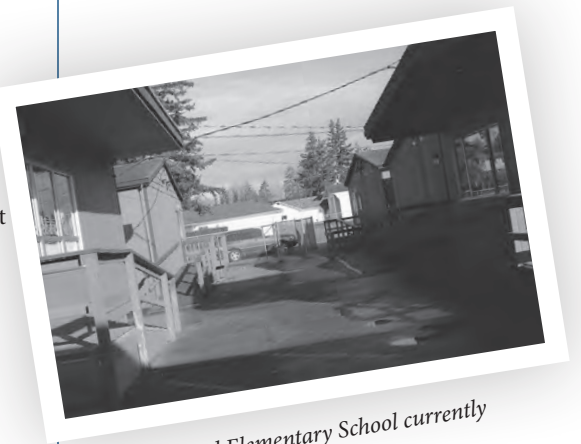


# Facilities Springboard Proposal and Future Visioning Process

The Bellingham School District has a few urgent facilities needs that require the superintendent to make decisions this school year. The district also has a need for longer-term facilities planning with our community.

## Urgent facilities needs include:

- 1 Rebuilding Whatcom Middle School on Halleck Street as quickly as possible;
- 2 Opening Cordata Elementary School in fall 2011 to relieve overcrowding at Sunnyland and Alderwood elementary schools and provide improved, more modern learning spaces for many children living in north Bellingham;
- 3 Deciding if and when to retrofit the District Office building on Dupont Street for improved earthquake safety. This is the last remaining seismic project from the bond measure approved by voters in 2006;
- 4 Moving Options High School and the Community Transitions program out of portable classrooms and the Alderwood preschool into better learning spaces until a more permanent solution can be determined through long-term facilities planning;
- 5 Investigating the possibility of using existing space for innovative programs the district wants to begin as soon as possible (perhaps by fall 2011): homeschool partnership program, online learning and year-round credit retrieval for high school students to recover credits to improve on-time graduation; and
- 6 Planning how to address future facilities needs, including consideration of those previously identified by the Capital Facilities Project Committee in 2006. A study in 2007 concluded that the schools with the most urgent facility needs were Lowell, Larrabee and Birchwood elementary schools, Whatcom Middle School and Sehome High School. Birchwood Elementary School and Sehome High School are now the identified schools with the most urgent facility needs since improvements have been made or are in the process of being made at Lowell, Larrabee and Whatcom.



*Birchwood Elementary School currently has six portable classrooms.*



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We will use the following facilities proposal starting in November 2010 as a springboard for sharing ideas and gathering input.

# Springboard Proposal:



*Cordata Elementary School construction will be complete this summer.*

- Open Cordata Elementary School, which is currently being built on Aldrich Road in north Bellingham, for elementary school students in fall 2011. The new school has the capacity to accommodate up to 500 students;
- Temporarily house all Birchwood Elementary School (students and staff, along with other students) in the new Cordata Elementary School while Birchwood is being rebuilt;
- Rebuild or remodel Birchwood Elementary School as soon as possible using funds that were slated for District Office seismic improvements and state construction assistance funds that would be available for the project;
- Postpone full implementation of the northside school attendance areas, including Cordata, as adopted in 2006: <http://bellingshamschools.org/sites/default/files/district/documents/>

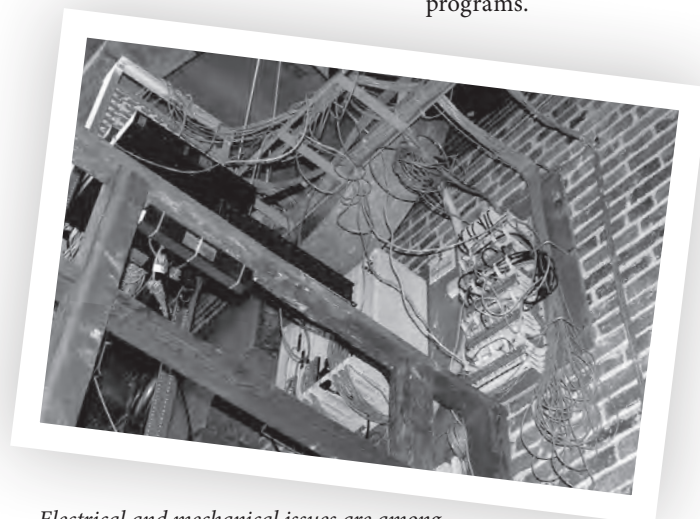
**elemwithcordata.pdf** Because this proposal temporarily includes all Birchwood students at Cordata, only portions of the previously adopted northside school attendance areas may be able to be implemented until Birchwood reopens. This will depend upon enrollment and projection data that is currently being gathered;

- Work with Alderwood, Sunnyland and Northern Heights' principals and elementary school communities to determine which portions of the boundaries adopted in 2006 to implement in the fall to provide relief from overcrowding and help balance northside enrollment. The goal would be for some current Alderwood and Sunnyland elementary school students to attend the new Cordata Elementary School beginning in fall 2011 to provide overcrowding relief for Sunnyland and Alderwood. Depending on how much of the boundaries were implemented, some current Northern Heights' students that live near Sunnyland Elementary School might attend Sunnyland in the fall;

- Investigate the possibility of including the Alderwood preschool and/or other district programs as part of the new Cordata Elementary School;
- Put District Office seismic work on hold until a Superintendent's Facilities Advisory Committee can evaluate all facility needs as part of a longer-term facilities plan and make recommendations to the superintendent. Reconfigure current District Office work areas to align with organizational restructuring by relocating some departments/offices within the building and possibly to schools;
- Explore moving Options High School and Community Transitions from portable classrooms to existing school facilities, possibly for fall 2011 while working on a more permanent solution; and
- Explore existing space options for homeschool partnership program, online learning, year-round credit retrieval needs and early childhood programs, should the district decide to implement these programs.

