

School Petition

We the undersigned taxpayers of Johnson County, Iowa hereby petition the Board of Directors of the Iowa City and Coralville Community School District (ICCSA) to take a series of specific actions based upon the following guiding principles and facts.

Guiding Principles

All students served by a single publicly funded school district should have equal access to an academically excellent and flexible curriculum and to high quality extracurricular programs.

A school board and the district administrators it supervises should manage their resources wisely and should not allow some facilities in their district to be underutilized while other similar facilities are over capacity.

The percentage of students from low income households (as determined by their eligibility for free or reduced price lunches) significantly alters the academic experience in that building in both positive and negative ways. For example, all students benefit from exposure to demographic diversity as a routine part of their educational experience. Thus, the school board should make every effort to evenly distribute students from low income families across the district, especially at the high school level where relatively large areas are served by a single school.

Relevant Facts

The following facts are offered as evidence of serious problems within the ICCSD that require immediate and substantive action:

For the next academic year, West High is predicted to be over capacity (101%) while City High is predicted to be at only 88% capacity. This is the tenth year of a trend of student gain at West High (which will soon result in serious overcrowding) and student loss at City High (with associated teacher loss and decreased curricular flexibility).

In the fall of 2008, West High provided free or reduced price lunches to 17% of its students while City High provided this support to 27% of its students (53% more).

Some elementary school enrollment areas with a very low percentage of low income households are currently assigned to West High despite being physically closer to City High. Other elementary school enrollment areas with a high percentage of low income households are currently assigned to City High even though they are physically closer to West High. This seemingly non-arbitrary assignment of enrollment areas is causing an increasing inequity in the educational experiences available at the two comprehensive high schools in the ICCSD.

Specific Requests for Action

In order to more efficiently utilize the current physical capacities of the two comprehensive public high schools in the ICCSD, and to reduce the disparity in academic and extracurricular opportunities in these institutions, we the undersigned taxpayers of Johnson County Iowa hereby petition the Board of Directors of the Iowa City and Coralville Community School District (ICCSD) to take the following specific actions:

- 1) Before the end of the 2008-2009 school year, we ask the Board of the ICCSD to announce phased boundary changes that will result in a more equitable utilization of high school capacities and a more equitable distribution of high school students from low income households. We ask that implementation of these boundary changes begin no later than the fall of 2010.
- 2) Before the end of the 2008-2009 school year, we ask that the Board of the ICCSD announce a policy that will stabilize the number of faculty working at City High to at least the level of the 2008-2009 year, and to guarantee this number of faculty at City High until the boundary changes have been fully implemented. This action is necessary for students at both high schools to have the same opportunity to take advanced and specialized courses during the boundary phase in.
- 3) To prevent overcrowding at West High and to create faculty stability at City High, we ask the board to assign all "new to the district" high school students to City High until the boundary changes are fully implemented. We also ask that the Board take all necessary steps to provide sufficient counseling and other support services to safely and constructively accommodate a very large number of "new to the community" students in a single school building.

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Web and Email Permissions

The undersigned are willing to have their names listed on the COPE website as signers of the High School Enrollment petition and/or to receive school-related emails from the COPE steering committee. The email list will NOT be shared outside the steering committee.

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