

FORUM FEEDBACK

Thursday, February 15, 2007 at Jordan Creek Elementary

Attendance – Approximately 225

Respondents: 32

28 parents, 4 unknown

Option A2	0
Option A3	0
Option F2	1
No Change	19
No preference or uncertain	3
None of the options presented	1
Any of the options	1
Combinations	
A2/A3	1
A2/A3/NC	2
A2/F2/NC	1
NC/F2	2
NC/A3/A2	1

- No option presented is good.
- None of these presented so far.
- Any plan is fine.
- Not ready to pick
- Need more time to study
- No change at this time. If the rationale for making changes is not financially based, then the process should be slowed to provide more complete projections on growth and demographic changes. Further, if this is not a budget issue, full grandfathering could be provided while new boundaries are established for incoming students.

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

- No change for any special needs children or their families.
- Grandfathering – all students/families should be allowed the option to remain at their current school. It is absolutely unfair to split up families. You will still achieve your goal – it will just happen at a slower pace but it will have less impact on the children involved.
- Please remember the special needs children and their siblings! You cannot move these kids! Families need to stay at the same school.
- A form of Option A. The reality is there is a need for a school in the northwest quadrant of the district. We are currently writing checks to neighboring districts in excess of \$.5 million yearly due to the lack of a neighborhood school and the lack of full day kindergarten for all students that could be remedied by a school in that area. That would also help even out the junior high imbalance if we would close the outflow to neighboring districts. The fact that Crestview lost 28 kindergarteners this year alone shows that neighborhoods are not aging out. The West Des Moines school district has failed to evolve to meet the needs of the northwest quadrant of the district and thus the students are taking their dollars to the neighborhood schools, which happen to be in neighboring districts (Waukee and Urbandale).
- Delay – aggressive timing is a huge concern. Do we know how many students are mapped by grade? This is not shared with parents so I wonder if some schools may end up with grade imbalance. Class size equity is a reason Kurt mentioned, but where are the details?

- Return all open enrolled or voluntary transfer students to their current designated schools and re-visit the numbers at that point.
- A strong transition plan
- Grandfathering all with any change
- Please grandfather by family, not by grade. Don't split up our families.
- Communicate better
- Have a clear and comprehensive transition plan for the kids
- Wait a year, if necessary to fully evaluate.
- Western Hills is going to be too big!
- Students in the "neighborhood" of the schools within definite walking distance should not have boundary change where they would need to be driven to a different school.
- Grandfather with all siblings included; don't separate them. Family is even more important than friends.
- A2 and F2 – I feel the boundary marker should be at EP True instead of Westwood Drive. My son is a kindergartener at Jordan Creek and would have to switch when all his friends would stay at Jordan Creek. These proposals would break up neighborhoods and friendships. Grandfathering would be the best solution.
- How can A2 leave Jordan Creek at 96 percent when A3 takes them to 70 percent? There is very little change to Jordan Creek boundaries between these two options. What will these options look like in the future?
- Understand the need for boundary for long term. Seems as though transition has not been thought through. Special ed cluster to Western Hills from Jordan Creek; Cumming/Maffit Lake to Western Hills; open enrollment and voluntary transfers return to home schools.
- Maffit Lake to Western Hills – this could ease Jordan Creek but still leave them at Stilwell (but this has significant issues too). Jordan Grove neighborhood should remain at Jordan Creek. Any revisions to boundaries should be minimal – each school has a strong foundation for support financially and spiritually.
- Need to study demographic changes.
- No revisions. If a revision needs to be made, it should be made going forward for all new families.
- Wait to redistrict until after remodeling. Western Hills will be way too big – 55 percent to 110 percent!
- Proximity to schools needs to be considered in all plans.
- If you grandfather children (families) that are enrolled, you eliminate all negatives about the proposal.

