fort Richardson Military Reservation and Melody Lane, (including all residents on Preuss Lane); Melody Lane and its northern extension to Chugach State Park. West - Fort Richardson Military Reservation and Knik Arm.

To New Eagle River Area High School (Includes Ft. Richardson students)

North - Eagle River Road between Fort Richardson Military Reservation and Melody Lane, (excluding all residents on Preuss Lane); northern extension of Melody Lane, including all residents on Stewart Drive, Upper Lowland Ave, and Silvertip Circle; to Chugach State Park. East - Chugach State Park. South - Chugach State Park, including the entire Hiland Road area. West - Eastern boundary of Fort Richardson Military Reservation to the New Glenn Highway.

PERTINENT FACTS

The NERAHS Boundaries Task Force was comprised of school principals, parents and students from Chugiak High School and Bartlett High School. Also serving on the task force was a representative from the Minority Education

Concerns Committee and a representative from ASD Special Education. Attending all of the task force meetings were the ASD Demographer and a representative from ASD Transportation. (Attachment B)

The task force began meeting on January 14, 2004. Five work sessions were held through March 17, 2004. Minutes of those meetings are found in Attachment C. The task force considered school capacity, existing school boundaries, established neighborhoods, projected growth, ethnicity, distance to school and major geographical areas in developing feasible scenarios. After listening to presentations from the demographer concerning projected residential growth in the Eagle River/Chugiak area, and after learning of the 2005-2006 school capacities (CHS - 1582, NERHS - 800, BHS- 1937), it was decided to include the 145 high school students living on the Fort Richardson installation to the NERHS or CHS to alleviate some of the BHS overcrowding and to fill some of the CHS/NERHS seats. This key decision allowed scenarios to be developed that would place 2089 students in the two Eagle River/Chugiak high schools that have a combined total capacity of 2382 students. It also allowed for a combined future growth in the Eagle River/Chugiak high schools of 293 students.

The task force developed and studied the six scenarios shown in Attachment D. Three were given initial approval and the others were placed in the bottom half - based on capacity, future growth, distance from school, ethnicity and geographical areas. All six scenarios were taken to the two public meetings for comment and suggestion.

Public meeting notices were sent to the homes of every elementary, middle and high school student residing in the Bartlett and Chugiak high school areas. Approximately 4,300 notices were mailed. (Attachment E) The public meetings took place on March 2, 2004, at Bartlett High School and March 9, 2004, at Chugiak High School. The meetings began with a report on the process, a description of the scenarios and guidelines for providing public comment. All comments were tape recorded and transcribed.

A majority of the public comments at the March 2 public meeting were actually questions about the new high school in Eagle River. During the March 9 public meeting at CHS, public comments centered on maintaining neighborhoods and feeder school boundaries when developing high school boundaries. In addition, many asked that their students be able to attend the school closest to their home. Proximity was also a concern of the task force, but because of the limitations of individual school capacities, the concern for proximity often took second priority.

The majority of the individuals commenting wanted their students to attend the New Eagle River Area High School.

Several recommendations from the public requested the preservation of the entire Ravenwood Elementary School attendance zone. This recommendation was made because the parents felt a strong sense of community and strongly advocated that their children attend the same schools through elementary, middle and high school. Some testified about the strong parent networks that had been developed and wanted to maintain that relationship through high school graduation. During the March 9, 2004, public meeting, a scenario #7 (Attachment F) was presented by parents. Scenario #7 allowed all of the students in the Ravenwood Elementary attendance zone to remain together and attend the New Eagle River Area High School. Scenario #7 also assigned the 145 Fort Richardson students, from BHS to attend the NERAHS. This scenario would have put the NERHS at 101% capacity and CHS at 84%.

Many individual speakers addressed open enrollment. Parents understood the need for established boundaries, but supported the idea of open enrollment. Open enrollment would allow students and parents the opportunity to make individual school choices.

A common theme from many of the public comments was to keep neighborhoods together and not split residential areas with high school boundaries.

After the final public meeting, the task force met to review all of the comments and suggestions and to develop a recommendation for the Superintendent. At that meeting, it was once again decided to maintain room for future growth in the Eagle River/Chugiak high schools. It was also reaffirmed to place primary emphasis on school capacity, existing school boundaries, established neighborhoods, projected growth, ethnicity, distance to school and major geographical areas. Using these principles, along with consideration for major geographical areas, ethnicity and distance from school, the task force unanimously selected scenario #6 (Attachment A).

The task force rejected scenario #7. It placed a single school over capacity and it did not maintain established neighborhoods as well as scenario #6. Comparing geographic proximity (travel time and distance to schools), scenario #6 made better sense than #7. Scenario #6 cut through existing elementary boundaries, but maintained every residential neighborhood. By preserving residential neighborhoods, scenario #6 was strongly supported by the ASD Transportation Department, indicating that route efficiency was best attained with this particular scenario.

SUPERINTENDENT'S NOTES:

The task force members are to be commended for their dedication and hard work. Theirs was a difficult assignment to undertake, but they accomplished it with careful thoughtfulness and a commitment to School Board policy. I concur with their recommendation and believe scenario #6 to be the best plan.

After a thorough review of the task force meeting minutes and all public comment, including testimony at the two public meetings and many e-mails and phone calls, I determined that the boundary recommendation for the new Eagle River high school should take into consideration proximity to schools and established neighborhoods. I felt it was an important consideration, especially with our increased emphasis on developing parent networks and encouraging active, long-term family participation in school activities.

This recommendation will send all students residing south of the Eagle River Road and the northern extension of Melody Lane, including all residents on Stewart Drive and the students living on the Fort Richardson Military Reservation to the new Eagle River area high school.

With this recommendation, the three high schools in north Anchorage would have the following enrollments:

	Projected Enrollment	Capacity	Percent Capacity
Bartlett H.S.	1959	1937	101%
Chugiak H.S.	1351	1582	85%
New H.S.	738	800	92%

CC/JC/MH

Prepared by: Mike Henry, Executive Director, High School Education

Approved by: Jan Christensen, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction