



November 10, 2024

Dr. Brent Jones
Superintendent, Seattle Public Schools
Seattle Public Schools Central Administration Office
2445 3rd Ave S, Seattle WA 98134

Subject: Concerns Regarding the North Beach/Viewlands Merger and Adherence to SPS Guiding Principles

Dear Dr. Jones,

We, the presidents of the North Beach PTA and Viewlands PTA, write to express our deep concerns about the proposed consolidation of North Beach and Viewlands Elementary Schools. The current plan not only appears rushed and inadequately planned but also contradicts the Guiding Principles you laid out at the October 9th Board meeting, specifically around minimizing disruption, transparency, and providing assurances to the community. We urge SPS to address the following issues before moving forward with this merger.

Historical Projections Miss the Mark

Enrollment projections for the merged Viewlands/North Beach school were inaccurate for 24-25. Both schools exceeded their kindergarten enrollment projections this year—North Beach enrolled 66 students against a projected 50, and Viewlands enrolled 49 against a projected 34. Continuing these trends, the merged school will likely exceed the 650-student capacity in the 25-26 school year. Furthermore, the *Seattle Public Schools 2024–25 to 2033–34 Enrollment Forecasts* report projected 232 students¹ at Viewlands for 2024-2025, while current enrollment is actually 265. Historical projection discrepancies raise concerns about overcrowding.

Overcrowding in a Rapidly Growing Area: Short-Sighted Planning for Consolidation

Northwest Seattle is one of the city's fastest-growing areas, with new housing developments and planning for a consolidated Viewlands/North Beach school to operate at nearly 100% capacity, while neighboring schools like Loyal Heights and Whittier remain at only 81% and 72% capacity, is short-sighted. This overcrowding undermines the district's goal of "Every Child Known" displayed prominently at Viewlands, as overcrowded schools diminish the quality of individual attention that students need for success. Additionally, overcrowding fails to meet the district's own Criteria for Consolidation by causing significant disruption through inevitable boundary changes, negatively impacting the learning environments for all students in the building.

¹ [Seattle Public Schools 2024–25 to 2033–34 Enrollment Forecasts](#), Project No. F2333.01.003, March 28, 2024, Page 33.

Publish Plans for Phased Boundary Changes that Keep Cohorts Together

To prevent repeated disruptions for the same communities, SPS must publish plans for boundary changes before voting for consolidations. Though Dr. Cambell has stated students will not face multiple relocations, overcrowding-driven boundary changes will still impact student cohorts by re-zoning friends and community members (see transcript [01:18:58](#)). Families need reliable, long-term attendance area maps that keep cohorts together from elementary school through both middle and high schools, supporting stability and fostering a sense of community and place that children in a major city need. Additionally, it's essential to understand the plans for the Cascadia zone as HCC phases out of that building. By adopting a 15-minute neighborhood approach to zoning, SPS can encourage children to walk or bike to school, more evenly distribute enrollment across existing capacity, and avoid the instability of frequent rezoning.

Misleading Claims About Better-Resourced Schools

The proposed staffing model for the merged school contradicts assurances that closures would lead to well-resourced schools. For nearly 650 students, the merged school would only have half a nurse, one counselor or social worker, and half a librarian. A half time librarian for this many students results in individual students attending library every 2-3 weeks rather than weekly per current practice. Such inadequate staffing does not align with the promise of enhanced resources but rather risks compromising student support and wellness.

Loss of Schoolwide Title I Qualification and Its Impact on Programs

With the merger of Viewlands and North Beach Elementary, the consolidated school's free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) rate would average 24.5%, falling short of the 40% threshold required for schoolwide Title I funding. Viewlands Elementary currently benefits from schoolwide Title I and LAP (Learning Assistance Program) funding due to its 46% FRPL rate, allowing it to use funds for programs that benefit all students, including academic intervention, multilingual support, and enrichment activities. Post-merger, the school would lose this designation, instead qualifying only for targeted Title I assistance, which limits the use of funds to specific students identified by the district. As a result, access to resources would be restricted, potentially impacting programs such as reading and math interventions, multilingual support services, enrichment activities, and universal free lunch.

