

USD 497 faces a predicted \$3M shortfall in operating budget. The final version of the task force recommendation report provides a maximum of \$497K in relief. This proposal does not adequately address said shortfall, does not adequately address "the restraints of current and anticipated district resources," and is inconsistent with the reported findings of at least two (2) of the four (4) task force subcommittees. Thus, I must respectfully dissent from this proposal.

The recommended closure of Wakarusa Valley Elementary School (WVES) will allegedly result in savings of \$497K. This number apparently assumes full staffing at WVES. However, WVES is presently only partially staffed. In 2010, when parents and teachers at WVES were notified of the intent to partially staff the school, they were informed that total closure would result in an additional savings of approximately \$351K. Regardless of the exact number, a mere savings of less than \$500K, when a shortfall of \$3M is projected, seems imprudent to this member and taxpayer. Two other more viable options (Cordley or Pinckney), both of which would save USD497 over \$1M, are available single-school closure alternatives.

The task force was formed, in large part, to address community concerns regarding proposed closures of "neighborhood schools." Indeed, a subcommittee of this task force was specifically assigned to address this issue. This subcommittee quickly and correctly enlarged their focus to "community schools." The task force recommendation report correctly urges the district to "strive to create and maintain schools that embody such a community that every school is a community school." WVES was chosen by this subcommittee as one of three examples of grade schools that embody the "community school" concept. Thus, closure of WVES violates one of the twelve basic tenets of the task force.

The task force recommendation report also proposes consolidations of six grade schools, rather than four into two, as was the original consensus. Those proposed consolidations will result in no immediate economic relief for USD497. To the contrary, this proposal shall require immediate and substantial capital outlay which does not adequately account for present "budget realities," and will delay or impede necessary capital improvements to structures that shall serve the district long-term. WVES is facilities-sound, has no immediate capital improvement needs and recently added a solar water heater. Much of the taskforce's proposed capital outlays will ultimately be a total waste of monies once those schools are closed/consolidated in 3-5 years, even assuming passage of the required bond issues, which is not a given in this economy.

Finally, the task force recommendation report makes no provision for the present crowding in classrooms at Langston Hughes and at Sunflower. Both schools presently serve over 400 students. WVES was targeted, in part, due to its low student enrollment. The aforementioned overcrowding and WVES low enrollment are caused by the same thing: an antiquated artificial boundary line. Broken Arrow also faces crowding issues with no room for expansion. Any equitable solution must adequately address these situations. It is noted that WVES can handle 80 students immediately, and easily has capacity and land space for additions to serve more students near-term. This would alleviate this crowding.

Closure of a grade school is an extreme remedy. It may be justified to solve economic issues within the district; to solve facilities issues at that school; or to solve community-related issues within the district. The proposed closure of WVES does none of the above. For all of the above-stated reasons, I respectfully dissent.

Respectfully submitted,

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