

# Board Presentation on Facilities Committee Report

May 16, 2009

Mr. Howard, Board Members, Dr. Duron:

I'm Shelley Potter, president of the San Antonio Alliance. It's a bit difficult to speak on the report from the committee prior to the report being presented. So, what I will talk about are aspects that we think should be included.

1) The plan should focus on more than bricks and mortar. Parents who decide to send their children to a charter school or a private school do not send them there because they have pretty buildings. They send their children to schools that they perceive to be environments that are conducive to learning. It's what happens inside the building that they care most about.

2) The plan needs to carefully consider the balance between the research on small schools and their positive impact on academic achievement and the economic efficiency of larger schools.

3) Any comprehensive plan to look at the district's future must include a component on how to grow student enrollment. As far as we can see to this point, the district seems to accept declining student enrollment as a given. We reject that assumption. There has been no evidence of an **aggressive** and **comprehensive** plan to increase student enrollment even though the Alliance has been advocating the need for such a plan for several years and has presented some ideas on how to "grow" our schools rather than shut them down.

We strongly believe that strengthening schools strengthens neighborhoods. And strengthening neighborhoods strengthens schools. We want to preserve our neighborhoods by preserving our neighborhood schools that are so vital to

the fabric of our community. We know SAISD cannot do this alone. We are part of a community. Increasing enrollment in the district will require a multi-faceted approach and will require reaching out to other entities – the housing authority, the city, the business community, parents, and many others – to look at the many issues and needs that impact student enrollment:

- more family housing within the district,
- a central city housing initiative, possibly including housing credits for moving into the central city,
- strategies to stabilize neighborhoods in decline,
- support for more schools to become internal charter schools
- continuing to improve our academic performance
- marketing our individual schools and their successes
- making sure we provide safe, orderly environments that are conducive to learning

We cannot allow our district to become like so many other urban, central city districts around the country – with abandoned, boarded-up schools, houses, and businesses. We can all pull together our best ideas and provide a message of hope for SAISD.