

Rose City Park Elementary

Talking and Messaging Points

We will continue to update this document.

Email board members with your personal story. Feel free to include any of the talking points below.

Board of Education names and emails:

- Virginia La Forte, representing our zone <vlaforte@pps.net>
- Eddie Wang, board chair <eddiewang@pps.net>
- Other members: Christy Splitt, Michelle DePass, Stephanie Engelsman, Patte Sullivan, Rashelle Chase-Miller, and Student Representative Rose Sandell <csplitt@pps.net>, <mdepass@pps.net>, <sengelsman@pps.net>, <psullivan@pps.net>, <rchasemiller@pps.net>, <rsandell@pps.net>

Why RCP is a great investment for PPS:

- **RCP is a sustainable, model school on a positive trajectory.** We meet all the criteria for a sustainable school.
 - **RCP needs to remain the home of Vietnamese dual-language.** Closing would displace and uproot the Vietnamese families at our school.
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General Talking Points

- **Rose City Park is a model PPS neighborhood school.** Dismantling something that is working this well is antithetical to the purpose of PPS. Especially because RCP does not fit the metrics for closure due to rightsizing.
- **We are not under-enrolled.** We are in the top seven largest K-5 schools in the district. Rose City Park has 417 students and the PPS Rightsizing mission defines a “sustainable” school, as a K-5 school with around 360 students. (The VDLI is 207 and the English Scholars is 210. Of the VDLI, 69 students live within the RCP neighborhood catchment.)
- **If attendance is the goal, closure will not achieve it.** One of the stated goals of the district-wide School Continuous Improvement Plan is to raise on-time attendance for all students. Closing neighborhood schools puts further strain on families to get their kids to school, especially families that rely on walking school buses.
- **Broken promises.** The district promised RCP would receive bond-funded seismic improvements — closing would break that promise and further erode trust in PPS. Rose City Park Elementary needs major seismic upgrades to be safe in a strong earthquake. The 2025 bond requires PPS to fix the riskiest schools, and last year our school was selected by PPS to receive a full retrofit using \$20 million of that bond money. Taxpayers already voted for this bond and it is a separate pot of money from PPS’s budget.

- Further detail: Rose City Park [was prioritized and approved by the school board to top the seismic upgrade](#) list because it would be one of the two most dangerous schools in the district in an earthquake. [From The Oregonian on March 13, 2026](#): “Franco said Tuesday night that Beverly Cleary K-8 and Rose City Park K-5 are not going to be candidates for closure, though they could potentially absorb students from other schools once their complete seismic retrofits are finished. But plans for the other buildings receiving partial upgrades could shift depending on decisions about right-sizing, given that the work is not scheduled to begin until summer 2027, he said.”
 - **Our community has successfully rebuilt since its last closure.** PPS re-opened Rose City Park as a neighborhood school in 2018 and moved the Vietnamese Dual Language Immersion program here the same year. Less than a decade later, it is on the closure list. We thoughtfully brought our English Scholars and Vietnamese DLI families together as one school community. That work would be torn apart with the separation of these communities into different school buildings and neighborhoods.
 - **Funded improvements are underway.** RCP has secured \$230,000 in grant money for our schoolyard revitalization project, which will remove the paved blacktop and replace it with trees and play areas. If RCP closes, this money is lost.
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Vietnamese Community Talking Points

- **Vietnamese cultural hub.** Rose City Park is a cultural hub and cultural safe space for the Vietnamese Community. The VDLI native speakers are a population that identifies as “refugee” not “immigrant”. They have had their homes and community taken away from them before. Moving to Vestal would displace this population once again causing more trauma. Vietnamese is the 3rd most spoken language in Oregon and PPS needs to honor this population.
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- **Closing RCP creates more split schools.** The PPS Rightsizing plan aims to eliminate “split schools,” but closing RCP will create them. Removing VDLI from the RCP cohort would work against the district’s stated goal of linear progression up to middle school and high school and disrupting the academic progress of the VDLI program. VDLI students will go to Vestal, being separated from their friends once, and then those kids later on having to move back to Roseway Heights which will tear them for the second time from their potential Vestal friends..
- **Two languages, one community.** Closing RCP undermines an integrated Vietnamese-English community. A dual-language immersion program is a community asset that gives students and families a broader worldview. We have something beautiful that would be expensive and impractical to try to recreate

