

## District Enrollment and Facility Utilization Meetings

January 8, 2018

District 303 Families and Community Members:

Over the past decade, St. Charles District 303 has moved from a “growing” community to a “mature” community. When communities go through this type of transition, the school districts within those communities often experience declining enrollment. As many of you remember, D303 experienced explosive growth during the late 1990’s and early 2000’s due to the development of three large subdivisions, Fox Mill, Cornerstone Lakes, and Thornwood, which resulted in the construction of Bell-Graham, Corron, and Norton Creek Elementary Schools.

When communities mature, the average number of school-aged children per household declines to around 0.4 children per household. At the peak of enrollment in our district, we had approximately 0.6 school-aged children per household in the district. Because of this decline within the D303 community, our district enrollment has dropped from over 14,000 students at its peak to around 12,000 students today. As we track the enrollment trends and birth data in the district, it has become evident that our new norm in student population for the foreseeable future is between 11,000 and 12,000 students.

This brings us to the challenges D303 is facing today in our elementary schools. **The current elementary school boundaries that were created over a decade ago no longer distribute the student population across the district in an efficient manner.** We have some schools, like Norton Creek Elementary, that are significantly underutilized while there are others, like Richmond Intermediate, that are reaching capacity. Our enrollment and birth rates are geographically out of balance, with higher birth rates and enrollment in the center of town and on the west side of the district, and with lower enrollments and birth rates on the east side.

**It is time for the district to right-size our elementary schools and realign our enrollment.** On January 18, the School Board will have the opportunity to hear an update on district enrollment, facility utilization, and class size at the elementary level. At that time, the district administration will present a proposal for boundary changes and building utilization changes at the elementary level. If accepted by the School Board, the plan would be implemented during the 2018-19 school year.

District 303 is proud that, on an annual basis, parents tell us they are highly satisfied with our schools and programs. Boundary and enrollment conversations are never easy, and the solutions are never simple. The district team is working to develop a plan that disrupts the fewest number of students possible, knowing that an adjustment of this magnitude will require some students and families to change schools. We will communicate these changes as soon as

possible after the School Board makes a decision so that the schools may begin to welcome new families into their school communities.

**There are several ways that you can be involved in learning about the proposed changes.** They include:

- Attending the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting on January 18 beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Thompson 6<sup>th</sup>Grade Center LRC to hear the presentation and administration recommendation to the School Board.
- Reviewing the plan on the D303 website. The proposed elementary plan will be available following the committee meeting on January 18. A search feature will be available to search the new attendance boundaries for the 2018-19 school year based on your current address.
- Providing comments using the link on the district website also available after the meeting on January 18.
- Attending one of two community forums on the proposed changes. They are scheduled to be held from 6:30 – 8:00 PM at:
  - Wredling Middle School LRC on January 22
  - Thompson Middle School 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center LRC on January 29

I hope you will take the time to learn about the proposed changes over the next month. The School Board is expected to consider the recommendation for approval at the February 12 School Board meeting. Thank you for allowing us to partner with you to educate and support your children.

Professionally,

Dr. Jason Pearson  
Superintendent