Mischaracterization of “Merging” School Communities

Contrary to the principle of “merging full communities” this consolidation does not preserve the North Beach community. North Beach teachers will be required to go into the displacement pool, some special education programs will not transfer to Viewlands, and North Beach's preschool program will move to Loyal Heights. These changes disrupt the current community structure rather than merging it.

Viewlands Kindergarten and Preschool Capacity Concerns

Viewlands lacks the capacity to accommodate the projected kindergarten enrollment, along with the Head Start and Development Preschool programs. Viewlands has 6 kindergarten classrooms designed for 20 students each, complete with integrated bathrooms. However, only 5 of these rooms are currently available for kindergarten, as the Head Start Preschool Program occupies one of these classrooms. The consolidation plan requires all 6 kindergarten rooms for the projected kindergarten enrollment of 115 students, creating a space shortage.

Additionally, the proposed onsite Developmental Preschool increased the need to a total of 8 Kindergarten/Preschool classrooms. The SPS Preschool Program, Creative Kids, is not included in this count, as it operates in dedicated classrooms with a separate entrance.

Limited Capacity at Viewlands for Special Education Expansion

Viewlands lacks the space to accommodate the special education services required for the combined student body. During a parent meeting on October 30 at Viewlands, Dr. Marni Campbell acknowledged that additional capacity would need to be built to accommodate all special education programs, contradicting the principle that consolidations should occur only in fully prepared facilities.

Transportation and Drop-Off Capacity at Viewlands

Dr. Campbell assured families that Viewlands Elementary was designed to accommodate up to 650 students, stating, "*The building was designed for 650. That was taken into consideration in the design where we went through a number of sort of departure hearings to make sure that we could accommodate that.*" She further implied that transportation costs would not increase with the additional students from North Beach, as more students per bus would supposedly make routes more efficient. However, the only available transportation study from October 2019² assessed traffic based on Viewlands' current attendance area, not the expanded zone that would include 350 North Beach students—who, due to geographic constraints like the large ravine and hills surrounding Carkeek Park, would rely heavily on buses. (See transcript: [Shannon Yuen, 56:36](#))

Minimal Savings, Major Disruption: School Closures Won't Solve the Budget Deficit

Dr. Campbell estimated that closing North Beach would save SPS \$1.5M annually in operating expenses (see [transcript 55:53](#)). However, based on previously released SPS data, the actual savings would likely be closer to \$1.0 million—and that's before accounting for ongoing maintenance and security costs for the closed North Beach site, as well as one-time closure expenses. School districts frequently find that school closures yield less savings than anticipated. Even the projected \$1.5 million savings per school is negligible against the nearly \$100 million budget deficit. Meanwhile, the disruption to the community is profound, with lasting negative impacts on our children.

Supporting Documentation

To facilitate a transparent review, we have included the following links for reference:

- [School Closures and Consolidations – Published Analysis for Review](#)
- [School Closures and Consolidations – Additional Analysis](#)
- [AI-generated transcript of the Zoom call with Marni Campbell, North Beach, and Viewlands people on Wednesday 10/30](#)
- [Recording of the same Zoom call](#) (Passcode: *@gRGLX3)

² Seattle Public Schools, *Viewlands Elementary School SEPA Environmental Checklist*, October 2019, pp. 95-96. Available at: https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Viewlands-ES-FINAL-SEPA-checklist_for-web.pdf.

We hope SPS leadership will take these concerns seriously and reevaluate the merger plan for North Beach and Viewlands Elementary Schools. Our communities deserve a thoughtful, transparent, and well-planned approach that genuinely considers the best interests of our students.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Markovitz (Nov 11, 2024 06:47 PST)

Jennifer Markovitz, President
North Beach Elementary PTA



Danae Kaemingk (Nov 10, 2024 12:39 PST)

Danae Kaemingk, Co-President
Viewlands Elementary PTA



Mike Grigg (Nov 10, 2024 22:05 PST)

Mike Grigg, Co-President
Viewlands Elementary PTA

CC: President Liza Rankin, Director Sarah Clark, Director Evan Briggs, Director Joe Mizrahi, Vice President Michelle Sarju, Director Gina Topp, Director Brandon K. Hersey, Greg Narver, General Counsel, John Cerqui, Deputy General Counsel