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## Crucial vote Monday night on Portland high school reorganization plan

By Kimberly Melton, The Oregonian

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The Portland School Board will take a crucial vote tonight that will help determine the direction of the district's 2-year-old high school reorganization plan.

The board is poised to adopt a 14-page resolution that endorses closing some neighborhood schools to equalize enrollment and offer a core curriculum at every remaining school while staying within the district's budget. The core program would include support courses for struggling kids, online classes, college-level courses and electives such as art, music and theater.

The district has more than 12,000 high school kids. About 11,000 students are spread among nine neighborhood campuses and magnet schools with varying enrollments, ranging from 284 at BizTech High School to 1,610 at Grant High.

The reorganization calls for neighborhood schools of at least 1,350 students -- a controversial figure because it could mean closing up to three campuses to meet that goal and take into account a projected declining enrollment.

**At issue:** Community groups have recommended that the district keep all the schools open and either change the core program or spend extra money to provide core classes at every school. School board members also have questioned the 1,350 figure, asking for more information about why that's the right number.

**What's new:** Portland Public Schools released a flurry of data to answer school board and community questions about the redesign. The data included scenarios about what would happen if the district kept every neighborhood school open. The scenarios show that the district would need an additional \$4.3 million to \$9.5 million annually to provide the full core program at all nine neighborhood campuses.

The district also sketched a scenario to keep all nine campuses open, but without the core program. Instead, each school would have about 1,000 students and provide reduced offerings. Decreasing the enrollment from 1,350 to 1,000 students would likely equate to a loss of 12 to 15 courses at each school.

One community group -- Close the Gap Not The Schools -- said the city and its families would be better served with neighborhood schools, even if they were smaller.

At the City Club of Portland on Friday, district Superintendent Carole Smith said that offering a reduced program at all nine campuses could create barriers for students and limit their opportunities.

**What's Next:** School Board members are expected to vote Monday night at their regular board meeting, which starts at 7 p.m. at the district office, 501 N. Dixon Street. Read the resolution and the data at [www.pps.k12.or.us](http://www.pps.k12.or.us).  
-- Kimberly Melton

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