



Tina Byrd and Karina Alcantara confer during Boise School's Black History "College Bowl." The 7th grade girls beat the 7th grade boys. The 8th grade match ended in a tie, but a rerun ended in a win for the girls. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

School Board picks Boise

The Portland School Board voted Thursday night to place Tubman Middle School, the school established as part of the "comprehensive desegregation plan" to serve students of Eliot, Humboldt and King areas, at Boise school.

The decision came after testimony representing the major Black organizations — Black United Front, NAACP, Urban League, Albina Ministerial Alliance, and others — and the Tubman Parent Advisory Committee — all supporting the placement of the school at Eliot as had been promised two years ago.

The decision will close Boise, the only K-8 school in the community, a school that has been under threat of closure for many years. The school now offers a "basic" program designed to give the school a last opportunity to avoid closure.

Because all other schools in the community were deprived of their upper grades and turned into Early Childhood Education Centers, Boise is a focal point of community opposition to discriminatory school district practices. Boise, the school with the highest concentration of Black students, has about 470 students, 7 per cent white, 12 to 14 per cent Asian and the rest Black.

This year, also part of the new desegregation plan, a pre-kindergarten and a full day kindergarten were added, although no renovation was done. In fact, nothing has been done to the building for over 12 years except adding a coat of paint and moving the library.

Other promises that this decision breaks are that no elementary school be closed, that Boise's upper grade program be strengthened, and that staff be added.

The decision was made after several months of indecision. Herb Cawthorne moved that Eliot be selected and was joined by Steve Buel and Bill Scott.

Dean Gisvold moved that the school go to Boise. Voting yes were Gisvold, Scott, Frank McNamara, Joe Reike and Charlotte Beeman.

Buel charged the board with racist tactics in ignoring the choice of the Black community for its children. He said the problem within the Board goes much deeper than the breaking of a promise.

Cawthorne expressed disappointment that the Board would force this decision on the Black community. In every other case "community acceptance" was obtained prior to changing a school to a middle school. This action once again demonstrates a double standard, he said.

Schools, city ignore fire codes

The Portland City Fire Marshall recently brought to attention the fact that the city's fire code and state law have not been enforced with the Portland Public Schools.

The code requires that children in the second grade or younger must be housed on the school's first floor.

In February the Fire Marshall ordered that first and second graders at Boise Elementary School be moved from the second floor to meet the code. Principal Dave McCrea said the classes were upstairs when he arrived 12 years ago and he had never been made aware of the code by the administration. Also, the Fire Marshall has inspected regularly and never said anything about the code.

Last Spring the Fire Marshall ordered that Eliot School be brought into compliance. An appeal was made and the district was allowed to leave the students on the second floor after installing a sprinkler system in the stairwells, hallways and doors to classrooms.

No one seems to have a good reason why the codes were not enforced earlier. Mert Lindsay, director of

physical plants for the school district, said he has been aware of the law but that arrangement of classrooms within the building is the responsibility of the educational department, not building maintenance.

The code has been in effect for many, many years, he said, and is designed to ensure the safety of the younger children. He has not taken it upon himself to inform building principals of the law but recently did send a memo to his supervisors.

King School has 2nd graders in the second floor but has a waiver since sprinklers were installed in 1975. The other Early Childhood Education Center had sprinklers installed when renovated, he said.

Cliff Lowe of the Area I office said he is not aware of any other schools that are not in compliance except Glenco, which is in the process of moving its students. The school district has always been aware of the law and knew there were students where they should not be, but the law was not enforced. "We always had an understanding" with the Fire Department, he said.

He felt everything was all right at Boise—the traffic flow at Boise was proper and there was no threat to safety. When the order came from the Fire Marshall, it was to make the change immediately.

Area II Superintendent Don Jones said he does not know of any schools in his area that are not in compliance. The last was Alameda. Sometimes the upstairs rooms are more suitable for small children: for example, at Alameda the second floor rooms are warmer.

His only explanation of earlier code infractions is that principals sometimes make changes and that principals sometimes forget the rules.

Lynn Davis of the Fire Marshall's office also had no answers. He felt that inspectors might not be aware of the ages of children in second-story classrooms or that changes might have been made since inspection.

As for Boise and Eliot, each with several years of non-compliance, he had no answer. Bill Turner, who does the school inspections for the Fire Marshall's office, was not available for comment.

Community plans opposition

The Black United Front will have a community meeting Thursday night to determine what actions should be taken to halt the Portland School District's plan to place Tubman Middle School in the Boise School building.

