

2016 Realignment Committee Notes*

JANUARY 21, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT

Bill Bays, Debbie Bendick, Barry Blagowsky, Scott Burger, Justin Coffelt, Amy Downey, Brian Eccellente, Cordell Ehrich, Bryan Evans, Karen Flores, Jason Galloway, Jason Hayes, Sara Hudson, Kartina McDaniel, Eileen McGuire, Michele Milner, Keith Paulter, Shana Perry, Dana Renner, Ruthie Riggs, Susie Schinnerer, Gabe Schmidt, Kristen Stahel, Miriam Teifke, Allison Timberlake, Scotti Wilson, Jamila Crawford, Tara Warwick, Cassandra Weides

WELCOME

Superintendent, Mr. Bret Towne, opened the meeting by thanking the members for their willingness to serve. He asked that they approach their work with open minds as they seek to reach consensus. Towne explained that Edmond Public Schools has experienced unprecedented growth over the past several years, necessitating the need for new schools and district realignment. He shared that Edmond is now the third largest district in Oklahoma. With that, Towne excused himself.

INTRODUCTIONS

Templeton Demographics (TD) representatives Mr. Rocky Gardiner and Mr. Forrest Chevallier were introduced. TD has worked with several of the largest districts in Texas, at a rate of about 50 districts per year. Edmond will be their first Oklahoma district.

Next, the committee members introduced themselves, giving their name, role, and the school they represented. It was explained that only four elementary schools were involved because, while their boundary lines would not be changing, their students might be redirected into a different or multiple middle schools, as these elementary locations were near the intersections of various middle schools.

Associate Superintendent, Dr. Debbie Bendick, reviewed the timeline for the committee's work:

Meeting #1 - January 21, Thursday, 3 to 6 pm

Committee and TD introductions; introduction of realignment goals, guidelines, and targets; presentation of demographic study with enrollment projections; development of boundary options for new MS.

Meeting #2 - January 28, Thursday, 3 to 6 pm

Review options/plans from meeting #1; gather any pertinent feedback on options presented at meeting #1; continue editing maps toward a solution and consensus opinion.

Meeting #3 - February 3, Wednesday, 3 to 6 pm (if necessary)

Finalize recommendation to be submitted for review at the Community Forums and then onto superintendent for further presentation to the school board.

Additional dates were announced that do not require committee members' attendance, but may be of interest to them.

Community Forum – February 11, Thursday, 7 to 8:30 pm

Community Forum – February 18, Thursday, 7 to 8:30 pm

Special Board Meeting – February 22, Monday, 6:00 pm

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Mr. Gardiner told the group that in the weeks since his firm was retained for this project, he and his associate had traveled to Edmond and visited with the superintendent and City of Edmond planning department to gather information on the district/city population and future real estate developments. The information they collected in Edmond was shared with the Templeton Demographic research team for integration with other pertinent data gathered from a variety of geographic data bases. With this combined information, TD created various maps showing the district's current boundaries, school sites, neighborhoods, and student distribution; plus, they added planned developments for the committee to understand future growth.

Mr. Gardiner also shared the student forecast data projected by their firm. With the 10-year forecast for Edmond enrollment, the plan is to seek to balance the enrollment for building capacities to handle the growth for the next five years, which amounts to approximately 500 additional students per year. Gardiner showed a series of slides that further illuminated the points of his introductory remarks. He also demonstrated the capability of the software the group would be working with, including the manner in which he could integrate various data sets to provide a complete picture of present and future district realities. With that, Mr. Gardiner deferred to Dr. Bendick for comments before setting the group loose on the maps TD had brought with them.

DISCUSSION

Dr. Bendick reminded the group of their charge: to populate the new middle school and to balance the attendance zones for the secondary schools.

She referred to the superintendent's guidelines shared in the TD slides:

1. Attendance areas should be designed to serve the district for more than five years.
2. Attendance areas should be largely contiguous and lack the appearance of gerrymandering.
3. Walk paths for each school must be considered.
4. Allow for initially smaller school populations in schools with higher than anticipated growth rates.
5. High schools should each be aligned with two middle schools.
6. When possible, elementary school boundaries should align with middle school boundaries, which should align with high school boundaries.
7. Neighborhoods should be assigned to the same school when possible.
8. The district should honor existing transfers into schools.