## DEFINITION

A springboard proposal is an idea that provides a platform to gather input, which can further shape the concept prior to decision-making. By sharing an idea in its early conceptual stages, we will not have all the answers to questions that emerge. However, this allows us to transparently share our thinking while gathering input and data before making a final and well thought-out decision.



*Electrical and mechanical issues are among many facility improvements needed at Birchwood.*

# Background

Birchwood Elementary School is currently tied with Sehome High School as the lowest-rated facilities in the district, according to a study conducted in 2007.

Enrollment at Birchwood declined this fall to approximately 250 students (300 last fall; 317 in 2008; 315 in 2007; 303 in 2006). Principal Dave Adams will work with staff, parents and neighborhood leaders to gather staff and parent input about the idea of moving all Birchwood students and staff to the new Cordata Elementary School for the 2011-12, 2012-13 and possibly 2013-14 school years while Birchwood Elementary is rebuilt.

Enrollment at Cordata for the next few years with all of Birchwood, possibly the Alderwood preschool and/or other district programs, and part of Sunnyland and Alderwood students would depend on the extent of the implementation of the northside school boundaries that were adopted in 2006. Updated enrollment and projection data is currently in the process of being gathered. Sunnyland Elementary School is currently bursting at the seams with four portables in use and no more room on school property for additional portables. In the proposal, some current Sunnyland students would attend the new Cordata Elementary School in the fall. Alderwood Elementary School has been adding another classroom of students annually as it continues to grow. In the proposal, some Alderwood students would also attend Cordata in the fall.

The idea is that when the new Birchwood Elementary School reopens after the rebuild in fall 2013 or 2014, many Birchwood students would return to their new school, according to revised northside attendance areas. Cordata would house part of the current Sunnyland and Alderwood attendance areas as well as future growth in the Cordata area according to updated

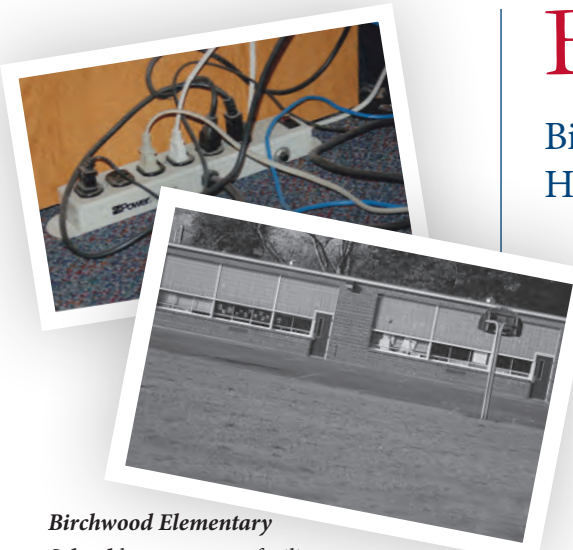
northside school attendance areas. We anticipate that once the economy recovers, and growth occurs in the north end of the district — as evidenced by recent city annexations and several large housing projects in the planning stages — Birchwood's attendance will increase and the large housing projects surrounding Cordata will begin to fill with families who have school-age children.

In the proposal, the seismic retrofit of the District Office on Dupont Street would have to be put on hold and the previously approved funds as part of the 2006 bond measure would instead be used for students by rebuilding Birchwood Elementary School.

After discussing the proposal and gathering input with the school communities involved, the Superintendent will make a decision — most likely prior to winter break — and communicate with families to allow adequate planning time.

The superintendent recognizes that the district has long-term facility issues that also need to be addressed. At the appropriate time, he will issue a call for applications for students, staff, parents and community members to serve on a Superintendent's Facilities Advisory Committee. This committee will advise the superintendent on long-term facilities issues including future plans for Sehome High School, early childhood programs, property purchase for a Sudden Valley elementary school that is currently on hold pending new development regulations, future elementary school remodels/construction, the District Office facility, and other bond, safety and facility-related issues.

**Funding for school construction, facility improvements and property purchases comes from a capital projects fund. By law, this cannot be used for day-to-day operations or to address budget shortfalls.**



**Birchwood Elementary School** has numerous facility issues that could be addressed by a rebuild. Birchwood was built in 1928 and has received additions over time.

The idea of using the new Cordata Elementary School to house Birchwood students and staff while Birchwood is being remodeled also allows Bellingham Public Schools to save the cost of opening another elementary school in these tight economic times.



# We want to make facility decisions

that are **child-centered**, make wise use of our limited resources in this economy, and allow time for long-term planning.

*Tell us what you think of the springboard proposal or share ideas that you have to improve it.*

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Please click **HERE** to submit comments and ideas online by November 30.

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