

April 9, 2010

Dear David Suppes and Nancy Bassett,

Per your request via email on March 15, 2010, we would like to submit this analysis and proposal for the Valdez School site and facility for your consideration. For the past three years, we have all been deeply involved in and committed to the exciting and community-based reforms underway at Valdez School. Our dual-language program has become well-established and continues to attract more families each year while increasing the academic achievement for all students. Valdez has become a renewed and innovative school option in northwest Denver serving families of varying ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

We are preparing to submit an application to the Board of Education for Innovative School status. We see our facility as an integral component of our school reforms and success. We need a site plan and facility that is safe, promotes healthy learning experiences, attracts families, and that serves our diverse and engaging dual-language program. Whereas the 2008 GOB includes funding for the Valdez facility, we seek to engage with you in conversations about how to utilize and add to these funds to create a more-creative and effective solution to the many challenges we face daily in our current facility. The following pages articulate three proposed options for our facility:

1. Replace the current facility with an ECE-5 building for Valdez OR with an ECE-8 building for Valdez and West Denver Prep.
2. Renovate the current facility with consideration to significantly improving the learning and working experiences of students and staff.
3. Consider relocating Valdez to another location, such as Smedley.

We recognize that many DPS facilities require extensive attention and we believe that this is the right time to prioritize and make significant and sustainable changes to the Valdez site and facility. As per the North HS/Valdez Master Plan, the Valdez facility should be improved along with the renovations occurring at North HS. Before spending up to six million dollars of Bond funds to patch the systems at Valdez, we believe it is the right time to re-evaluate the needs of Valdez. We should build on the momentum of the new Valdez program, pending Innovation status and parent and community engagement and improve the facility.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to discussing these opportunities further.

Sincerely,

Peter Sherman, Principal

Valdez Facility Analysis Work Group Parent Members:

Matt Davis, Architect, Fran Carson, PTO Chair, Jill Darlington, Jeff Fisher, Germain Gomez, Will Johnson, Sarah Shay, Kristen Speth, Robert Speth, Dawn Voorhee



## Valdez School Site and Facility Analysis and Needs Report

April 2010

This document will outline three options regarding the Valdez site and facility which will support families of northwest Denver, the surrounding community, and most importantly, the Valdez students.

### History and Scope of Valdez Reforms

Beginning in the summer of 2007, we embarked on several significant reform efforts aimed at turning around the academic performance of all Valdez students. The major reform efforts include:

Reform Effort	Results to Date
Increase and sustain enrollment.	<i>We have been successful in recruiting many families from NW Denver and from outside of the District. We have also reinvigorated our neighborhood families. The word on the street about Valdez is very positive!</i>
Increase student achievement.	<i>Reading comprehension and oral language data from students in our dual-language classrooms have shown strong achievement. 65%-85% of K-2 students are scoring at or above grade level in reading comprehension. This is dramatically higher than past CSAP scores. Our dual-language students will take the CSAP for the first time in February 2011.</i>
Develop, implement, and grow a dual-language program beginning in ECE/K to expand one grade level each year.	<i>The dual-language program will grow into third grade in the 2010-2011 school year, involving approximately 270 students. The dual-language model has been a major factor in attracting families to Valdez.</i>
Develop and implement the Montessori model in ECE/K, to merge with the dual-language program.	<i>The Montessori model exists in six classrooms and has been a major factor in attracting families to Valdez.</i>
Initiate and implement a school culture based in the Positive Behavior Support model in order to create an inviting and compelling school environment with high expectations for all students.	<i>Our POWER/PODER theme permeates our day-to-day routines. Students are required to wear uniforms. We hold students to be responsible and reflective of their behavior.</i>
Initiate, implement, and grow an academic intervention system.	<i>We have developed and implemented an extensive intervention system in both literacy and mathematics</i>

	<i>for all grades.</i>
Develop and implement a middle school program.	<i>We grew a 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade program for the 08-09 and 09-10 years. We will discontinue the middle school until 2013, when we will expand it again as a dual-language program.</i>

**School Mission and Goals**

The mission of Valdez School is to serve families from diverse socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds. Valdez students will graduate with linguistic, academic, and social skills so as to be successful and contributing members of our diverse society and economy.

