

## General Comments on SWNI-area School Issues

The SWNI Schools Committee focuses on **local issues or the local impact of state and federal decisions**. The main government agency it monitors is **Portland Public Schools**. It gets involved with other agencies when there is a specific school-related issue, and then generally in collaboration with other committees, such as Transportation Committee re sidewalks on safe routes to schools, Parks Committee around use of parks for schools, conversion to parks, or Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee re schools as disaster centers or graffiti issues.

The past 6 years have been a **quiet time for schools in the SWNI area**. Since the closure of Smith School in 2005, our-area schools have been almost untouched by changes such as the controversial K-8 conversions, high school redesign and boundary changes that have affected schools elsewhere in the city. **All our schools are rated outstanding or satisfactory** on the 2011 school report card. Enrollments in early grades are up and rising. The major problem has been the **slow, steady erosion of budgets** leading to reduced library and extracurricular support and the loss of staff in most schools.

**That may change**, however, with continued **enrollment balancing** in Portland Public Schools (PPS) that could lead to boundary changes or school closures, long-range **facilities repairs and improvements** needing bond funding and construction disruptions, and the anticipated **\$27 million shortfall in next year's PPS budget**. The **Portland Plan** and the **governor's education changes** will also impact all schools in the city, including ours.

Because the committee is **centered on all students** getting a good education, and not on the specific type of school providing the education, it interacts with **private and religious schools** in the area to **build relations with the larger community**.

The Committee wants to **set its priorities from neighborhood priorities**. We have been attempting to get feedback from neighborhood associations on their main school-related issues and interests, **but with limited success**. Efforts since April have produced only 12 responses, of which 4 focused on the speed bump at Capitol Hill or other Capitol Hill issues. We are going to go to NA meetings and **ask people directly**, rather than relying on emails or phone responses.

Since neighborhood associations often have a large proportion of **neighbors who don't have children in school**, the Schools Committee makes a special effort to involve these members in education issues. They are 4 out of 5 voters, and they can see the bigger picture, not just the school their child attends, so they **are an important voice in school affairs**.

## Local school issues for SWNI Schools Committee action

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Alert status</i>	<i>Comments Schools Committee actions are highlighted</i>
School boundary adjustments		Alert for PPS boundary adjustments review in 2012-13 school year
Role of school property as open space		Smith School property use as park space
School closures		Alert for PPS boundary adjustments review in 2012-13 school year
Sale of school properties		Smith School property at risk?
School events and partnership opportunities with neighborhood associations		NA meetings at schools, need OK for free use otherwise. Publicize school events to NAs, encourage volunteering in schools
Safe routes to schools		Chronic issue. Made sure that all 6 recommended sidewalk projects in SWNI area were safe routes to schools
Funding impact on SWNI-area schools		\$27 million cut in Portland Public School next year? Support our schools with local volunteers. State of Our Schools survey of principals is underway.
City planning that affects schools, e.g. Portland Plan		Portland Plan currently under review – sent commentary to city, continue to press for education support in plan.
Portland Public Schools policy and regulation, e.g. facilities plan, high school redesign		Long-range facilities plan underway. Testify, write letters, attend hearings and school visits to ensure SWNI-area schools are heard. 2011 School bond and levy forum for SW area neighbors.
Increasing awareness and involvement of neighbors who don't have children in school		Appearances at NAs, civic organizations. Publicize school needs to neighbors. Solicit feedback at NA meetings and in newsletter
Conflicts between school and neighborhood interests, e.g. traffic, vandalism, noise		e.g. Speed bump at Capitol Hill school, Wilson HS students at bus stop. Monitored, made sure mediation was taking place.
Building city govt awareness of and involvement in SW Portland's unique issues,		e.g. lack of safe streets and sidewalks, perception that all are rich, white and well-educated when we have ethnic diversity and areas of poverty which become isolated by contrast with more privileged majority and lack of social services that are allocated geographically. Defended SUN funding. Publicized SWNI issues in paper, letters to officials, all public testimony and comment.
Elections that affect schools		Sponsored forums on ballot measures, candidates.

## Larger issues that SWNI can address locally, but are generally beyond our scope

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Achievement/opportunity gaps between races and family income levels		A tragically-persistent problem. We (a) sponsored a student/community dialogue on ethnic heritage. (b) keep statistics on enrollment by race and income level. (c) Produced a video about Robt Gray REACH program on ethnic heritages. (d) Publicize equity efforts in SW schools, e.g. Jackson equity initiative.
State education policy and regulations		Governor's education plan. Funding. Need more citizen input, local control. Publicize need for public comment, letters, testify in Salem
Federal education policy and regulations		No Child Left Behind – State waiver requested, still in process.