

TimesCommunity.com

Your weekly newspaper, daily

07/17/2007

High school redistricting to be studied

By: Layla Wilder

Fairfax County School Board members decided in a July 16 work session to include six high schools in a boundary study designed to balance enrollment numbers in a large part of the county.

Westfield and Chantilly high schools are overcrowded, while South Lakes High School is under capacity.

The proposed boundary study now includes Chantilly, Westfield, South Lakes, Oakton, Herndon and Madison high schools. The list could change after public hearings on the study, this fall, school officials say.

"No decisions about the boundaries have been made," Dean Tistadt, chief operating officer of the school system's facilities services, said at the meeting, which was attended by a handful of parents.

"We really need to hear from the community," Tistadt said.

The study, which has been in the works for several years, was placed on hold until a renovation giving South Lakes High School an added capacity of 700 to 800 students was completed.

The renovation should be done in 2008, and the boundary changes are scheduled to be finalized in time for the 2008-09 school year.

The equal distribution of programs and resources among all the high schools is one of the main objectives of the study, said Gary Chevalier, planning director of the school system's facilities services.

Cluster VIII Assistant Superintendent Betsy Goodman, who represents South Lakes and Westfield high schools, said South Lakes isn't large enough to offer students some core classes and specialized courses.

By contrast, Westfield is so large that students are having to compete to be involved in extracurricular activities, Goodman said.

Discussion at the work session centered around the size of the proposed boundary study.

Some school board members, like Kaye Kory (Mason), Phillip Niedzielski-Eichne (Providence), and Janet Oleszek (At-Large), suggested that more schools be included in the study in anticipation of development changes in the county.

Langley, Falls Church and Annandale high schools - all schools currently at their capacity - were mentioned as possible additions. Kory called the current proposal "a Band-Aid and a short-term approach."

She said adding additional schools to the study "wouldn't be politically easy, but would be the right decision."

School Board Member Kathy Smith (Sully) said the size of the project should stay as currently proposed.

"We have to keep it focused," Smith said.

Herndon High School was included because it is under its enrollment capacity and could possibly take some students from Westfield, Chevalier said.

Oakton High School is at capacity, but was included because its boundary is surrounded by the study area.

Madison High School, also at capacity, was included because staff wants to integrate an isolated part of its boundary area, located above the Dulles Toll Road.

Chevalier said school staff hope to have numbers by this fall on how new growth surrounding the planned Metrorail extension through Tysons Corner and the Dulles Corridor may affect school enrollment in the county.

County school staff will begin hosting public meetings about the proposed boundary changes in November. School board members and administrators have already been meeting with parents concerned about the proposed changes.

After input from the community, the school board will vote on changes next year.

Contact the reporter at lwilder@timespapers.com.

High School Capacities

Herndon
Capacity: 2,225
2006-07 enrollment: 2,167
Projected 2011: 1,1870

Chantilly
Capacity: 2,625
2006-07 enrollment: 2,849
Projected 2011: 2,627

Oakton
Capacity: 2,325
2006-07 enrollment: 2,375
Projected 2011: 2,226

South Lakes
Capacity: 2,100
2006-07 enrollment: 1,430
Projected 2011: 1,302

Westfield
Capacity: 3,100
2006-07 enrollment: 3,232
Projected 2011: 2,835

Madison
Capacity: 1,875
2006-07 enrollment: 1,900
Projected 2011: 1,895



DirectBuy
The #1 way to buy direct for your home.
Click here for a FREE Visitor's Pass to a showroom near you.

Home Furnishings

©Times Community Newspapers 2007