9. All students should be expected to attend their new schools.
10. Transportation routes should be as efficient as possible, giving consideration to minimizing ride times with established parameters.
11. There may be an option for the 2016-17 eighth graders to matriculate through their current school.

PREPARING TO MAP THE ATTENDANCE ZONES

Mr. Gardiner explained that according to the superintendent's guidelines to send two middle schools to each high school, a likely plan would be for Heartland and Summit students to attend Santa Fe; Central and Cimarron to attend Memorial; and Cheyenne and Sequoyah to attend North. To achieve this goal, Mr. Gardiner suggested that some elementary schools may be split between two or more middle schools. It may even be that middle schools have to be split to two high schools. So, with this in mind, Mr. Gardiner proceeded to direct the group by examining middle school boundaries first.

GROUP WORK WITH MAPS

Mr. Gardiner passed out 4 copies of the existing middle school boundaries and asked everyone to divide among 4 groups and draw new boundaries over the existing boundaries, taking care to first draw attendance lines for the new middle school, Heartland. The groups worked for about 20 minutes, followed by a break while TD reviewed the products to discern which two represented different points of view. He then took these two options and added them to his software to illustrate the challenges the committee would face once they had all the numerical data to add to the graphics of a map. Without the knowledge of student populations within the neighborhoods, the schools were out of balance with some having large populations and others very small.

The committee continued to work with the maps they had generated, using TD's software and all of its data. Questions were posed from time to time by various committee members. The following reflections were raised as a result of the small group interactions:

- A parent whose child attends Central, which splits 3 ways, thinks the split is okay because her student has friends at all 3 high schools.
- High school representatives shared their perspective against the idea of splitting middle schools because they cannot go into schools that split because they may be viewed as recruiting.
- Another parent felt like the split schools causes greater rivalry among the high schools.
- A concern was raised about pushing more traffic into problem areas.
- It was noted that sidewalks are available for Northern Hills attendance area students to walk to Sequoyah.
- A parent suggested that kids are resilient, but younger kids have fewer allegiances to activities, athletics, etc., making that age group an easier one to divide at the next educational level.

- Both a parent and a principal raised concerns about Title I schools and the federal funding they receive. Mainly, what would be the effect of a Title I school having its economically disadvantaged students be if dispersed to other schools? And how does that translate? Dr. Bendick explained that Title status is determined by the percentage of students receiving a free or reduced price school lunch. A school is considered schoolwide Title I and will receive supplementary federal funding if 50% or more of the students participate. Dr. Bendick explained, however, that that socio-economic status was not to be considered as a factor in the realignment of boundaries; so there was no need to consider whether a school was or would be a Title I school before or after the mapping process.

The group continued to suggest various adds and take-aways to the two maps that had been generated, but – with the verbal agreement of the group -- moved to one of the two maps as a working template; the template was chosen as a starting point because it was determined the better option as it provided the most balanced scenario for middle school populations. The entire group moved through many, many suggested iterations, moving twice around the map in a clockwise fashion. Nonetheless, the group could not find a suitable solution that met most of the guidelines within the time constraints allotted for the meeting. At this point, almost 6 pm, Mr. Gardiner suggested that the meeting close for the evening, but first it would be wise to agree on a starting place for meeting #2. One parent asked if Gardiner would like email ideas forwarded to TD prior to the next meeting. After discussion, the committee decided that in lieu of the email idea, a better option would be for TD to return with a map that combined the committee's input from the first evening, but with his attendance data added. Mr. Gardiner polled the committee to see if they would prefer to start from such a point at the next meeting, and they concurred.

Before dismissal, a parent asked if they were expected to keep the ideas and suggestions proffered thus far a secret from the public. Mr. Gardiner assured them that was not his hope. He suggested instead that while the work sessions were closed to the public, the topic was not. He encouraged everyone to talk with their neighbors so they could come back next week with even better ideas about their task.

Dr. Bendick dismissed the committee right at 6 pm with instructions to submit any feedback they might have to her email address: debbie.bendick@edmondschools.net.

(* These notes represent as nearly as possible the comments, exchanges, and activities of the committee's work, considering the possibility for error or omission given the various small group conversations, table talk, work group efforts, and all-group discussions.)