Additional comments or questions:

- Please let siblings go to the same school as their special needs brother/sister. No change for special needs students.
- Special needs children should be allowed to stay at their current school in their current programs. Special needs siblings should be allowed to stay at the same school with their special needs sibling. Families who have a child with special needs face so much stress on a day-to-day basis that it would be absolutely devastating to split up children in those families adding unnecessary stress to already stressed out families. My neuron-typical children check in on our special needs son throughout their school day. It gives them comfort to know he's there and it gives him comfort to know they are there. Separating these siblings is cruel and absolutely unnecessary. They deserve to stay together – they need each other. Families like ours should absolutely be allowed to stay together. Taking my children and moving two to one school and having my special needs son stay at another (because he needs that Level 2 program and the stability and consistency) would be a huge mistake and would be devastating to our family.

- Consider grandfathering all current school families. Families are the heart of the student body. Please recognize the ties to the school include younger siblings. After three years, we (whole family) are entrenched in school. Under all proposals my family would change schools and lose free busing under current guidelines. Thus I would be penalized in the move and forced to pay \$1200+ per year to bus three children to a school we are forced to change to. What type of transition plan is there to assist younger students deal with being separated from their friends and established teachers? I'm very concerned with the impact of the change for my children (5,7,9) to adjust to this and maintain their academic scores. Do not rush decisions – consider kids first. Please improve communication of new proposals. Finally, repeat of grandfather of all families including students not in school. The family concept is central to overall school support. You can't cut off at a certain age. Why do voluntary transfers get “home” status but residents in school three-plus years do not?
- Plans A2 and F2 appear to draw the Jordan Creek line to the south at Wistful Vista, placing Westwood and Tamara in the Western Hills boundary. These two streets, west of 50th have only 6 elementary aged children. Those few will be separated from others in the neighborhood. It would be nice if those two streets could be included.
- No voluntary transfers
- Allow grandfathering as much as possible; voluntary transfer as much as possible.
- Get appropriate data and research gathered prior to decision being made. Take time making a decision – look to the future.
- Grandfather all children currently attending school.
- Grandfathering is crucial. I have a fifth and second grader at Jordan creek and moving my fifth grader next year is unacceptable. At a minimum, current fourth and fifth graders plus siblings need to be grandfathered at current schools. New enrollees can start at new schools. Open enrollment to Jordan Creek should end.
- Take more time – wait until after Western Hills remodel. Grandfather everyone. Allow voluntary transfers for special needs, especially. Phase changes in, but preserve family. Voluntary transfers should have priority over open enrollments! Do more research.
- Don't do anything until Western Hills is done renovating. Then grandfather and provide transportation.
- I feel that the proposals have been rushed and not necessary to be pushed through for next fall. If grandfathering is considered, I believe all current students stay and through a couple years, the boundaries will eventually bring down the number.
- Grandfathering is critical! The most liberal policy would be the best. Best case – grandfather the entire families who attend the school. If that's not possible, at a minimum incoming fifth and sixth graders (with siblings). What's the rush? Let's defer this a year and get this right! Why wasn't there input from parents to establish the criteria for the committee?
- Please grandfather existing students (even without transportation), particularly students who have siblings or who are siblings of students who have gone through a home school and are now at Stilwell/Indian Hills/Valley. Very disruptive academically for all of the transitions across buildings, especially on these short timings. Home schools are that – home and are centers of community. Keep them intact.
- I'm concerned that the enrollment numbers have not been considered for preschool students who would be the future enrollment. I believe grandfathering is important for the students, particularly if the family has been in the school for a number of years supporting the academics and activities of the school. School remodels need to be considered to the child's well-being and education. How do you ensure “no child left behind?” Phased approach needs to be considered – possibly for new incoming families (further analysis and research needs to be done), particularly for Western Hills. You need a transition plan so everyone can adjust.
- Consider remodeling Western Hills before sending students with new boundaries there. Need to get additional input from parents and research studies. Don't push this through so quickly. It's evident this has come too fast and was not communicated properly to parents. Allow grandfathering of all students.

