

FORUM FEEDBACK

Monday, February 5, 2007 at Clive Elementary

Attendance – Approximately 225

Respondents: 19

13 parents, 1 staff member, 1 parent/staff member, 4 unknown
(1 respondent self-identified as the parent of a voluntary transfer to Westridge from Crestview)

Option A2	3
Option A3	0
Option F2	3
No Change	3
No preference or uncertain	3
Combinations	
A2 or A3	5
A2 or F2	1
A2 or no change	1

- I don't see any difference between these two (A2/A3) but either one would be okay because it keeps us at Crestview.
- Not enough information to decide
- Uncertain

What revisions would you propose for any of the boundary options?

- Reduce the number of students slated for Western Hills to below 100% in F2 and A3 and move more to Crossroads Park, Jordan Creek or Westridge
- Build school west to stop the bleeding! Many would be back if closer school.
- Build more schools west
- I'd like to see transportation provided for "grandfathered" 5th and 6th graders
- Consider having Clive Elementary start earlier – 8:15 or 8:00. Working parents find the school day of 9:00 to 4:00 hard.
- A2 and A3 plans aren't neighborhood schools for me. As a parent of a Crestview F2 is more of community schools.
- If proximity was ranked #2, why would the area west of 128th go to Crestview?
- Boundaries should be geographically centered more around the schools – it makes no sense to move kids that live just a few blocks from the school to another school a distance away. E.g. the "proximity" criterion.

Additional comments or questions:

- I strongly believe that grandfathering must be allowed, preferably either grandfathering 5th and 6th plus siblings or all current students.
- I absolutely think that neighborhoods should be left intact – you shouldn't take four or more streets out of a neighborhood and move it to another school. Please consider using major streets as boundaries, i.e. on A3 use Vista as a boundary, not Woodland.
- I would be receptive to grandfathering – I've already had to move my son and he doesn't want to do it again. And I am in favor of moving start times back to 9:05.
- I think it's important to find a "middle of the ground" on grandfathering students in (possibly looking more at older students versus younger OR currently enrolled only). It seems as if F2

would be the most dramatic change for the majority of the schools. The more we wait the more we “beat the dead horse.” Change is hard for all; let’s just do it and get it moving forward. Do we not support the schools in the entire district? (This is the impression I get from many parents) I echo one of the parents who states that we need to prepare children for the diversity they will experience in life.

- I believe grandfathering for all ages is important. Also, please look at earlier start times for all elementary students as research shows this is important.
- Grandfather all students K-6th to ensure family does not have students in two elementary schools. District does not provide transportation for grandfathered students.
- How will boundaries for Indian Hills and Stilwell be affected? Will it stay the same/change?
- Need more information. Diversity is important to have. Parents need more confidence in other schools. Allow parents that would be affected to visit the other school and meet with PTA parents at that school. Try to avoid moving one or two students in a class. Moving larger groups would help adaptation. Demographics is important. Between kindergarten round-up and the start of school on my street, three out of six possible kindergartners left the neighborhood. That is difficult to predict!
- We are interested in the grandfathering clause. When we bought our home, we did everything we could to stay in the Clive attendance area. We prefer this size of school. We worry about the relationships the students have built over the years and how this plan could disrupt those relationships. We are also concerned with increase in class sizes. Elementary students and smaller class sizes do well. Larger classes lead to less student/teacher interaction.
- If no grandfathering or voluntary transfer, then move out the 186 students who open enroll into the WDM Community School District. That will allow some additional room to current WDM schools.
- I think we should procure experienced resources to assist with this effort (demographers, city planners, mathematicians). Our neighborhood is just beginning to turn around from an older, retired neighborhood to a neighborhood filling up with young children.
- If no change to boundaries, I would hope that voluntary transfers would still be allowed.
- I think it is important to include as many children from current families as possible for grandfathering. (note about on-line survey: I tried to do the survey on-line and was reviewing questions before answering and got to the end and couldn’t go back to answer all questions)
- Understand the need. Maybe takes time to bring people along! Grandfathering is important. How does grandfathering apply if a grade level is capped? Who gets priority? Seems very rushed to implement for 07-08. Essential that research and data analysis is thorough and complete. May be best to implement the following year – more adequate planning. Consider consultant for analysis. How have other districts handled boundary changes; any lessons to be learned? Cost implications of each. One area was impacted by last boundary change...back to analysis.

