

**RECOMMENDATION ON ELEMENTARY RECONFIGURATION  
REMARKS TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
NOVEMBER 27, 2006**

Members of the Board of Education, Winton Woods residents, and staff:

Tonight I am recommending one of the three reconfiguration options. Initially, I indicated to the community that I would make my recommendation to the Board of Education in early December; however, after reviewing an enormous amount of data and community input, I am ready to make that announcement tonight.

Some people have said that they thought the option I would recommend was already a “done deal”. Anyone who has worked with me during these past few months knows that is not the case. It was only in November that I began to see clearly what my recommendation would be. While the recommendation was always mine to make, and mine alone, I wanted to include as many viewpoints as possible so that I would make the best-informed decision for the students of Winton Woods.

The treasurer and I have conducted 19 focus groups and two community presentations. Members of the Board and I have listened to residents at three Saturday coffees and a Greenhills-Forest Park Kiwanis Club meeting. A small group of parents, staff, and Board members have toured reconfigured schools in four districts: Springboro, Finneytown, Fairfield, and Loveland. I have also discussed the issue and received feedback from the Winton Woods HS Student Advisory Council.

The Cost Reduction Committee, consisting of Tom Hausterman, Tom Golinar, Paul Bahner, Patty D’Arcy, and Steve Mathews, has provided data requested by various individuals regarding the three options and various alternatives. We established a special e-mail address and web site link for reconfiguration questions and comments. I have supplied the members of the Board of Education and my administrative team with copies of the literature on reconfiguration, reports of other reconfigured districts, comments and questions from the community, and data that was shared with them.

I want to thank the many parents, teachers, students, and community members who provided feedback, suggestions, questions, and commentary. It has made all of us more reflective and I believe it has improved our operations, as a result. After reviewing all of these data with my senior staff, including principals, I am prepared to make the recommendation for the first time tonight, allowing the board time to reflect before they vote in December.

First, I will recommend that the Cameron Park Building be closed as a school for the 2007-2008 school year. In the coming months, the Business Office will

help me determine whether I recommend to you that the property be placed on the market for sale or be placed for rent for the next school year. I want to assure the Cameron Park community that we will do whatever is in the best interest of your neighborhood with respect to that facility.

Second, I will recommend Option 3. Before giving my reasons for selecting this option, I would like to provide you with a rationale for not selecting the other two options.

- Option 1: 4 grade-level schools, with (1) PK-K school, (1) 1-2 school, (1) 3-4 school and (1) 5-6 school

While Option 1 would provide the greatest savings and academic focus, it would require four changes of buildings during the elementary years. The parents that I heard from expressed concern for the logistical difficulties associated with this option. If the district already had an elementary complex where students could remain at one site for their elementary years, this concern would not have existed and Option 1 would have been my first choice. This is still possible if the district passes a bond issue in the future, but at this time, the current buildings do not allow for an elementary complex.

I also heard from staff and community members that Option 1 would not provide the best use of the Lakeside and Beechwoods buildings. Some were concerned that the Lakeside building would be underutilized and some were not happy about the addition of modulars on the Beechwoods property.

For these reasons, I am not recommending Option 1.

- Option 2: (3) K-4 schools and (1) 5-6 school

Through repeated communications with some parents and community members, it became apparent to me that there is an erroneous perception that some of our elementary schools are not as good as others. This perception is not grounded in fact. I am regularly in elementary buildings and I know that we have excellent staff, students, and parents in each building. Additionally, in examining reassignment boundaries, it would be difficult to draw logical boundaries in order to establish three equally diverse schools.

My recommendation is an opportunity to eradicate any perception that some students are not receiving the same quality of education from this district. For these reasons, I am not recommending Option 2.

Option 3: (2)K-2 schools, (1) 3-4 school, and (1) 5-6 school.

I am recommending Option 3 because it:

- Reduces the number of elementary building changes that would occur in Option 1
- Optimizes the space utilization in the four remaining buildings
- Provides for more logical reassignment boundaries than Option 2 and eradicates the perception that some schools are not as good as others
- Allows for grade-level benefits at grades 3-6.

Option 3 would consist of the following buildings, school names, and principals.

- a K-2 school at the Lakeside building, renamed as Winton Woods Primary School - South Campus with Mrs. Linda Giuliano as principal.
- a PK-2 school at the Beechwoods building, renamed as Winton Woods Primary School – North Campus, with Dr. Claire Crook, currently the Cameron Park principal, as principal of that new school. Dr. Ernie Spalding is retiring at the end of this school year and the Cameron Park building is closing. The Pre-K program will remain at the Beechwoods building. Staff at the North and South campuses will work together to provide similar programs and opportunities for all K-2 students in the district, so that if the community in the future votes to build a new elementary complex, these schools would easily come together to form one school.
- a 3-4 school at Winton Forest building, renamed Winton Woods Elementary School, with Mr. Steven Denny as principal.
- a 5-6 school at the Waycross building, renamed Winton Woods Intermediate School, with Mrs. Amy Byrne as principal, and an assistant principal to be named in the near future.

With this reconfiguration, we have an opportunity to build community - a community of learners defined by the Winton Woods City School District. We will optimize our ability to socially nurture and academically challenge all students within the district's boundaries. We will all be Winton Woods Warriors. We will come together as professionals, parents and community members for our students, regardless of their zip code.

In our geographic area, we enjoy a strong sense of identity with our institutions, whether it is with our family, our neighborhood, our church, or our fraternal organization. None of that will change under reconfiguration. We will simply strengthen our identity as a seamless system of education from Pre-Kindergarten to grade 12. I have seen it operate that way in other districts that have reconfigured schools and it is my belief that it will operate that way in this school district, beginning with the 2007-2008 school year.

I am not asking for a vote this evening. At the December 11 meeting, I will respectfully request the Board of Education's approval of Option 3, which

includes closing the Cameron Park building and reconfiguring the four remaining elementary buildings.

After the Board votes in December, we will begin preparations for the next school year in conjunction with employee associations and parents. We have much to do – staff, parents, and community – to make this a smooth transition for our students.

I want to thank all those individuals who contributed to the dialogue and assisted me in making this recommendation. Option 3 will postpone a levy until 2008 and reduce the millage needed to operate the district. Most importantly, it will enhance the academic professionalism, focus, and performance of our schools. I am confident that Option 3 will provide greater financial stability for academic excellence throughout the Winton Woods City Schools.