Role of Modeling in Making Restructuring Decisions

People have asked the District and School Board questions about the process involved in now considering Pine Tree Elementary for closure as part of the School District's restructuring.

Our modeling tool provided the District with a comparative analysis of the impact of closing one school building versus another. In this case it evaluated what would happen if we closed Webber Elementary or Pine Tree Elementary, per the District's original recommendations presented to the School Board earlier this fall. We also worked under the assumption the district would return exclusively to neighborhood schools, using the Carpenter, Paint Creek, Blanche Sims, Orion Oaks and Stadium buildings.

We started by evaluating the capacity of each of the seven elementary buildings, looking specifically at the number of general education classrooms available. (This did not include rooms that house art, music, computer labs and similar activities, or those used for students with special needs.) We used a class size maximum of 27 students per room, to determine the maximum number of students we could place in each of the buildings. This then becomes the maximum number to be used when looking at drawing the attendance boundaries for the buildings.

The next step then is to determine the potential attendance boundaries of the buildings. This is done based on proximity to the building, major transportation arteries within the district, as well as other nuances of transportation that will allow us to run an efficient transportation system. The boundaries are drawn and redrawn until we get to the point where each of the buildings is under the maximum number of students as determined in the previous step. This part of the process is the most time consuming and will require several attempts in order to ensure we are balancing the students and being as efficient as possible with our transportation services.

Once the boundaries are drawn and the students within the boundary are determined we then move to determine grade specific needs. The student population is further broken down by grade level and these numbers are used to determine the number of sections (classes) by grade level that are needed for that building. The district operates using the following desired class size numbers; 23 students for kindergarten, 25 for grades 1 and 2, and 26 for grades 3 thru 5.

Our careful analysis of the modeling determined that it would be most practical and efficient to close Pine Tree. We will again be reviewing this information at the November 16 Board meeting which will be open to the public and televised.