Represented at a press conference to announce the meeting were the BUF, the National Business League, the CRIB, and the Jefferson High School Advisory Committee.

Every major Black organization supported placement of the school at the Eliot building, the site

adopted by the School Board two years ago. The change to the Boise site is seen as breaking a promise to the Black community.

Tubman was established as a school for Black students who had been bussed out of their community

to attend 6th, 7th and 8th grades. The school was designed with programs to draw white youngsters from throughout the district.

The meeting will be held at King Neighborhood Center, Thursday, March 11th, at 7:30 pm.

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What does the future hold?

Boise Principal Dave McCrea reports that his staff is extremely concerned about the future of Boise's students now that the School Board has voted to close Boise and use its building for Tubman Middle School.

Decisions that are still to be made include: 1) disposition of the approximately 470 children at the school now; 2) whether Boise will remain in its building next year or be moved elsewhere during renovation of the building; 3) where teachers will be assigned.

These decisions—or at least recommendations to the new superintendent, Matthew Prophet—are expected to be made on March 15th.

Dr. Fenwick had recommended a "domino effect" assignment of students—placing students in nearby Beach, Humboldt and Eliot, while children in those schools would need to be moved to make places for them. This would involve moving

about 6,000 students.

McCrea hopes the schools to which Boise's students will be moved will be limited to two besides Tubman, which will receive the approximately 125 6th, 7th and 8th grades.

A second question is whether Boise will exist as a school next year, and if so, where. Will Boise remain in its building for the full school year 1982-83 or will it move this September or during the year to allow reconstruction?

Boise began a new pre-Kindergarten and full-day Kindergarten program this year as part of the "Comprehensive Desegregation Program." Will this program stay at Boise next year, and if so, what parents will send their children to a program that will be discontinued? Or will this program be moved to Beach this year?

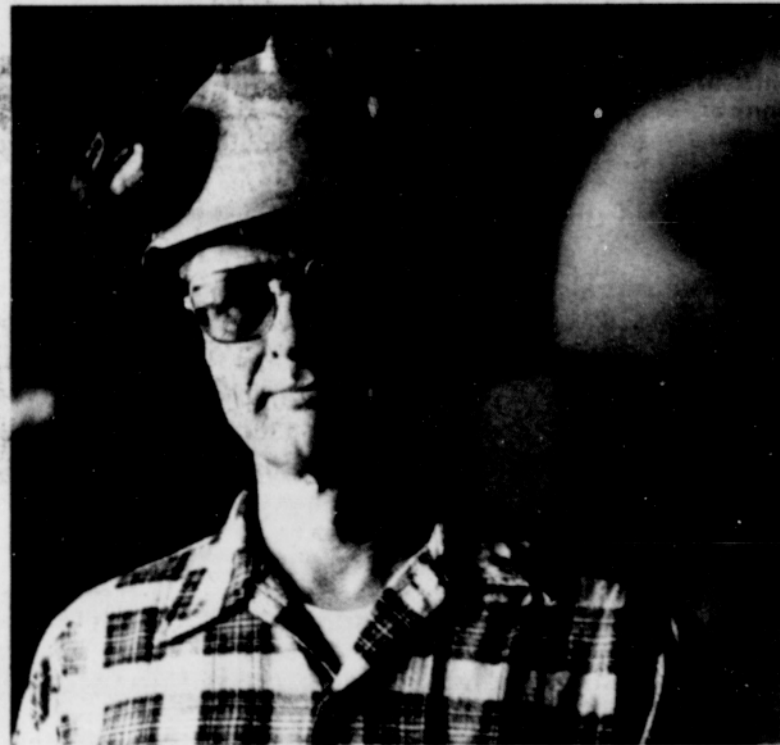
Teachers at Boise are under threat of losing their positions. If the

school is closed and the children scattered, the Boise teachers will go into the pool. They would then be eligible for selection by other principals. If the students go in large groups to schools that would then need additional teachers, they would have a contract right to follow the students.

Boise has 35 teachers, 15 of whom are probationary. These probationary teachers could lose out altogether since there is a reduction in need for teachers. Most of the probationary teachers are in special programs—English as a Second Language and Special Education, but others teach music, physical education or are classroom teachers. Boise has five Black teachers, including a Special Projects Director and four classroom teachers.

McCrea hopes the decisions on Boise's future will be made quickly so the staff and students can begin to make plans for the future.

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