Our two primary goals are to **increase academic achievement** for all of our students and to **increase our enrollment**. Our enrollment target is 448 students for ECE-5 and 598 students for ECE-8 (if we expand).

**Challenges**

We face many challenges in our goals. We are currently writing an application to the Board of Education to gain “Innovation School” status. We hope that Innovation will give us increased autonomy to more-effectively implement our efforts. Our facility has emerged as a significant impediment to our success. As outlined below, we believe that the facility is no longer adequate for an educational setting. Despite their attraction to the program, many parents are disinclined to enroll their children in the current Valdez facility because of functional and aesthetic reasons.

**Valdez Facility Analysis Work Group**

In the fall of 2009, a Site and Facility Analysis Work Group was formed consisting of the Valdez School principal, staff and parents. The goal of the work group is to assess, plan for and implement a variety of projects aimed at enhancing the learning and working environment for students, staff, parents and visitors to Valdez School. We recognize that a school should be a place that fosters: intellectual thought, academic work, collaboration, creativity, communication, community, physical fitness and well-being, and more. Within the context of our significant school reform efforts and our new dual-language program (established August 2007), the Valdez School facility and site needs to promote all of these values for an increasingly-diverse community.

**OPTION 1: REPLACE CURRENT FACILITY**

In consideration of the many variables involved in school facilities, we believe the best and most cost-effective option is to entirely replace the Valdez facility. As evidenced through many reports and assessments, the Valdez facility does not operate efficiently, effectively or safely for its students, staff, and families. We see two replacement options:

1. Replace Valdez with an ECE-5 facility with the future option of adding a 150-200 student middle school facility.
2. Replace Valdez with shared campus for both Valdez and West Denver Prep charter school.

The potential to partner with the successful West Denver Prep charter school to create a joint facility and campus would allow us all to benefit programmatically, financially, and politically. It is likely that a partnership with WDP could bring in additional construction funds. With the demonstrated growing success at Valdez and the proven success at WDP, we would make a strong and innovative partnership for northwest Denver.

**Valdez Facility and Site Strengths**

We have identified several areas and projects which, if completed, would have a positive effect on the learning and working experiences of our students and staff. Identified projects include: site and playground; entrance and reception; lighting; air quality; ADA compliance; and parking and circulation. Many of these projects could be folded into the scope of the 2008 Bond projects, some cannot.

The Valdez School site provides many extraordinary benefits:

- The home for a strong and growing academic dual-language program serving a diverse range of northwest Denver families
- Adjacent location to North High School – an historic building
- Proximity to downtown Denver and many educational resources – students are able to walk to many resources
- With Emerson Street facility, location on a commercially-viable intersection – 29<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Zuni St.
- A “gateway” to northwest Denver – a highly-visible location along and near many vehicle and pedestrian routes
- Immediate proximity to Ashland Recreation Center – opportunities exist for sharing facilities and resources

Given the benefits of the Valdez School site, we believe that the District should take significant action to renovate or re-build on this site. Consideration should be given to re-allocating 2008 Bond funds away from projects that lack in enhancements to the learning environment and towards a new facility.

**Valdez Facility Assessments**

It is our belief and conclusion that the current Valdez School facility and site are inadequate in meeting the educational needs of our students. This belief is supported by two publications: the “Final School Assessment Report” and the “Statewide Financial Assistance Priority Assessment”, both published by the Colorado Department of Education in February and March of 2010, respectively. These reports provide valuable evaluative information about the Valdez facility. Data provided by this report include:

Gross Square Feet (GSF)	73,818
Year Built	1974
Construction Needs	\$11,164,538
Suitability Needs	\$5,550,200
Energy Audit Needs	\$25,836
Current Replacement Value	\$17,003,439
Total FCI	65.70%
Total CFI	98.50%
Total RSLI	10%
<u>Total School Score</u>	<u>2.60</u>

