

Questions and Answers

Public Forum (2/15/16)

Tracy Van Vuren, Angie Smith – Question on transfers, and when will the transfer question be decided?

Modifications to the district's transfer policy will be a part of any final redistricting plan. There are several issues which the school board will decide and vote upon.

1) Will students currently attending a high school be able to continue and matriculate through their current school?

2) Will middle school students be able to continue at/through their current school? This would only apply to current 6th and 7th graders?

3) Will there be consideration for students currently in middle school to follow their siblings into high schools so that families are not split between two high schools; and if this policy is allowed, how long will it be in effect?

4) Will existing elementary and secondary transfers be honored?

5) Will future elementary transfers be allowed?

6) Will incoming freshmen be allowed to continue to transfer into North for ROTC?

Cary Samara – Question – Did you look at North South Relevance?

The committee did not approach the process to attempt to make all attendance areas orient east / west or north / south. Some of the proposed boundaries are, and will be oriented in both fashions, while others will be more compact. The factors for the shapes of the secondary schools' individual orientation are the density of the students, the influence of the boundary of the district (edges), and location of the school itself. One of the greatest influences is the locations of most of our secondary schools. All three high schools are at the center of the district within three miles of each other at the core of the district. Whereas it would be optimal for schools to be in the center of their attendance areas, it is not possible for high schools to have that option.

Cary Samara – Question – What is the plan for Central's curriculum?

Central's curriculum is identical to all the other middle schools' programs. Central does have a Gateway to Technology Course (pre-engineering, robotics, elementary coding and programming, aeronautics, etc.), which Sequoyah does not yet have.

Prior to redistricting discussions, the board of education has expressed concerns about the rigor of middle school course offerings especially in the core subjects of math and science related to STEM (science, technology engineering and math). Central had been determined to be the first middle school to have an increased focus on these subjects. Administrators have just begun planning a framework to see what this STEM focus would look like at Central, subsequently moving on to all other middle schools.

To complement any changes in curriculum, the facility improvements for the 2017 Bond Project at Central will probably change from a gym/shelter to a math and science wing/shelter.

Cary Samara - Question – Will there be transportation for high school students on transfer?

Transportation will only be provided for students to the schools that are assigned as a result of the new boundary realignment. Students who are allowed to stay at their current schools (such as high schoolers staying through graduation) despite being reassigned to a new school boundary will not be provided by the district. Providing transportation outside the new attendance areas would double the number of routes required to transport students.

Kendall Braly – Concerning the Olde Edmond area not being included with the proposed Northern Hills attendance area, why was this area left off?

The committee's work dealt with "planning areas" rather than housing additions or elementary schools. Rarely was an area referred to by its addition's name, such as The Trails or Olde Edmond. Street names were the more typical reference because the committee members were generally only familiar with the neighborhoods near their homes, but all were familiar with the more prominent Edmond street names. The number of children living in the area that is Olde Edmond complemented other planning areas assigned to attend Central and when put into Sequoyah's numbers beyond them beyond capacity. **As far as redistricting this area to Centennial, that wasn't discussed as we had not planned to change elementary attendance lines. It could be a consideration if Centennial has room.**

Jean Marie – Question -- What is the capacity of Central?

Currently, Central includes 836 students. The capacity for Central is 950, and that is the lower margin of capacity. If the current plan is adopted, Central is projected to be approximately the same size. What is lost in most appraisals of the plan is that students are shifted from Central to Cimarron to increase their overall student population. Cimarron also will gain students from Sunset, and Cheyenne will receive more students from Ida Freeman.

Jimmy Harmen, Constance Crossin – Questions – How long will kids be on a bus in the northeast if they are traveling to Central or Memorial?

Precise student transportation times are difficult to determine because of the size of this area whether with its current boundaries to Sequoyah and North, or possible future attendance at Central and Memorial. District transportation will begin planning routes once a final plan is set for all middle and high schools within the district.

From the farthest part of the boundary in this area, it is approximately 14 miles to Sequoyah, 15 miles to North, 15.5 miles to Central and 16 miles to Memorial. As a test, district vehicles left the Bella Terra neighborhood located east of Air Depot on Waterloo February 10th at 7:15 am to check drive times to Sequoyah and Central. Drive time to Sequoyah was 18 minutes and 16 seconds and to Central, 19 minutes 23 seconds.

Jimmy Harmen, Benjamin Floyd - Question – Why wasn't there a traffic study at Central?

On Friday, the district requested a week long traffic count from the City of Edmond. We do not know when that might begin. With this question others have stated that the anticipated increase in traffic might be further complicated by Will Rogers Elementary and Oklahoma Christian Academy traffic. District officials have checked, and Oklahoma Christian Academy begins at 8:00 am, and Will Rogers, at 8:50 am.

The current parent drop-off area for Central is the circle drive that enters and exits on Rankin, the west side of the building. It has not been problematic in the past. There is considerable parking on the south side of the building; plus, our neighbor to the west, First Presbyterian Church has been very generous with their parking for special events. (We reciprocate on weekends with the same generosity when their lots overflow.) We will be considering pick up and drop off changes pending a final boundary plan.

Jimmy Harmen - Question – Why were some of the considerations lower on the priority list?

The highest priority was given to the goals of the committee: populate Heartland and balance populations among the secondary schools. Beyond that, there was no did not prioritize the guidelines; rather, they asked the committee to oblige the guidelines where possible.

Lynn Garrison – Question – Why now on transfers, why not delay it a year?

