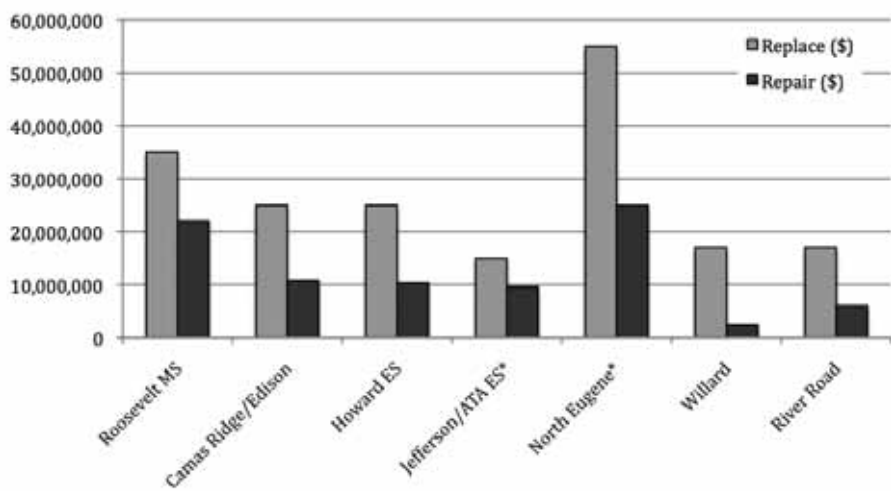
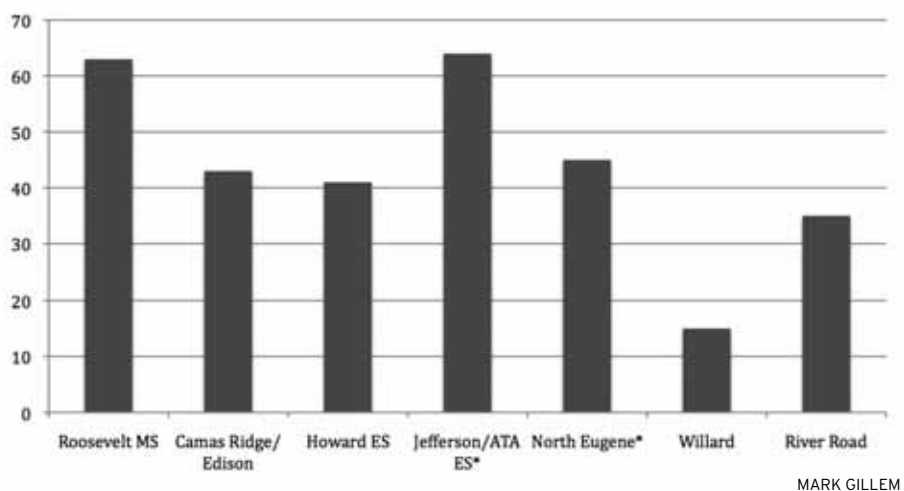


**Figure 1. 4J Facilities Plan Cost Comparison (\$)**



\* Jefferson/ATA and North Eugene include partial remodeling costs

**Figure 2. Repair as Percentage of Replacement Cost (%)**



MARK GILLEM

**Curricular Choices**

Advocates of large schools falsely claim that such schools give students more curricular choices. In an extensive study, University of Missouri scholar John Slate found, "Increasing school size, especially beyond 400 students, does not typically result in a large increase in curricular choices."

**Environmental Performance**

One final problem with large schools is that they cannot effectively operate as neighborhood schools to which most students can walk and in which the school becomes a center of community life. Bigger schools draw students from a much wider geographical area, which generally means more students are driven or bused to school. If the 4J plan proceeds and consolidates Edison at Camas Ridge, for example, roughly half of Edison children will not be able to walk or bike to school anymore. The distance will simply be too far. In this era of skyrocketing childhood obesity and climate change concerns, schools should be looking for ways to increase walking and biking rather than becoming part of the problem. Less walking and biking will mean more driving, increased carbon emissions, more asthma-inducing air pollutants and heavier children.

**A Different Path**

In 2011, Eugene voters approved Measure 20-183 to fund \$70 million in repairs to schools across the district. The funds will fix the very problems that have been identified in the 2012 report, including major system repairs and replacements,


additions and remodels and technology upgrades. Unfortunately, schools now slated for demolition or abandonment were part of the sales pitch for last year's bond. For example, Edison was to be allocated \$900,000 to upgrade its kitchen and staff offices. This is one reason why I voted for that bond measure.

So last year the district thought these types of problems could be addressed with sensible repairs. But this year, the district thinks these problems justify demolition and abandonment of eight buildings. The recommendations were clearly driven by the consultant's flawed mathematical model and the new superintendent's desire to make a quick change rather than by a well-conceived, community-based process.

In advocating for the 2011 bond, former Eugene School Board member Eric Forrester wrote, "Reflecting the times we're in, this isn't a sweeping grand plan to add spanking new buildings ... Rather, it's a responsible, prudent measure that does what every single one of us knows makes the most business sense — taking care of what we have so that future, more costly repair or replacement costs are deferred or avoided altogether." That is the kind of thinking 4J needs now. Given the mountain of evidence in support of small schools, the substantial cost premium for new buildings and the relatively minor upgrades that 4J schools actually need, the case for repair over replacement and consolidation is easy to make.

**EW**

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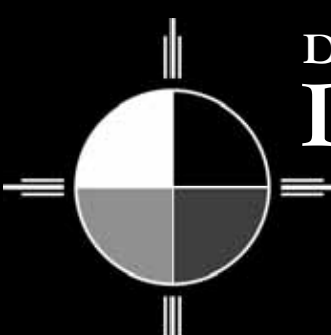
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