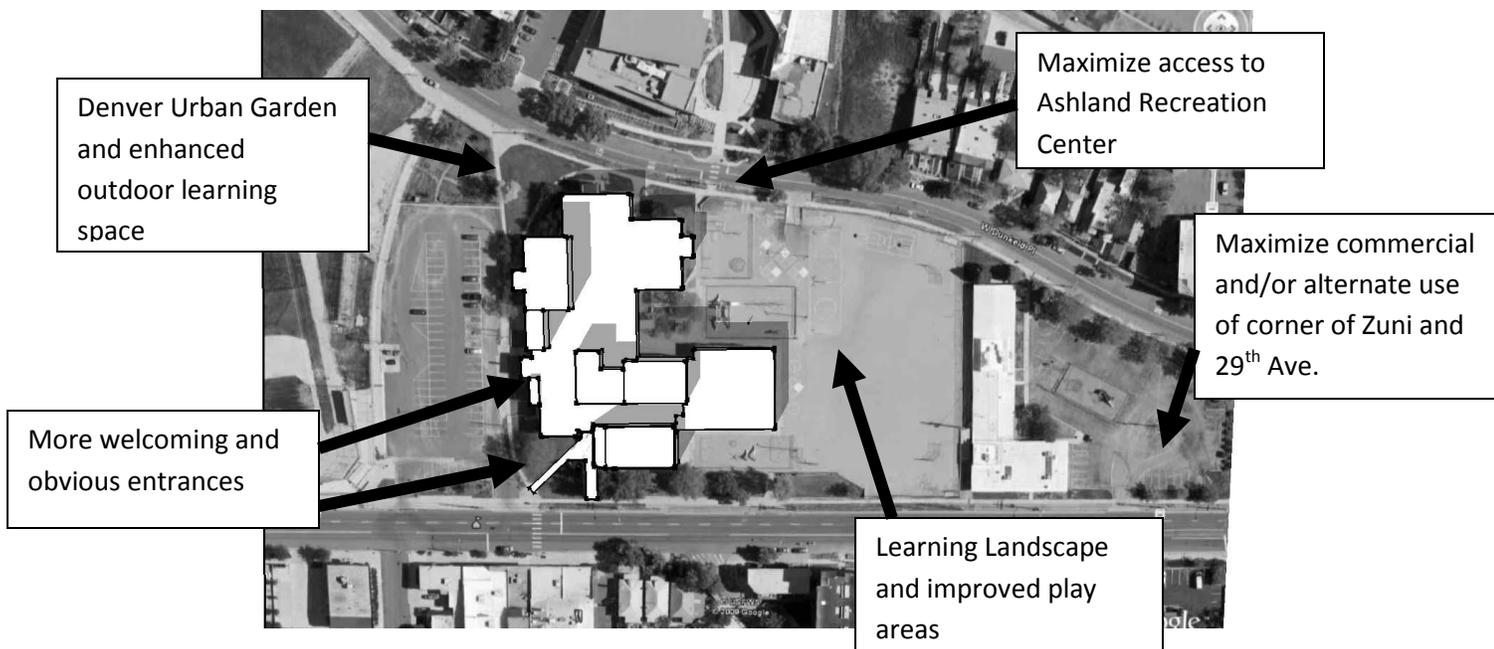
- **CFI** (Colorado Facility Index) is the ratio of condition needs plus suitability needs plus energy audit needs to Current Replacement Value (CRV).
- **FCI** (Facility Condition Index) is an industry-standard measurement of a facility's condition that is the ratio of the cost to correct a facility's deficiencies to the Current Replacement Value of the facilities. The higher the FCI, the poorer the condition of a facility. After an FCI is established for all buildings within a portfolio, a building's condition can be ranked relative to other buildings. The FCI may also represent the condition of a portfolio based on the cumulative FCIs of the portfolio's facilities.
- **RSLI** (Residual Service Life Index) represents the estimated remaining service life of a school or facility based on a 50-year design life compared to its original construction date.

