

“Educational Excellence in a Caring Community”

Manchester Community Schools

Board of Education Office
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January 21, 2016

Dear Parents, Community Members, Students, and Stakeholders,

I am writing today to explain the district's consideration of building configuration. We currently are operating four buildings (Ackerson, Klager, Manchester Middle School, and Manchester High School). With our enrollment at 1,066, we need to consider how we might become more efficient, while maintaining our vision of "Educational Excellence in a Caring Community."

The causes of our drop in enrollment may be different from what you've heard on social media or around town. The biggest reason is the drop in birth rate, around the state and nation, dating back to the recession of 2008. There are just fewer students to educate. With per pupil funding in Michigan, fewer students means less funding. Over the past five years, enrollment in Klager Elementary has declined. Additionally, jobs around the state and region also flat lined, forcing families to move to other states or parts of Michigan to seek work. Both of these factors are outside of our control. We have made it a priority to communicate with departing families, to ascertain why they left. The reasons are across the board. When we look at the decrease from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016, few of departing families identify dissatisfaction with the Manchester Community Schools as their reason for leaving. As the school year has continued, several families have contacted us and are planning on having their students return to the Manchester Schools.

With the outside factors pressing on our district, we are embarking on a discussion on ways to become more effective and more efficient and keep our resources in our classrooms. No decisions have been made. Nothing is set in stone. If you've heard that in the community, it may be because there is a lot of brainstorming happening, and feedback already is being given on ideas. This review process is one in which many other school districts within Washtenaw County have already undertaken.

The Manchester Community School Board has formed a committee of teachers, support staff, parents, students, community members and administrators to investigate these opportunities to re-align our resources, our staffing, and our facilities. There is a wide range of choices, and these choices may cause concern and stress for our families.

The first committee meeting will be held on January 27, 2016 at 6 PM. Minutes will be taken in these meetings. They will be emailed to you within a week, so you can stay up to date about the discussions, the issues, and the concerns being voiced. Additionally, the minutes will be sent to the Manchester Mirror for publication. The goal of the committee is to make a recommendation to the Board of Education at the April board meeting. We hope to send a draft of the plan for public input prior to this date.

I will be having "Coffee with the Superintendents" for more informal contacts with community members on any topic in the district, including building configuration.

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February 10	2:00 pm	Frank's
March 9	7:00 pm	Ackerson Board room
April 13	10:00 am	Frank's
May 12	2:00 pm	Frank's
June 8	7:00 pm	Ackerson Board room

We want to collaborate with all stakeholders to find the best solutions to the issues of declining enrollment. I hope that you'll stay connected to our process and give feedback via the “Let's Talk” button on the district website.

If you have any questions, please email me or use the “Let's Talk” button on the district's website.

Thanks for all you do for the Manchester Community Schools. I look forward to working with everyone on this process.



Sincerely,
Cherie Vannatter