

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS DECLINING ENROLLMENT COMMITTEE

Update 4.13.23

On March 16, the District 51 Board of Education approved a resolution to move forward with forming a committee to address declining enrollment at the elementary school level. The committee will make a recommendation to Superintendent Dr. Hill no later than September 19, 2023. The committee is specifically charged to:

- Continue the work already started
- Review data already presented
- Acquire additional data, if necessary
- Study all options, including the benefits, and ramifications of closing elementary schools
- Better educate the community on the issues surrounding the enrollment declines and the effects enrollment decline has on the District
- Develop recommendations to address declining student enrollment

Superintendent Dr. Hill, along with District 51 leaders, will facilitate the committee meetings. Committee members (28 in total) were invited to serve based on a variety of criteria. The committee is comprised of elementary teachers serving on the Superintendent Teacher Advisory Group, elementary principals who serve on the Superintendent Principal Advisory Group, family members from the District Accountability Committee and District Special Education Advisory Committee, community members from D51 Strategic Plan Priority Area Action Teams, community members and district staff from the District Minority Advisory Committee, members of entities in the community that the District collaborates with such as the City of Grand Junction, the City of Fruita, Mesa County, Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, and Grand Junction Economic Partnership, two members from the District 51 Board of Education, members from the D51 Senior Leadership Team, and the D51 Department of Communications.

The group will meet twice a month in four-hour sessions through September in order to work together to develop a final recommendation. The first work session was held on April 11. The committee gathered to learn more about the process and the charge. The group engaged in a collaborative brainstorming session on how we will interact and communicate with each other, ultimately developing a set of working agreements.

Superintendent Dr. Hill discussed the relationship between our work and the 3-year Strategic Plan, which was co-created with our Community and grounded the District in our work of ensuring we engage, equip, and empower each and every student, each and every day and the promises of the D51 Graduate Profile. He presented to the committee the reasons why District 51 is continuing to see decreasing enrollment, including declining birth rates, COVID-19 impacts, increases in housing prices, and other educational options available to students in our community outside of D51.

Melanie Trujillo, our Chief Financial Officer reviewed the District's Systemic Staffing Model and presented a review of the efforts the District has engaged in over the last few years to combat declining enrollment through the staffing model. Unfortunately, declining enrollment remains an issue and could result in a projected revenue loss of over \$3 million next year. Melanie presented to the group on how the staffing levels will impact our general fund and a school's ability to provide enrichment options for our students.

The group explored what an equipped and empowered elementary school profile might look like, including adequately staffed and strong teaching teams, effective plans for student supports, and quality facilities. The discussion included conversations that focused on the number of staff vs. students, the amount of resources and condition of facilities, and the school's ability to offer enrichment programs. The committee briefly explored other effective consolidation models and research and shared with the group questions, concerns, and assessments as we begin to look at how we will move forward, and will continue to explore those at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held later this month, and the committee will continue to work through a process that will lead to a final recommendation. Summaries of the committee meetings will be sent to D51 staff, families, and the community following each meeting, and the Board of Education will receive updates at Work Sessions, beginning in May. Ultimately, the success of a committee to address declining enrollment will depend on the collaboration and commitment of its members, as well as the willingness of the broader community to support its efforts. By working together, however, we believe this committee plays a vital role in ensuring that elementary schools remain vibrant and well-attended institutions that support the academic success and well-being of all students.

Mesa County Valley School District 51

More Information :

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