

District Feeling Enrollment Growth

We are fortunate that years ago, in witnessing the enrollment growth elsewhere in Delaware County, the Big Walnut Board of Education and district administration started the discussion and preparation for the growth that would impact our district. We can see throughout the area with new homes being built and with the increased enrollment in our schools that the growth is now upon us.

Without a doubt, enrollment, facilities and our finances combined represent the most significant needs facing our district right now. For that reason, it continues to demand our full attention.

In Big Walnut, our community-based Facilities Committee, a committee comprised of community volunteers who have expertise in construction and design, has continued its work. As part of that work, they review and consider the enrollment projections, along with needs our facilities have, when looking for solutions. To aid in their work, a third-party firm with expertise in enrollment projections, Future Think, Inc., helps project enrollment based on new homes being built and people moving into the district.

Now, as we look ahead from the failure of the November 2016 bond issue, we are again using the committee to help assess our next steps.

Our enrollment remains strong and we are feeling the overcrowding in the buildings. In fact, three of our buildings are above capacity. Due to the growth, General Rosecrans Elementary and Big Walnut Elementary will open the new school year with trailers so that we can provide additional classroom space. These buildings are not alone. All of our buildings, except the middle school, will be at or above capacity within two years.

So, what can we do as a solution?

That is what the District and Board are considering right now. We are considering a November 2017 ballot issue, but are first seeking input from the community to assess their needs and desires for our school district.

In the meantime, we do know that the need did not go away with the failure of the bond issue and that doing nothing only exacerbates the situation. Enrollment projections show that growth will remain strong in the years to come. In addition, throughout our district our schools need up-to-date security and electrical systems.

In the short term, funds from our daily operating budget will continue to be used to compensate for enrollment issues. This includes the renovation and purchase of trailers along with repairs to current buildings. Unfortunately these expenses divert

funds from the classroom and hiring of teachers to keep class sizes manageable as we grow.

You can see that the work we have ahead of us is important to all of us now, not just in the future. Thank you for supporting our students and schools.

Angela S. Pollock
Superintendent