- Grandfathering should be allowed for all children and their siblings. We bought our house where we did so that our kids would attend the school in the neighborhood – Crossroads. Furthermore, we have put so much time into volunteering at this school – Brownies, volunteering at class, etc. Voluntary transfer should not be allowed. If you are allowing students to stay for voluntary transfer, you will have to allow all children and siblings to be grandfathered in as well as this was/is their neighborhood school.
- Grandfathering current students and families is critical. Promote stability for the students and reduce the number of transitions between schools. Consider making changes after Western Hills remodeling is complete. Statistical data regarding grandfathering scenarios, demographics and impact of change on students needs to be addressed.

February 15 – Forum Comments/ Questions

- Crossroads Park parent who lives .3 miles from the school. Under Option F2, student would attend five schools in five years. Concern with impact on student. Consider grandfathering or no boundary change.
- Concern that didn't get communication until four weeks ago. Not notified of committee selection. How were members chosen? (A: *principals selected committee members*). Others in the school were not notified. Did not receive feedback from committee representatives. If boundary changes are made, how will we find out? (A: *school newsletters, district web site. Board will hold a hearing prior to any action on a recommendation from the Superintendent.*)
- Family is impacted by boundary changes. Concern that student would attend four schools in four years. Not all Western Hills students will fit into Clegg Park. Students would be separated from friends and classmates. Request for grandfathering.
- Consider special needs students. Important that they be in the same school with siblings. Speaker picked neighborhood to live in based on the school. (A: *Special needs programs will not be relocated. We may need to add English as a Second Language programs at some schools. In past, siblings of special needs students have become voluntary transfers.*)
- Question to audience: how many would vote for no change? A significant number indicated that would be their preference.
- Speaker has no concern with elementary maps. However, do have a concern with the distance to the junior high if assigned to Westridge and Indian Hills. Bus ride would be too long. Preference would be Option F2 or change the junior high assignment. (Response: *The bus ride must be no longer than 45 minutes under the three tier system.*)
- Have heard that the process started last year. No information was on the district web site until two weeks ago. Options should be a starting point. With the plans to remodel Western Hills, and the impending move of the students to the Clegg Park building, not all grades will fit into that facility. No information has been provided nor has research been done by the committee on the psychological impact changing schools has on students. Parent has commented about the availability of information on the Polk County Assessor web site, but the committee has not considered this. No future demographic data was gathered. In plan F2 more than 20 percent of district students would change schools. Feedback would be analyzed in one month. Most parents feel this can't be done in this time frame. Asked audience to stand if they agree the process can't be done to make boundary changes by fall 2007. Large numbers in the audience stood.
- Concern with using Mills Civic Parkway as a boundary. Concern with breaking up an existing scout group. Who takes responsibility when this is done? We're not getting answers and don't feel that anyone is listening. (A: *Administration and committee members are taking the comments to heart.*)
- Concern with junior high assignment to Westridge. Few current friends would be impacted by the new assignments. Problem with scheduling if opt to stay at currently assigned school.

Request to offer busing to grandfathered students. No time to adjust to change. This upsets the dynamics for community and children. Our children should not be worrying about where they will attend school next year.

