



November 5, 2013

Seattle School District
Attention: Board of Directors
MS 11-010
PO Box 34165
Seattle, WA 98124-1165

**RE: CONCERNS OVER PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WEDGWOOD
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND ECKSTEIN MIDDLE SCHOOL BOUNDARIES
ON NOVEMBER 6**

Dear Board of Directors:

On behalf of the Wedgwood neighborhood in Northeast Seattle, the Wedgwood Community Council (WCC) would like to express our concern over the short- and long-term changes described within the “Growth Boundaries for Student Assignment” Board Action Report (BAR), to be presented to the Board on November 6.

As we understand it, all Wedgwood Elementary School students would be assigned to the new, as of yet unopened Jane Addams Middle School, while former Wedgwood students currently attending Eckstein would be moved to the new Jane Addams Middle School for their 7th and 8th grade years. These moves would be made to alleviate the current overcrowding at Eckstein and to accommodate the co-location of one of two North Seattle Advanced Placement Programs.

The proposed changes are of great concern to the WCC, not to mention the parents of Wedgwood Elementary School and Eckstein Middle School students, for several reasons. As such, **we are requesting more detail regarding and consideration of the situation.**

First and foremost, **this BAR is significantly different from previous iterations** that have been reviewed and commented on by parents, teachers and the public. Furthermore, the adjusted BAR was only released to the public on the Friday before the November 6 meeting, which **did not allow critical stakeholders adequate time to review and consider the changes** relative to potential alternatives.

Second, **the BAR proposal as it is structured could separate siblings** during the transition to the Jane Addams Middle School. This surely is not a desirable outcome for any family or the District.

Third, the District transitioned to neighborhood-based attendance area schools in 2009. Under the BAR proposal, a student who lives across NE 75th Street from Eckstein Middle School and within the Wedgwood Elementary School attendance area would be required to attend Jane

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Addams Middle School, located 1.8 miles from their home (instead of the school literally feet away). This scenario is both **less efficient and less effective**, and **would require greater transportation investment** by the District – the very issues the neighborhood-based attendance area system was set up to avoid.¹

Finally, Northeast Seattle schools have been leading, through the Bryant Bikes and Eckstein Bikes programs, a city-wide effort to increase walk trains to and bike trains create healthy and focused students. These parent-driven programs have spread to other schools across the City and are inspiring more and more families to walk or bike to school. However, it is our opinion that **the BAR proposal would result in less walkable/bikeable growth boundaries, endangering the efficiencies and health improvement levels** the District has been working to improve for many years.²

It is for this reason we urge the Board of Directors and Superintendent Banda to clarify the reasoning behind the proposed changes, and strongly take into account the feedback put forth by various community members and groups before making a major decision on November 20.

Respectfully,

Keeley Hughes
President
Wedgwood Community Council

¹ According to then-Superintendent Goodloe-Johnson, the neighborhood-based attendance area system decision was made in part to put “systems in place to ensure that future planning integrates all of the factors that contribute to an efficient, effective district that is structured to support student achievement.” Board President DeBell also stated in regards to this decision, “If we’re going to use our limited resources efficiently, this is a big opportunity to reduce transportation costs, balance out enrollment so that hopefully the vast majority of our schools have enough students in them to be successful.”

² On May 8, 2013, Superintendent Banda was joined by School Board President Smith-Blum, former Bryant Principal Kim Fox, and Seattle City Councilmember Bagshaw at a “Bike to School” rally. At this rally, Superintendent Banda said biking to school is a benefit in two different ways: It improves student’s well-being and helps with the District’s transportation costs. Superintendent Banda went on to say that, “Studies show that students who get regular exercise are more attentive in class and reach higher achievement levels. More students biking to school means lower transportation costs, which translate into more funds for our classrooms. Ultimately, supporting bicycling will help us find happier, healthier, more focused students at their desks.”

This message is echoed in an October 10, 2013 letter from Feet First to the Seattle School District Board of Directors encouraging walkability to be factored into healthy growth boundaries. In this letter, Jen Cole, the Safe Routes to School Program Director for Feet First writes, “If the District successfully incorporates walkability into its boundary calculations, we will see benefits in student health, learning, and economic savings for years to come.”