

## Revised Sibley Addition Recommendation – December 22, 2008:

1. We currently have space needs in our three elementary buildings based on the significant growth of several programs for special education and English as a second language (ESL students). These programs have state and federal class size limits as low as 8 students per classroom which cannot be modified regardless of economic conditions. State compliance reviews scheduled for next fall will likely mandate moving special education students out of current inadequate spaces, displacing regular education students and further overcrowding these buildings. We also have significant space inequities between elementary buildings as far as classrooms, media centers, computer labs and restroom facilities.
2. After the last round of budget cuts, our class sizes have remained relatively large. Primary classes (K-2) average 22.6 students per classroom with class sizes ranging from 17 in kindergarten to 28 in first grade and intermediate class sizes (3-5) average 23.0 students per classroom with class sizes ranging from 17 in fifth grade to 33 in fifth grade. If further state budget cuts are made, we would need to look at all parts of the budget including classroom teachers to make those cuts. We also understand that increased class sizes would only slightly increase the number of vacant rooms since the physical ability to hold more students in many of our current elementary classrooms is limited especially when we offer two choice programs Companeros and Contemporary. For example, with only two sections of Companeros at a number of grade levels, two classes of 18 seem small but one class of 36 is extremely difficult.
3. Our best information from state and federal sources is that there will be a massive and multifaceted Stimulus Package ready for the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress to approve and the President to sign shortly after January 20<sup>th</sup>. Every source indicates that this bill will target infrastructure and schools. Quoting from the Transition website, “The Obama-Biden emergency plan would make \$25 billion immediately available in a Jobs and Growth Fund for... **fast-tracked infrastructure projects.**”
4. To be considered for stimulus funding, schools must have specific, **fully approved** renovation, repair and construction projects submitted to our House and Senate members immediately so that the plan can be taken up by Congress. We have already completed a letter and sent it to our congressional delegation for their consideration. For projects to be considered, they need to be ready to begin construction this spring or early summer.
5. In order to be “fully approved” from the federal perspective, the Northfield Public School Board needs to approve the completion of the design phase of this project. By doing so, the district can submit the project to the State for review and comment approval, engage architectural and engineering professionals to design the addition and remodeling project, complete construction documents and provide bid specifications and be prepared, once we determine how the

- construction project will be funded, to advertise and accept bids and issue lease purchase instruments to fund construction.
6. Since we had already planned to use capital reserve dollars to fund approximately 1/3 of the project cost, the design phase could be completed using existing capital funds and would not require us to execute the lease purchase instruments prior to knowing whether we were selected for federal stimulus funding. We could also wait to execute the lease purchase instruments until we have a better idea of the State's economic situation with the understanding that we need to solicit bids in early April if we intend to accept bids and get construction started in early summer.
  7. As we weigh this project, it will also be important to understand that the current economic situation is likely to positively impact the number of construction bids we receive. Projects that are currently being bid are coming in very favorably and would likely result in a lower overall cost for the district on the project.
  8. This recommendation provides the school district with the greatest flexibility to take advantage of the federal stimulus funding if available and if not gives us a few more months to gauge the economic situation without eliminating the opportunity to complete construction and remodeling for the 2010-11 school year. Failure to move forward with the design phase and the State's review and comment approval eliminates any opportunity to receive stimulus funding and means that elementary students will wait 2 ½ more years with inadequate and inequitable facilities. It also places us at risk of having to make additional regular classroom shifts that would further overcrowd buildings based on state and federal compliance mandates placing special education students in larger spaces even if it requires displacing regular education students.

**Revised Superintendent's Recommendation:**

**The administration recommends the approval of the design phase of the Sibley Addition project to include submitting the project to the State for review and comment, engaging architectural and engineering professionals to design the addition and remodeling project, and completing construction documents and project bid specifications.**