February 5 – Forum Comments/Questions

- We are seeking good solutions. How is Western Hills currently staffed? (*A: staffed according to enrollment and number of sections, as are other elementary schools*) Why are Indian Hills and Stilwell staffed differently when enrollments are not equitable? (*A: teaming concept at both schools; class sizes are larger at Stilwell*) What is the position of the committee/administration/Board on grandfathering? (*A: we are still taking input*) This is the key to the success of the boundary changes. Where will we be in a couple of years? Would we be back where we started? (*A: projected growth in district neighborhoods has been taken into account. It is hoped that the boundary adjustments will be a long-term solution to the current problem.*)
- Report from a representative of a group of parents who attended a meeting at Jordan Creek where they heard from their school representatives to the Boundary Study Committee. Minutes of the meeting were summarized at the forum and are as follows:

Thursday February 1st, **92** Jordan Creek parents met at Jordan Creek to discuss the school boundary study.

Meeting objectives were:

1. Information exchange
2. Understand current situation
3. Discuss and agree to next steps with specific purpose to develop a prioritized list of concerns relative to the boundary issue

The meeting started with Laine Mendenhall & Jill Grossklaus (Boundary Committee members) updating the group on the boundary committee objectives.

The committee applied the following criteria to develop potential boundary adjustments:

1. **Capacity** - Establish boundaries that consider the enrollment capacity at each building. Use space efficiently.
2. **Proximity** – Establish boundaries that take into account the location of the neighborhood in relationship to the assigned school.
3. **Resources** – Use all resources – people and financial efficiently. Consider costs associated with new boundaries such as transportation and staffing.
4. **Stability** – Boundaries with long term stability
5. **Balance** – Balance class size in the schools. Minimize capouts wherever possible.
6. **Impact** – Establish boundaries that are family-friendly and minimize disruption.

After approximately one hour of vigorous discussion the group developed a prioritized list of issues/concerns:

1. **Grandfathering issue** – all children currently in the school should be grandfathered
 - a. The group agreed that if grandfathering were allowed for the students that were currently in the school, there would be no contest to the boundary issue.
 - i. The various grandfathering options that are being considered include:
 1. No grandfathering
 2. grandfathering 5th and 6th graders only
 3. grandfathering 4th to 6th graders and siblings
 4. all current Jordan Creek students that request it
 5. all current Jordan Creek students
 - b. In all current models being considered all voluntary transfers are sent back to home schools.

2. **Model the various grandfather scenarios** so that long term effects of boundary changes can be understood more completely.
 - a. Failure to properly account for maturation of current neighborhoods may result in boundaries that don't meet long term objectives for balancing enrollment between schools.
3. **Western Hills Remodel** – what effect will this have on the children in the next year if they move there, then need to be moved again in 08-09 remodel.
4. **Timing** – Immediate or phased
 - a. **WHAT IS THE RUSH** - Group consensus was that they did not see the need for it to all happen in one year
5. **Equity of resources** –
 - a. State dollar allocation
 - i. Group wanted more information whether the district was using boundary drawings to increase total enrollment in the district.
 - b. PFC/School funds/ fundraising
 - i. Jordan Creek currently has strong volunteer support and fundraising, and those present did not want their efforts to their school lost.
6. **Legality of busing** for grandfathered children
 - a. Will busing be provided for grandfathered children?
 - i. Is there a legal requirement to do so
7. **Maffit Lake community** – distance to Indian Hills – early pick up times and total distance made this plan seem untenable

Timing for final decision is early March so it is decided before kindergarten round-up.

1. Concern was voiced that this timing is not in sync with PFC board nominations, extra curricular groups, etc.

All parents in attendance were encouraged to email board members and Superintendent Dr. Narak with concerns. Keep concerns to relevant to the prioritized list above so we can build overall consensus around the real issues at top of parent minds.

The schools our children attend define our community. Reassigning schools is akin to moving to a completely different city. It is disruptive to kids' learning and family dynamics.

