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Revisit 2000 long-range plan

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Guest Opinion

Iowa City School District Associate Superintendent Jim Behle tells me that City High is projected to be at 88 percent capacity next year while West High is projected to be at 101 percent of its capacity.

He also told me that City High received only 13 students from the "new to the district" enrollment policy this year (juniors and seniors) while an additional 54 "new to the district" students (freshman and sophomores) attended West High.

So my question is, "Why is the district continuing with a one-fifth implementation of the enrollment policy (13 of 67 new students) while West is predicted to be over capacity and City is predicted to be under capacity?" I am sure the School Board realizes that doing this will result in the loss of three teachers from City High -- something they can ill afford.

Let me repeat the four requests that I made at a recent meeting:

- 1) The board should make it clear to the public that given our current financial constraints, no new high school will be built in the district in the foreseeable future.
- 2) The board should not talk publicly about strategic planning for 2017 until the existing high school enrollment problem has been resolved. (The first two of these requests are necessary to allow the public to focus on the need for the next two items.)
- 3) The board should reinstate the complete "new to the district" enrollment policy to stem the loss of teachers from City High.
- 4) Before the end of this school year, the board should announce a boundary change that will result in a durable solution to the enrollment disparity between the high schools and that will improve the disparity in the "free and reduced lunch" percentage at the same time.

I also suggest that the board review its planning document for 2000 (available on former board member Nicholas Johnson's Web site at www.uiowa.edu/~cyberlaw/SchBoard/Other/boundry3.html). Both the board members and the public should look at what was planned nine years ago with respect to balancing enrollment between the high schools and balancing the distribution of low-income students.

Why hasn't this been done? Because it requires courage, conviction and leadership. Because it requires the seven board members to get this done.

I ask the board to please do it now, for the benefit of our entire community for decades to come.
