

Ogden-Jenner Joint Task Force Executive Summary

The Jenner-Ogden Joint Task Force was formed to explore options to address over-crowding at Ogden International School and under-enrollment at Jenner Academy of the Arts. The 14 members of the task force (7 from Ogden and 7 from Jenner) were comprised of teachers, community members and parents. They were selected to represent the diverse voices of the many stakeholders that would be affected by any consolidation plan. The primary directive of the task force was to develop a plan that:

- 1) Addresses the under-enrollment issue of Jenner and the overcrowding issue at Ogden in a way that frees up the most space for the longest amount of time;
- 2) Proposes a school configuration that is equitable and is the least disruptive for Jenner and Ogden parents and families;
- 3) Employs the most cost-effective mechanism that protects the integrity of the academic and social emotional experience for children

The Task Force was committed to operating with transparency and equity in process - recognizing that the possible consolidation represents a possible partnership between peer schools and peer communities. The Task Force recognized that both schools should have equal voice in deciding whether a consolidation was the right step for each. Low enrollment has negatively impacted the quality of academic options students enjoy at Jenner. Students do not receive second language instruction. Until 2015, middle grade students were not receiving science instruction from a certified science educator. The low enrollment for the 2015 school year meant a loss of \$310,000 for the school – the equivalent of 3 teachers.

Meanwhile, at Ogden, overcrowding threatens to erode the quality of educational experience for teachers and students. Over the past four years both science labs have been lost, as one became an art room, since the art room was converted into two primary classrooms. This year the Spanish room was converted into a homeroom, and the music room would have been if Ogden did not create a split grade level classroom. The library storage room and a book room have been converted to learning spaces for special education classrooms.

Given the current circumstances at both schools and the Task Force's mandate to determine whether consolidation was feasible, and what consolidation would look like in operation, the Task Force voted by a vote of 10 to 2 (with 2 votes still outstanding) to consolidate schools for the 2016 school year.

The Task Force selected a configuration of grades K – 3 at Ogden East, grades 4-8 (with pre-K) at Jenner, and grades 9 – 12 at Ogden West. This configuration was selected because it frees up the most amount of space at each school for the longest amount of time – freeing up about 100 additional seats at each school for a period of about 5 years. In addition, Jenner is the only existing school in the vicinity with a footprint that allows for the construction of an annex that could create even more seats when necessary.

The consolidation would not incur significant additional costs to either school and administratively, there exists an opportunity for a co-principal model which would allow the schools to retain existing leadership. Funding and training exists to ensure Jenner faculty are trained in the IB curriculum and the consolidation of schools would create access to Title 1 federal funds, which mean more financial resources to add to the school's budget.

It must be noted that many alternatives to consolidation were considered. For example, the task force assessed the viability of turning the Ogden parking garage into classroom space, building vertically, or constructing a new elementary school. All three of these options were cost prohibitive and CPS is unable to commit resources due to budget constraints. Changing the attendance boundaries also proved unworkable due to already overcrowded neighboring schools whose attendance boundaries border both Ogden and Jenner. Delaying consolidation also proved to be an unfavorable decision. For Jenner, it means the possibility of deep funding cuts for the 2016 school year. This would cause further cuts to staff and programs such as music and art. If Jenner aggressively recruits students from around the city and is able to increase enrollment in 2016 (it experienced a 10% increase in enrollment for 2015) this could mean a consolidation is no longer an option for Ogden.

The options on the table were to consolidate both schools or not consolidate. If no consolidation occurs (Plan B) both schools would go back to their respective drawing board – meaning that Jenner will have to aggressively recruit students from around the city in an effort to avoid further cuts to staff and programs while Ogden would prepare to lose additional classroom space and prepare for increased class sizes.

The proposal by this task force to move forward with consolidation for the 2016 school year reflects the desire to be proactive, yet thoughtful about how to address the issues both schools face, challenging though they may be. It also represents a willingness to work collaboratively, recognizing that a consolidation entails the merger not just of staff and facilities but also of cultures. The process recognizes the unique identities of two great schools separately, with the opportunity to join forces to create something even greater. The Joint Task Force is confident that the strengths of both communities and desire to work on behalf of the children served by both schools can create an opportunity for a productive consolidation process that will benefit all stakeholders.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amara Enyia', written in a cursive style.

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