

**MINUTES OF THE ELEMENTARY ENROLLMENT / ATTENDANCE
AREAS COMMITTEE
October 14, 2024**



Welcome/Introductions/Norms (introduction and norms)

Call to Order: 5:03 p.m.

Mr. Watson welcomed everyone and conducted introductions. He stated that we have five scheduled meetings and depending on the work and decisions, the number of meetings could be extended as needed. He said the committee would eventually bring its recommendation to the Board.

- Jake Dixon – Zone 1 – Present**
- Holli Haws – Zone 2 – Present**
- Eryn Kelsey – Zone 3 – Present**
- Jennifer Warner – Zone 3 – Present**
- Lauren Dalton – Zone 3 – Present**
- Emily Astin – Zone 4 – Present**
- Jennifer Lloyd – Zone 5 – Present**
- Tara Dayley – Teacher – Present**
- Cody Perry – Teacher – Present**
- Nick Muckerman – Administrator - Present**
- Angela Stevens – Administrator - Present**
- Troy Johnson – Administrator - Present**
- AJ Watson – Director of Elementary Ed - Present**

Mr. Watson stated he wanted to keep the committee as a workable group. He said the Board gave direction to have seven parents, two teachers and three administrators on the committee. He said the committee would begin looking at the elementary enrollment and attendance areas. He said the secondary committee would review the same information for the middle schools. He said at some point we will combine the committees and present to the school board. Mr. Muckerman asked if they were looking at high school. Mr. Watson said they are not looking at that right now but they could at some point. He said the purpose for the committee is to make a recommendation to the school board and they will make the final choices.

Mr. Watson stated we would go through norms and would ask that all conversations (ideas) be kept within the committee until we make recommendations to the school board.

Mr. Watson reviewed the committee norms and said committee members represented each geographical area of the trustee zones. He said that one parent from each zone was randomly selected and then two were randomly selected from the entire group.

Committee Purpose

- Address Decline in District-Wide Enrollment
- Maximize Use of District Resources
- Develop Recommendations/Options to Provide to School Board for Elementary Enrollment Areas

Mr. Watson said the main purpose of the committee was to address the decline in district-wide enrollment. He said since the 22-23 school year the district is down 427 students and over seven years it is down 1,042 for K-12. He said the only school that has not had a decline over the seven year span is Washington, which was a very small school.

Mr. Watson said we want to utilize buildings and staffing to the best of our ability. He said declining student enrollment meant a decline in funding. He said last year the district had to reduce by 14 teachers and this year it could be at least 6 to 8 FTE (teaching positions) depending on funding. He said you can only distribute so much before looking at restructuring or coming up with other solutions.

Mr. Watson said when the committee is done, he would like to be able to present options to the Board. He said he does not know where we will end up and it could be several recommendations. He said there are resources and tools that the committee will use to come up with the recommendations.

Goals

- Optimizing Capacity – balance populations make best use available space
- Equitable Access – fair access to educational programs and facilities
- Minimize Disruptions – for learners and families
- Maintain Efficiency – travel time and middle school feeders
- Future Needs and Considerations – planning for future changes and needs

Mr. Watson said we want to optimize capacity and make best use of available space. He said there is no way to balance everything equally as we cannot move neighborhoods, but the committee will look at balancing out populations as much as possible. He said we want to make sure there is fair access to education programs and facilities for all families. He stated that we need to look at maintaining efficiency with travel time and middle school feeder schools. He said there is no way to tell what the future holds but if there are areas of growth and development or other areas that do not have families and development, those need to be factors in the recommendation. Ms. Haws asked if this would go into effect for the next school year and Mr. Watson said he will show the timeline of the committee and there is a possibility that the recommendations made to the Board of Trustees could go into effect for the next school year.

Elementary Information and Enrollment Areas

- District 25 Elementary School Information/Enrollment Areas
- Elementary Feeder Schools (Middle Schools)

Mr. Watson stated there are 13 elementary schools in the district, and Turning Point was the behavioral elementary program that had one class with a small number of learners housed at the New Horizon Center. He said all of the elementary schools have K-5 programs and there is one preschool at Tendoy Elementary that is operated through a grant through the 21st Century Program. He said Lincoln Early Intervention is also a preschool but it will not be part of the discussion. He mentioned that some elementary schools housed the ERR program (Chubbuck, Wilcox, Greenacres and Indian Hills) and each school has two programs that consist of K-2 and 3-5. He said when the committee looks at numbers these programs need space as well. He said an elementary and middle school map were included in the handouts. He said the maps could be drilled down online to see the actual streets. He said it would be a useful tool as we start looking at different areas and making decisions. He said some of the areas look very large but it does not mean there are homes in that area. He said there is a middle school feeder list in the handout as well. He said in the past they have tried to align the elementary schools to feed into the same middle school but that is not the case anymore and that some of them feed into a couple of different middle schools. He said this could have an impact on some decisions we make or we may think it is a transition period and it is not a big deal to keep them in the same feeder schools. He said the online maps showed which elementary schools feed into the middle schools and how they overlap. He said capacity is different in each school and ranged from 250 to 650. He said transportation does play a big part in these decisions as well since they have to be able to make it work and the committee will coordinate with them to make sure recommendations we want to make are possible. Ms. Kelsey asked if there were any resources from when the current boundaries were set. Mr. Watson said it has been several years since any changes to elementary boundaries were made but he would gather the information for the next meeting. Mr. Watson said in the last six years, some of the

elementary schools were at, or over capacity and had to overload students in certain grade levels. He said the district had not had to do that in the last few years. Ms. Dalton asked how funding was determined. Mr. Watson stated it was based on student average daily attendance (ADA).

