



Reuniting East and West Sylvan: An adjustment to the facilities bond proposal

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What is the problem at East/West Sylvan?

On Nov. 8, Portland Public Schools Superintendent Carole Smith proposed a facilities bond to update and improve safety in all PPS school buildings. Both before and after she made that proposal, Smith considered the challenges posed by having the West Sylvan Middle School sixth grade students in the East Sylvan building:

- The sixth grade students are separated from the seventh and eighth grade students by more than a mile and by the Sunset Highway.
- The East Sylvan building – previously closed as a PPS neighborhood school for many years – is rated the second worst in the district for its facilities condition.
- School bus transportation must deliver students to two separate locations, complicating routes and adding costs.
- Having two separate locations for one middle school leads to administrative inefficiencies and difficulty in coordination and professional development for the schools' split teaching staff.

What is the adjusted proposal?

Superintendent Smith asked staff to refine the proposal. She is now recommending to the board that the facilities bond package including funding to master plan the West Sylvan campus and to construct space – classrooms and other school facilities – to house the sixth grade students on the main campus. That new building would be designed and placed so as to be easily integrated into a rebuilt West Sylvan Middle School when that school is fully renovated in a future bond.

How will the new school building work?

As with all other major renovations and rebuilding efforts in the proposed facilities bond, this sixth-grade addition to the West Sylvan campus would be developed with community input – both into the master plan for the entire site and into the specific and immediate construction plans. Teachers, school staff, students and families would help shape the design.

PPS expects the new master plan and construction project would deliver:

- Separate classroom space for 6th graders – an aspect of the current East Sylvan campus that parents most appreciate.
- More effective and standard teacher scheduling, professional development, staff meetings and professional learning communities, as staff members do not have to travel from one site to another.
- Safer and better designed parking, school bus pull-in and parent drop-off areas.
- Less time spent by the principal and assistant principal(s) on administrative issues, more focus on instructional leadership.
- Updated science labs for all middle grade students at West Sylvan, as proposed across the school district.

- Expanded spaces for the added 6th grade students to have lunch, take PE and enrichment and dance classes – planned in coordination with existing spaces at West Sylvan, but without further crowding the current cafeteria, West Sylvan gym or the smaller gym/multi-purpose space.

This adjustment would mean an additional investment in West Portland schools, offering an updated 6th grade environment for the vast majority of students in the Lincoln attendance area and, in effect, paying for the first phase of a rebuilt West Sylvan Middle School.

For more information on Portland Public Schools facilities bond proposal, go to: www.pps.k12.or.us or call the Information Hotline, 503-916-2801. Portland Public Schools is an equal opportunity employer and educator.