- **The VDLI program is entwined with our English Scholars program.** They cannot be separated. Some families have kids in both programs and would be sent to different elementary programs to continue their education. (The VDLI enrollment is 207 and the English Scholars enrollment is 210. Of the VDLI cohort, 69 students live within the RCP neighborhood catchment.) **For more than one-third of the VDLI students, their new “neighborhood school” will be 2.5 miles away. For the English Scholars students, their new “neighborhood school” will be 1.5 miles away.**
- **Risk of VDLI Program falling apart.** PPS stated that many Vietnamese families live near Vestal. This is an unproven claim. PPS has not done adequate outreach to VDLI families to understand how this change would affect them. Some Vietnamese families are unsure that they will send their students to Vestal. Some VDLI students from neighborhood families may leave the program and go to Scott. It is impractical to expect the Vestal community to easily embrace a new program at their school. Moving the VDLI program may result in declining enrollment and the end of the program. Vietnamese is the 3rd most spoken language in Oregon and our Vietnamese community deserves to have this program prioritized.
- **PPS data says 17% of Rose City Park’s students are historically underserved. The real number is 48%. The difference is the Vietnamese immigrant families PPS isn’t counting.**
 - PPS’s definition of historically underserved students leaves out Asian and Asian/White multiracial students, which means it doesn’t count students from refugee backgrounds, like the Vietnamese families at the heart of Rose City Park’s immersion program. **You can’t rightsize through an equity lens when the lens is missing half the picture.**
 - Many Vietnamese families came to Portland as war refugees. That history shapes their access to resources in ways the data erases — they weren’t arriving here with the economic stability or educational degrees that other Asian groups may have had.
 - Factoring in Asian or Asian/White multirace students and Historically Refugees and Displaced groups, RCP’s Historically Underserved percentage jumps from 16.8% to 48.4% (assuming 90% of VDLI’s Asian and Asian/White multirace students are Vietnamese, a conservative estimate). (Resources: [PPS Enrollment Summary by Race and Ethnicity, October 2025](#) and [PPS Enrollment of Underserved Groups ‘25-26](#))

Underserved Community Talking Points

- **Rose City Park provides support and stability to low-income families.**
 - While we are not a Title 1 school, we miss the mark by less than 1%. Our actual number of Title 1 eligible students (137 students) is higher than many other schools.
 - **The Combined Underserved percentage** for RCP is 53.8% (~225 students), according to most recent official data published by PPS. That figure combines

T1, underserved, and racially diverse students who would lose school walkability & bikeability. We can assume it would be higher if this percentage included Historically Refugee and Displaced groups.

- **Closing RCP does not center low-income students.** It would remove walkability and stabilizing relationships with staff members, and force their families to absorb disruption and a longer commute.
- **Rose City Park serves families at the Ellington**, a 263-unit apartment complex the City of Portland bought with voter-approved bond money in 2017 to keep low-income families from being displaced. The city invested \$47 million so these kids could stay in their neighborhood. Closing their school undoes part of that promise and destabilizes families. The school has spent years developing relationships with these families and earning their trust. This will all be lost.
 - Further detail: In 2026, the [city received federal funding](#) to further invest in the Ellington and will start construction soon to increase the total housing units to 400-450 units.
 - The distance from the Ellington Apartments to Rose City Park is currently 0.9 miles, or a 20-minute walk.
 - The distance from the Ellington to Vestal Elementary is 1.4 miles, or a 32-minute walk. The distance from the Ellington to Scott is more than 1.8 miles, or a 40-minute walk.

Information about other school closures from around the country

Snippets from [NPR Story](#) "After 10 years, Chicago school closings have left big holes, and promises unkept"

- *Chicago closed 50 elementary schools in 2013*
- *"I strongly believe that the cost of closing schools in terms of the lost trust, the challenges of dealing with the facilities, and moving children ... outweigh any benefits you get from it," Pedro Martinez says (current superintendent of Chicago Public Schools)*
- *"Schools, in many ways, are representative of a general public commitment to a community and to the longevity and health of a community, to its vitality, to its future," says Amanda Lewis, a University of Illinois Chicago professor and director of the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy. "They are clearly anchor institutions in a lot of ways."*
- *CPS has [81,000 fewer students than it had a decade ago](#), far outpacing the decline in the 10 years prior to 2013.*
- *[More than half of the buildings aren't back in use](#), most of them vacant and dilapidated.*