- o Crossroads Park parents agree with comments made by the Jordan Creek parent. Question the timing of the decision. The proposed plans take current students within walking distance of the school and transfer them to another building. Grandfathering is important. Would like the survey to ask if respondents would support grandfathering all students or not. More information will lead to a better decision. Maintain existing neighborhood groups.
- o Would like information on socio-economic balancing and student diversity for current attendance areas and the proposed boundary adjustments – has the committee looked at this? (A: data has been gathered, but final analysis will depend on the option recommended) What additional costs would be incurred for transportation? (A: all efforts will be made to adopt a cost-neutral proposal) What is the history of past boundary changes. Were goals met or did we fall short? (A: The last major boundary change occurred more than 15 years ago and was based on the opening of two new elementary schools. The attendance area shifts relieved extremely overcrowded schools – more than 800 students were at Crossroads Park – and assigned students to the new buildings. In 1998 a minor boundary adjustment was made to relieve overcrowding at Crestview. Several students are still grandfathered into Crestview as a result of that boundary change). Keep families at one school when grandfathering. Inequities in education need to be remedied.

- Has the district considered building more elementary schools? (*A: no plans for additional schools are being considered at this time*) Concern with large schools and the ability to maintain student relationships (Jordan Creek, Westridge, Hillside)
- The enrollment numbers in some of the scenarios exceed 100 percent.
- Why now? What is motivating this? (*A: an ongoing issue with schools that are overcrowded and schools that are under-utilized*). This is too fast. Concern that committee members chosen by principals. It is time to establish trust among parents. Consider the impact on parents loyal to their school.
- Comments on transportation costs, grandfathering options, timing of the decision. Want kids who now walk to their school to still be able to walk to school. Can additional input be provided? (*A: the online survey, forum feedback forms, e-mails and communication with your school representative are all encouraged*)
- Grandfathering – siblings should stay together. Moved to the neighborhood based on the school. Consider enrollment projections and the impact on future boundary needs. Do not have enough information.
- Consider the impact open enrollment might have on this. A large number of students who live near the 142nd Street boundary open enroll out to other districts.
- Take into consideration a kindergarten student who could move four times in five years.
- Concern with the “neighborhoods:” created by option A3. Concern with the impact on youth organizations such as Cub Scouts.
- Are you worried about people leaving the district? Why not go to another district rather than the new assigned school? (*A: families do have choices for school attendance*)
- Next fall is too soon to implement boundary changes.
- Our family chose the West Des Moines district. Older students are friends with kids from all over the district. Kids are adaptable. Children will follow the reaction or “over-reaction” of parents. Pride in all of the schools; meetings help parents get to know others. Transition works, based on experience with changing buildings inside the district.
- Is the Jordan Creek parent population concerned with over-crowding?
- Please clarify the enrollment numbers in the options presented.
- There are good kids at all of our schools
- How were criteria developed and ranked? (*A: the committee brainstormed a list, placed a one to five agreement rating on each item on the list. At one of the early meetings, the committee then analyzed the results of the rating and selected the top six. The ranking of those six is very close*)
- My students are in this district because all of the schools are good. Be careful of overloading Western Hills and Fairmeadows. There are many empty nest homes in those neighborhoods and the potential exists for young families to purchase homes in that area.
- Request that the committee review psychological studies of the impact changing schools would have on students
- Need to consider each child; not numbers and lines. Consider whether the value is budget or education.

Additional questions presented in writing:

- Are there any other preschools in district buildings? (*A: Head Start is at Phenix, Tiger Cubs is at Clive and Early Childhood Special Education is at Jordan Creek*) Do those kids get grandfathered in? (*Students at the pre-schools are not necessarily district residents or residents in the attendance area of the school where the pre-school program is held*)
- All day vs. half day kindergartens; how are they effected? (*A: Programs will remain at the buildings as previously planned. Elementary principals are discussing the placement of students in an all day program if the new school assignment offers a half-day and full day mix*)

- Will Crestview still have the earlier start times like this year? Will start times stay the same for other schools? (*A: the boundary adjustments would not impact the school start times*)
- How will special education classes be affected? (*A: Students would be assigned to the program that best meets their needs. At this time, there are no plans to relocate special education programs in the district because of boundary changes.*)
- What will the swing school be for Indian Hills if Crestview is at Clegg Park in 2009-10 and both are remodeled that year? (*A: Currently there are no plans for students to leave the Indian Hills building during that remodeling project. The scope and timing of the project will be designed with student occupancy in mind.*)