For numerous years, – as far back as 1994 - Valdez teachers have complained that they become and remain ill during the months of the year when they work. Numerous teachers have complained of respiratory, vision, and dermatological issues. Approximately 75 Valdez students suffer from respiratory disorders and 25 students use inhalers. Facility managers have been directed to change air filters every three months, as recommended, however we do not believe that this adequately clears the air of particulate matter. It is believed that the proximity to Interstate 25 may contribute to the cause of respiratory ailments.

## OPTION 2: MODIFY PLANNED PROJECTS

The 2008 General Obligation Bond includes numerous projects for the Valdez facility (listed below). We believe these funds and projects can be reallocated and modified to better meet the needs of the students and staff. We have included the problems and some solutions for each area.

### SITE AND PLAYGROUND



#### Problems:

- The site is organized poorly, difficult to access and does not maximize the real estate, and access potential.
- The current playground is inadequate and unsafe.
- The entrances are hidden and not obvious

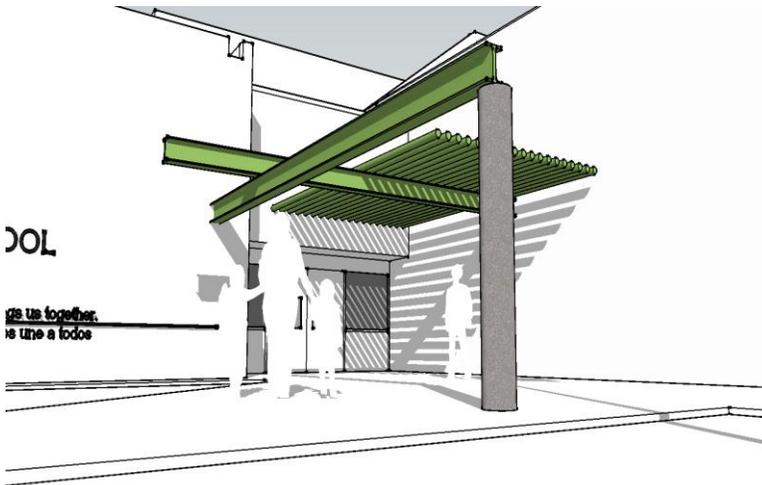
#### Solutions:

- Reconsider the master site plan to take advantage of the proximity to North HS, Ashland Recreation Center, and the Emerson St. facility.
- Consider alternative use of the east corners of Dunkeld, Zuni, and 29<sup>th</sup> Ave. in order to maximize potential of commercial and/or residential value.
- Open west side of site to become more welcoming and obvious where people are to enter the building. Existing entrances are unattractive and ambiguous.

Current west entrance



Enhanced approaches and entrances are needed to welcome families to the school.



- We are scheduled to receive a Learning Landscape in summer 2011.
- We have been successful in an application to KaBOOM! to supplement the Learning Landscape structures and design. We would like to utilize part of the GOB funds to provide some of our \$7,500 matching funds to KaBOOM!.

## Current playground



- We are working with business partner Steel Images to design and build interior and exterior wall enhancements to promote school themes.



- The master site plan should be discussed with Denver Parks and Recreation so as to maximize opportunities to partner and share facilities with Ashland Recreation Center.
- Irrigation and additional landscaping should be provided. There is currently very little shade for playgrounds.

## ENTRANCE AND RECEPTION

### Problems:

- The office is difficult to identify from the entrances and people often wander the building looking for the office. Added signage should be designed to better identify the office.
- The office reception area in the building has limited accessibility. We request that the southwest corner of the office area (with interior windows) be remodeled as an office reception area.

### Solutions:

- The office furniture and cabinetry should be redesigned, rebuilt, and modernized to increase office floor space.

Office windows to be opened up to form new reception area.



## LIGHTING AND WINDOWS

### Problems:

- There is very little natural lighting in most of the facility. Research shows that lack of natural lighting decreases productivity, health, and academic performance.
- Many of the windows are old and in need of repair or replacement. Simple replacement will not increase the quality of quantity of natural light.

