SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Office of School Site Support

RELOCATION OF JOHN MUIR SCHOOL
FOR HUMANISTIC STUDIES

March 8, 2005

Introductory Statement

On June 22, 2004, the Board of Education directed district staff to find a suitable alternative location for John Muir School of Humanistic Studies prior to July 31, 2005.

Background

On July 22, 2003, the Board of Education authorized staff to enter into negotiations with the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) to lease the Muir School site to SDCCD on a long-term basis in exchange for the use of a portion of a new school/middle college envisioned as a bridge to college for at-risk students. The building would be constructed by SDCCD on its San Diego Mesa College campus. The Board of Education also directed staff to: (1) issue a temporary encroachment permit to allow Mesa College parking on the Muir School site; and (2) develop a proposal for educational use of the proposed new school facilities.

The July 22, 2003, agreement to lease the John Muir site to SDCCD on a long-term basis in exchange for the use of a portion of a new school/middle college to be constructed by SDCCD on the Mesa College campus has facilities implications for both SDUSD and SDCCD. A five-part agreement governing the use of facilities and development of the new school was created as part of the negotiations for this arrangement. As part of the agreement, John Muir School was to be relocated.

The February 10, 2004 Report on Construction of a New Middle College High School at San Diego Mesa College identified a tentative timeline for the development of the new school/middle college and directed staff to create a joint design team with San Diego Mesa College to develop a school implementation plan for presentation to the Board at a later date.

On June 22, 2004, the Board of Education approved a Permit Agreement with SDCCD. This Permit Agreement provided the district with enough space on the San Diego Mesa College campus to operate one San Diego Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical High School (San Diego Met School). Under the terms of the Permit Agreement, SDCCD funded both the placement of San Diego Met School on the Mesa College campus and the necessary classroom reconfiguration. As part of the June 22, 2004 Permit Agreement, district staff was directed to find a suitable alternative location for the operation of John Muir prior to July 31, 2005.
Two sites were assessed for the relocation of John Muir: the former Andersen Elementary School and the former Decatur Elementary School. Andersen is located at 4431 Mt. Herbert Street in Clairemont, and Decatur is located at 65560 Soledad Mountain Road in La Jolla.

Andersen is currently leased to Children’s Creative & Performing Arts Academy, whose lease expires June 30, 2005. Andersen has 26,291 square feet of facilities on 9.55 acres.

Decatur is currently leased to Springall Academy. Springall Academy was the successful bidder for the lease at the district’s former Forward Elementary School and has requested an early termination of its lease at Decatur. The early termination would be effective September 1, 2005. Decatur has 21,147 square feet of facilities on 8.34 acres.

Both sites require upgrades to house district students and staff. These upgrades are addressed in the Facilities Implications section of this report.

Instructional Implications

The SDCS Office of Secondary School Innovation (OSSI) is working with the Muir School to develop the highest caliber educational opportunities for its students. Muir has formed a design team of teachers, staff, parents, community members and students. This design team has been charged with preparing a school design plan, addressing the ten “features of good small schools” identified by the Stanford University School Redesign Network. The ten design features include personalization, continuous relationships, high standards and performance-based assessment, authentic curriculum, adaptive pedagogy, multicultural and anti-racist teaching, knowledgeable and skilled teachers, collaborative planning and professional development, family and community connections, and school governance/democratic decision-making.

The Muir School’s redesign team is in the process of developing its school design and action plans. The John Muir School chooses to address the educational well being of kindergarten through twelfth grade students in a small, family style environment. A humanistic theme guides students to become world citizens. The school’s overarching goal is to increase student achievement, with personalization of the educational program key to achieving this goal. Muir uses flexible scheduling options and structures such as interdisciplinary teams to provide a learning environment where all students can succeed. Grade-specific activities are geared to promote responsible citizenship and social action, complement a rigorous, standards-based, college preparatory curriculum. Muir’s instructional practice includes multi-grade, thematic project-based learning. The school utilizes the talents of its older students to support learning of younger students through tutoring, coaching, and modeling. Muir recently added a 4th through 6th grade instrumental music program and plans to expand its offerings to integrate “the arts” across all grade levels. The school culture is further enhanced through the support of partners,
businesses, and international connections with whom teachers and administrators collaborate to provide opportunities for students to explore interests, career/post secondary explorations and internships.

Facilities Implications

A modular library, two science labs, and additional portables would need to be placed at either site to accommodate John Muir’s students and staff. Placement of the portables might be difficult at the Decatur site. There are two subtenants at the Decatur site with facilities on the campus – La Jolla Preschool and Montessori School of La Jolla – whose leases do not expire until June 30, 2007. Their facilities on the campus constrain the placement alternatives for additional portables. Andersen has greater capacity in buildings and grounds than Decatur and a relatively flat campus that could more easily accommodate any future expansion.

Both the Andersen and the Decatur sites require facilities upgrades to house district students and staff. The required upgrades at both sites would be done in multiple phases.

At both Andersen and Decatur, the initial phase includes a modular library building, two modular science labs, fire/life safety upgrades, data wiring with network equipment, minor electrical/lighting, painting, plumbing maintenance, play equipment, kitchen equipment, flooring repair and asphalt repair. Phase I work would begin in Summer 2005 with the goal of moving Muir into the facilities for the start of school in September 2005. Minor Phase I work would continue through Fall 2005. The modular science labs and library would be placed on site in Spring 2006.

Concurrent with the development of the Phase I design and construction documents, additional maintenance, repair and technology improvements will be identified for subsequent phases of construction. Additional phases must be accomplished so the entire project can be approved through DSA.

Budget Implication

Phase I described above will require approximately $2.5 million at Andersen for the facilities portion of the initial phase of the project and $2.2-$2.4 million at Decatur. These funds will be provided from Proposition MM, state facilities improvement fund and other capital facilities funds.
Public Support and Engagement Implications

District staff met with the parents and staff of John Muir School on January 12 and February 9, 2005, to discuss a potential move from their current site to either the Andersen site or the Decatur site. In both meetings, the overwhelming support was for the move to Andersen because of its location in Clairemont and closeness to Mesa College.

On February 28, district staff met with the Andersen community residents. Their input could not be included in this report because the meeting took place after this report was submitted. Staff is available to brief the board on the input that was received. District staff has not had the opportunity to meet with the Decatur community, so it is not aware of the potential move of John Muir School to Decatur.

Policy Implications

The recommendations are consistent with Board Policy E-2050 that states the district’s vision is “to provide educational facilities that are safe, healthy, aesthetically pleasing, and support optimal teaching and learning for all students and welcome parents and community.” The recommendations are also consistent with Board Policy E-2400 regarding the maintenance and modernization of district facilities.

Recommendation

The superintendent recommends that the Board of Education:

1. Approve the relocation of the John Muir School for Humanistic Studies to the former Andersen Elementary School site.

2. Allocate $2,500,000 from existing Proposition MM funds, state facilities funds and capital facilities funds for facilities upgrades and repairs in Phase I to the former Andersen Elementary School site.