Redistricting has to be accomplished in order to the populate Heartland Middle School and ease current and future overcrowding at Sequoyah, Summit and North; also important is adding students to the under-populated schools in the district's eastern areas. Sequoyah, Summit, North, and increasingly, Santa Fe are currently significantly over-crowded. The district has been purposely waiting to correct this problem with the opening of Heartland. Waiting another year is not in the best interest of the most children. Looking ahead, Sequoyah is projected to have 1,665 students in five years and 1,757 students in eight years. Similarly, North is projected to have 3,144 students in five years and 3,459 students in eight years.

Ed Moore – This plan appears to resemble busing to achieve racial balance. What are the Central / Sequoyah student profiles?

The 25 and then later 36 members of the re-districting committee at no time had access to demographic race information on any of the schools. ED (economically disadvantaged) came up on the end of all preliminary forms called "Grade Reports" that showed free and reduced counts as plans were considered and numbers of students were looked at to populate plans. ED was used as a check point to see if any particular plan adversely affected increase in schools' ED situation. In the plans, some schools increase some ED%, some decrease ED%. The committee was routinely asked not to consider demographic information or suppositions in recommending boundaries.

Central

Caucasian – 64%; Black – 15%; Asian – 4%; Hispanic – 15%; Native American – 3%;
48% Free and Reduced Lunch

Sequoyah

Caucasian – 84%; Black – 3%; Asian – 4%; Hispanic – 7%; Native American – 2%;
13% Free and Reduced Lunch

Constance Crossin – Will you redesign traffic patterns around Central?

District officials are currently considering the effect of additional cars dropping off and picking up at Central with a shift in student demographics. Currently there are three pick up / drop off areas at Central – front (north), parent (west) and bus (south).

Casey Klepper – Question – Why was Iron Horse Ranch included in the final plan and not in the plan that came out of the second meeting?

The final plan was agreed upon Feb 3 at the end of the committee’s work session. Up to that time, there was not a workable plan in place. There were upwards of 25 different iterations of the entire district before the committee finally found a plan that would balance the populations among all 6 middle schools and all 3 high schools. Included in that final area were changes in attendance areas for the planning areas, which included Iron Horse Ranch and other neighborhoods.

Andy Dillard – Question -- Why was the superintendent not on the committee?

The superintendent is the advisor to the Board of Education in these types of matters. The superintendent’s involvement might be construed as trying to influence the committee in a particular direction by his opinions or ideas. The committee has as ex officio members, the associate superintendents for secondary and elementary education. These individuals were non-voting members who assisted in guiding the mechanics of the process and provide feedback as needed. An example would be on the first draft the square mile where Santa Fe High School is located was surrounded on all sides by four different middle school boundaries, two were feeders to Santa Fe, one was to North and one was to Memorial. The associate superintendents caught this and asked for it to be adjusted.

Andy Dillard - Why was the superintendent’s neighborhood not included in a redistricting move?

It is doubtful that many, if any, voting members of the committee might know where the superintendent of schools lives. Regardless, the superintendent’s children have not been in district middle schools for more than a decade. One of his children attended Sequoyah Middle School; and the other attended Central Middle School.

Andy Dillard - Why has the Board not responded yet?

School Board members are ordinary citizens and have no authority until they sit convened as a Board of Education. Whereas they may study, investigate, listen, contemplate issues and form opinions individually, they have no decision-making power outside of a Board meeting.

The Board of Education has access to the re-alignment committee’s final information, all of which is posted on the district’s website. The Board was in attendance at the February 11 Community Forum to listen to community concerns and will be present again at the forum on February 18. Board members hope to make a decision on district attendance boundaries on February 22 at a scheduled Board of Education meeting.

Were there purposeful efforts made to keep whole elementary schools going to one middle school, such as Centennial to Central Middle School?

Yes, consideration was given to keeping whole elementaries together; as it was one of the committee's guidelines (#6) they were asked to aim for. "When possible, elementary school boundaries should align with middle school boundaries, which should align with high school boundaries." However, in many cases this was not possible, including Sunset, West Field, Northern Hills, Heritage, Cross Timbers, John Ross, Frontier, and Ida Freeman. At one point in the discussion, Centennial was also split between two middle schools, but Sequoyah still had too many students and Central, not enough. By pulling in additional planning areas, this imbalance was immediately corrected. It wasn't a matter of taking all of Centennial, but additional planning areas that were, in fact, part of the Centennial boundaries.

It became evident that students must split at the end of middle school or at the end of elementary school. The committee discussed the pros and cons of the split at both levels. The committee felt like it is more critical for students to remain together when leaving middle school and entering high school because they are finding their way and developing allegiance to the high school programs most closely aligned with their interests such as band, fine arts, sports.

Eric Russell – What would happen if/when Central loses Title I funds?

Central Middle School is a schoolwide Title I school. If they fall below 40% free and reduced, they no longer qualify for Title I funds. All equipment and materials that have been purchased since 2011 with Title I funds will be removed from the building and be redistributed to the remaining Title I schools in our district. Employees whose salaries are paid for with Title I funds will continue to have a job within the district, but not in the same capacity (i.e. Instructional Facilitator may now go back to being a math teacher).

Central Middle School would basically operate just like any of our other middle schools. All present student supports provided for with Title I funds would no longer exist.

Regarding questions and statements dealing with those who purchased homes or land with the specific purpose of attending a certain school or schools, the following is important to remember:

In a fast growing district or a district of any size or location that finds itself needing to add schools to accommodate growth, it should be clear that while one's address may be static, the school boundary lines are dynamic and may change several times over the course of a family's residence in the dwelling within the school district boundaries.

There will be several speakers' questions which will be answered directly to that speaker due to the singular, specific nature of their question.

If a question was omitted, please contact Bret Towne at bret.towne@edmondschools.net.