### Solutions:

- Any planned projects should increase the **quantity** and **quality** of light within the facility, especially in classrooms. The initial plans for the GOB windows and lighting work indicate a simple replacement of windows and fixtures. This would not result in a significant improvement.
- If any new light fixtures are installed, we request that they improve the **quality** of light.
- It is imperative to increase the daylight accessible to students and staff. Research shows that increased opportunities for daylight in classrooms will have a positive effect on student learning and health for students and staff. Anticipated projects might include:
  - New and expanded windows in classrooms.
  - Improved lighting quality from new fixtures.
  - New light tubes or skylights in classrooms, such as these "Solatubes"



## AIR QUALITY

### Problems:

- Several air quality studies have been conducted in the past two years indicating tolerable but high levels of particulate matter in the air. Resulting recommendations were to simply regularly change air filters.
- As with many buildings of this era, return air pushes through the ceiling plenum. This system relies on filters to ensure the air output be clean.
- Since at least 1994, numerous staff members have complained of chronic respiratory problems while working in the Valdez facility.
- A large number of Valdez students suffer from asthma. The air quality of the building may be an irritant or a cause for some students.
- It is possible that the facility's proximity to Interstate 25 may reduce the quality of the air in the facility.

### Solutions:

- Any work done on HVAC systems should be targeted to **improve** air quality and **increase** fresh air circulation within the building.
- Installation of return air ducts would significantly improve the ability to control the air quality. It is recognized that this would not likely be worth the expense to do so.
- Consider new air filtering equipment, taking into consideration the proximity of Interstate 25.

## ADA COMPLIANCE

### Problems:

- The exterior entrances are not adequately accessible for persons in wheelchairs.
- Multiple classrooms in the facility are currently not accessible to wheelchairs. The library is currently only accessible from the north exterior of the building.

### Solutions:

- Both exterior entrances (south and west) should be redesigned so as to become more-accessible and more-welcoming.

- Approval and work has begun to provide a video camera and remote door lock/buzzer for the west entrance.
- In order to provide wheelchair access to all classrooms, numerous elevators would be required. This would be cost-prohibitive. The facility simply does not provide a reasonable solution for accessibility.

## **PARKING AND CIRCULATION**

### **Problems:**

- Traffic circulation for buses and drop-off/pick-up is inadequate and frequently results in traffic congestion and unsafe pedestrian circulation.

### **Solutions:**

- In March 2010, the trash dumpsters were relocated and about ten more parking spots created.
- We have consulted with the DPS transportation department; however no solutions are obvious within the current street and parking arrangement. We should consider significant new solutions to allow for bus access and/or parent drop-off/pick-up access along 29<sup>th</sup> Ave. and/or Dunkeld St.

**2008 BOND PROJECTS – (costs listed are from draft Bond expenditure sheet)**

10 – LEARNING LANDSCAPES

**Learning Landscapes** **\$1,034,000**

01 - CODES

**ADA Compliance** **\$2,941,000**

**Fire Alarm and Suppression** **\$651,000**

- Project completed summer 2009.

01 – SAFETY

**Folding Lunchroom Tables** **\$82,000**

- Lunchroom tables replaced in summer 2008.

02 – CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Absorption Chiller** **\$517,000**

**Cooling System/Cooling Tower** **\$107,000**

**Finish Restoration** **\$71,000**

**Irrigation** **\$114,000**

**Regulatory /Light Fixtures** **\$326,000**

**Windows** **\$329,000**

06 - TECHNOLOGY

**Video Security** **\$29,000**

### OPTION 3: RELOCATE VALDEZ SCHOOL

If none of the above solutions are possible, we consider the challenges to the current Valdez facility so significant that an alternate placement for the school should be considered. It is acknowledged that there exists an abundance of instructional space in the DPS facilities in northwest Denver.

Possible Solution: Relocate Valdez to the Smedley campus

**Pros:**

- The Smedley facility is aesthetically and functionally much more attractive.
- There would be adequate space for the Valdez program.

**Cons:**

- Such a move would likely be very disruptive to many current Valdez families, especially those of lower socioeconomic status who live in the immediate neighborhoods to Valdez.
- Such a move would likely negatively impact the enrollment of other DPS schools such as Beach Court and Trevista.

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