- Concern with impact on students. Concern with process. Received no communication until the public forums were set. Criteria should be reversed; family impact should be the first criteria. Request no massive change. Grandfather – balance enrollment needs with student need for continuity.
- Public should have been informed first. Should have been notified that recruitment of volunteers was occurring; would have had many volunteers. Wait one year, hold more public forums and make a good decision.
- Comment read in *DM Register* about sending special needs students to Western Hills. Concern expressed that the special needs student needs consistency and the program should stay at Jordan Creek.
- Speaker has a special needs student who really needs to stay at Jordan Creek. The program for students with autism is outstanding. Child has made progress. Please keep special needs students in mind. Need to keep contact with friends and siblings. Allow voluntary transfers to continue.
- Having a special needs child can be a strain on a family. Child deserves to stay in the program that is located at Jordan Creek. (*Response: There are no plans to move the program from Jordan Creek.*)
- Speaker lives in the Jordan Creek boundary; student goes to Westridge as a voluntary transfer. Lives just south of E.P. True. Consider those living just east of I-35. It is a safe walk to Westridge. Would like to see that option presented on one of the maps. Give voluntary transfers priority based on special needs and proximity to school.
- Voluntary transfer to Westridge; requests grandfathering for student. Cap out situation for new families is difficult. Supports grandfathering and maintaining voluntary transfers. Don't need to wait. Provide transportation.
- All who go to Jordan Creek are impacted. The principal is the reason no one wants to leave. Critical of lack of communication. Need more forums. Request that committee minutes be posted on the district web site the day after the meeting. Misinformation breeds fear. Has a transition plan been considered? (*A: Nothing is final. Public discussion is an integral part of the process. The decision could be on a continuum from keeping boundaries the same to making massive changes. You are part of the process.*) Request a strong transition plan. No reason that a complete change needs to happen immediately. Want to make things better. Next school year is too soon.
- Participants at all forums have requested full grandfathering and minimal change in boundaries. Current plans do not address that and do not meet the criteria. The decision is being rushed and the time line is too short. Appropriate enrollment numbers have not been examined. Need to hire a professional demographer. Need to maintain property values. Communication has failed. Process and conclusion haven't built public confidence. This would be the second year that a committee is making a recommendation counter to what parents want, based on the assumption that the process would continue as currently offered. Speaker will not leave students in the district if they would have to change schools due to boundary adjustments. Presented signed petitions – “We the undersigned are strongly opposed to the boundary change plans under discussion for Crossroads Park Elementary School. We believe any change in boundaries should first consider the proximity of the immediate neighborhood children and those who are currently enrolled in Crossroads Park Elementary. We believe the plans currently under consideration by the planning committee destroy the Crossroads community. We request that additional alternatives be considered and acted upon.” (*Response: Please don't judge the committee before their work is done.*)
- Proposed changes do not present a long term solution. No such thing as a cost-neutral change. There will be a cost – emotionally or in busing. Plan would move this family from familiar surroundings. Long term capacity of schools has not been considered. The new boundary ideas are foolish, overkill and do more harm than good.

