

June 29, 2009

Start boundary committee soon

The Iowa City School Board said it plans to address elementary boundary changes when they voted to close Roosevelt on June 9. The school board will discuss high school enrollment issues during its work session Tuesday. One idea discussed during the high school enrollment task force meeting is to shift Lincoln Elementary students (or another elementary school) to City High to help increase enrollment at City High as early as fall 2009.

This short-term solution presents a quandary for the elementary boundary change that most likely will occur when the Crossing school opens. One goal in boundary changes is not to do them too frequently, thus whatever elementary school is changed now would most likely not be changed in two or three years when elementary boundaries are changed. That could result in leaving a school such as Lincoln with a disproportionately low free-reduced lunch population when the district changes elementary boundaries.

Rather than take students from any elementary school now, the district should wait and form a boundary committee. A committee which includes all potential stakeholders, thus it would be different from the high school enrollment task force. This committee should listen to options for boundary changes from internal and external experts and set up the criteria for making the change. The committee may decide that looking at boundary changes every five years because of community mobility is necessary.

We need to take care of the elementary issue to reduce the socioeconomic and racial isolation patterns in the district. The boundary changes for elementary schools most likely will affect the high school enrollment. Let's take our time and make the boundary change work for the entire community and not move an elementary school now.

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