- Live close to school; have students entering kindergarten. Consider the neighborhood. Be sure to look at proximity when making a decision.
- Very important for all to have a voice. What is the time frame? (*A: Committee meets on February 20 and 28 – if needed – and will make a recommendation to the Superintendent. The Board will hold a public hearing in March and could take action later in the month. Decision could be delayed based on when the committee completes its work.*) Open enrollment students should not stay at their current school; residents should have first priority. Our job is to make sure we do it right.
- Speaker lives close to one school, but drives student to school farther away. Proposals would make the drive to school even longer. Use proximity as the first priority. Took online survey and discovered it could be taken again. This is not necessarily objective data. Don't make decisions assuming the survey feedback is objective; it is not.
- Speaker represents families west of 128th Street in Clive – 234 students. There are enrollment issues throughout the district. We are one district; problems at one school impact others. Large numbers of students open enroll out of our neighborhood due to the location of our assigned school and the proximity of schools in other districts. Crestview is not close to our neighborhood. Option F2 attempts to create a neighborhood school, but does not accomplish this. It will not draw open enrollment students back in. Request that the district build a new school. Group supports a variation that allows current students to stay at Crestview. Crestview bell time is different. Supportive of attempt to remedy problems. Request a firm stand on voluntary transfers, grandfathering and open enrollment. Any delay in boundary adjustments puts us in limbo for another year. It would increase the anxiety and impact. Request a transition plan with gatherings hosted by schools receiving new students. Change should be faced positively.
- There is no benefit in moving students all around and then moving them again when Western Hills is remodeled. Student would go to Western Hills, but neighbors go to Jordan Creek. Only six children would be moving. Concern that data shows Western Hills would be over capacity. (*Response: Recent planning for the Western Hills remodeling results in changing the school from four to three sections. Know the scenario doesn't work. Wanted to get feedback to contribute to the process of refining the options.*) My student would go to four schools in four years. Wait until after the Western Hills remodeling to make any boundary changes.
- Maffitt Lake area resident listed the following: first choice – no change; second choice – long term study using a demographer. Third - grandfathering is important and transportation should be provided. Can the district legally withhold transportation if a student lives more than two miles from school? (*A: Mileage limit applies to the assigned school.*) Fourth - want to stay at Stilwell; Indian Hills is too far away.
- Thank you for holding the forums. Hope the Board and committee are listening. Grandfathering is a significant topic. There must be a way to phase in a boundary change. New families would go to the newly assigned school. Leave three year voluntary transfers at their current school, since they are considered residents. Open enrollment students should not receive preferential placement over voluntary transfers. Is the voluntary transfer rule changing? (*A: This is still under discussion.*) Urge the Board and committee to grandfather all ages and groups; grandfather voluntary transfer rules and those that follow them ahead of open enrollment students. Process would have been better if communication had occurred sooner and more information was available. There is a solution, but we are changing too quickly. Not enough effort has been put in to this.
- If boundary changes are made, grandfather all students. In the future, make small changes along the way.
- Speaker refutes the comment in the *Des Moines Register* regarding moving special needs programs. Moving Crossroads Park students to Western Hills increases the imbalance in junior high enrollments. Wait one more year. Speaker is a committee member concerned with the time limits. Committee was told the decision must be made by fall. It is hard to believe we will make a decision that is best for all. Could change schools if there is a good

reason. Children are different; move impacts students differently. Don't force this on them. The bus ride to Indian Hills is 35 minutes for students in my neighborhood.

- Thank you to Board and residents for participating in the forum. Current drop off time at Western Hills is approximately three minutes. With more students at the school, the time would increase to more than nine minutes. The Western Hills proposal is preposterous; the school can't handle the traffic. No proposal addresses the problem. How many e-mail addresses are in the Infinite Campus System? (*A: Number is unknown at this time.*) Should have sent a mass e-mail seeking volunteers when the committee was formed. The boundary is about programming. No representation of children in this process. Where is the primary focus? Or is it for the satisfaction of upsetting families? Take time to look at the feedback. Put the boundary changes on the back burner.
- Welcome new families to Fairmeadows. Communication will improve the transition for parents and children. Comments on the positive experience of the Fairmeadows move to Clegg Park for one year. Students were with their same teachers and classmates.

Many in the audience left at this point. A number of questions continued to be posed related to the timeline of the process, committee meeting schedule, data on Jordan Creek enrollment (cap outs, open enrollments and voluntary transfers).

- Conversation also focused on the addition of all day kindergarten sections and the need for more classroom space. It was suggested that the district look at bringing in portable classrooms (That has been researched and city codes do not permit this to happen.)
- If all students return to their home school, how would this impact the boundaries?
- Comment about a first grade student moving to a school where most students have had a full day kindergarten experience.
- An audience member requested an explanation of voluntary transfer, open enrollment and grandfathering.
- Parent concern with "mixing kids" as a result of the Western Hills remodel.
- Concern with the committee opinion that treats voluntary transfers better than current residents.
- Question on transportation for junior high assignment. In response to a question, it was noted that special needs programs would stay where they are currently located.
- Concern expressed about a potential move for children and the length of the bus ride. Comment about the proposed move from Jordan Creek to Fairmeadows: currently have free transportation to Jordan Creek. Please consider providing busing. Concern with safe access to the school.
- Request more opportunities for public input.
- A committee member spoke about his respect for the Board of Education. He commented on the passion people have for their schools. He said he was happy to serve on the committee. Other district issues have generated similar controversy and conversation. Leaders for children are their parents. How adults react impacts how kids respond.