Data Review

- Current Membership/Enrollment – October
- 7 Year Enrollment Comparison (K-12)
- 7 Year Kindergarten Enrollment
- 7 Year Transfer Comparison
- Elementary School Capacity 24-25
- PCSD25 Enrollment Cohort Data

Mr. Watson said included in the packet were the membership numbers. He said the numbers were broken out by elementary schools and grade level. He said some of the numbers represented our special programs. He said, for example, Chubbuck had 24 students in each of their kindergarten classes and also had 6 in the ERR program (special program). He stated the size of our student population varied from 221 to 510 depending on the building capacity, which impacts the number significantly. He said maximum classroom size was: Kindergarten = (25), grades 2 – 3 = (28) and grades 4 – 5 = (30). He said the committee would review September's membership data. Ms. Dayley asked Mr. Watson to touch more on funding. Mr. Watson said we get funded for so many units, based on the number of learners that are in their seats for attendance purposes. He said the state has a calculation that they base it on and it comes down to the instructional hours. He said as we lose learners along with that goes the funding for our general fund that funds teachers. He said we upload data to the state and they send us units / funding based on all of that information. Mr. Muckerman stated that attendance has been an issue since Covid. Mr. Watson said during Covid, the state funded districts based on student membership, rather than attendance, but reverted back to the attendance formula last year. Ms. Lloyd asked if there was a difference between excused and unexcused absences. Mr. Watson said not for the state, they count as an absence. Ms. Kelsey said she would like to see the turnover rate data for each school (mainly teachers). Mr. Watson said he would see if he could gather the information. Ms. Dalton asked who would be most likely to lose a position without funding. Mr. Watson said it would have an impact on all positions. He said he wanted to be very clear that the decisions made by the committee would not have anything to do with anyone losing their job. He said there is a possibility of restructuring but there has been no talk of any type of discussion of losing positions/jobs. Ms. Dayley said speaking as a teacher the district has done a great job to make sure people still have jobs when restructuring has to happen.

Mr. Watson said the data presented showed the last 7 years for comparison purposes and reflected K-12 student enrollment. Ms. Lloyd asked if the 20-21 school year included the students that chose to do online during Covid. Mr. Watson said yes. Ms. Dayley asked why there was a shift in numbers at Irving Middle School and Pocatello High School. Mr. Watson stated they did a boundary shift that impacted some schools. Ms. Jensen said the last boundary shift took effect in the 2019-2020 school year. Mr. Watson said for every 25 learners that unenrolled, the district had to reduce by one teacher. He said the hardest part about staffing, was that the reduction in student membership affected all grade levels.

Mr. Watson said there were a lot of net gains/losses. He said if there were 1,000 students in 12th grade, and only 730 elementary learners coming in, that net loss would eventually come into play. Ms. Lloyd asked if we could look at city demographics to see if the people moving in had kids or families, or if they were older adults with no children. Mr. Watson said our ArcGIS person is trying to gather this information and is working with the city as well. Mr. Dixon asked if parents have kindergarten students that just are not sending them to school. Mr. Watson said that is very rare and most of them do/will attend kindergarten. Mr. Muckerman said there was a lot of development in the Edahow area and traditionally it has been a really full school but he wondered if the lack of affordable housing was affecting enrollment. He said there were probably a million factors that play into this. Ms. Haws said

she feels people will have less children because of rising prices for everything. Mr. Watson said we are hoping to get enrollment projections for families/students that will be coming into district. Mr. Dixon said the Blackfoot area lost enrollment and had to let some people go. He said ISU was also facing an enrollment cliff, but it is not specific to Pocatello. Mr. Watson said Marsh Valley is down about 100 learners in their high school and the trend is a decline in all schools across the state.

Mr. Watson said we have open enrollment which means parents can submit a transfer to any school in the district. He said if there is space available, the transfers are accepted. He said parents have to transport on their own with an accepted transfer. He said in some schools it reduced enrollment numbers and other schools it increases those enrollment numbers. He said just looking at the 24-25 school year, Ellis Elementary accepted 73 transfers outside their enrollment area and only 14 students transferred to other schools. He said Ellis has about 60 learners that are not in their attendance area that are attending their school. Ms. Haws asked if the committee could get the transfer-in/transfer-out data broken down by school. Ms. Jensen will gather the information. Ms. Warner asked why transfers get denied. Mr. Watson said there are only three reasons for denial which are capacity, behavior, and attendance. Ms. Lloyd asked why Ellis was at 98% capacity and Gate City was only at 87% capacity and Ellis is still accepting transfers. Mr. Watson explained that as long as they have space available, they will continue to accept transfers.

Mr. Watson said capacity is based on programs and classrooms this year. He stated on the handout it shows the capacity they could have but sometimes we are using classrooms and/or space for different things. Mr. Watson will get updated building capacity for the next meeting. He said one example was a modular unit being moved from Jefferson to Chubbuck which changed each school's capacity. He said he would make sure the numbers were accurate. Ms. Dayley asked if the ERR programs are staying the schools they are in. Mr. Watson said the plan is to have them stay. He said the programs were spread throughout the district to accommodate for transportation. Mr. Watson said a general rule is between 80 – 85% of capacity. Ms. Stevens asked if we can check Ellis's capacity, she feels it is off by 100 at least. Mr. Watson will check on this. Ms. Lloyd asked if all classrooms are created equally. Mr. Watson said no, they are not created equal and explained that there are a few exceptions of smaller rooms where we cannot make the capacity the same. Mr. Dixon asked if there are other factors that affect capacity like students, teachers, programs, or equipment. Mr. Watson said the only other thing would be if at one of the schools there are two special education teachers instead of one, they would need two different classes. Mr. Dixon asked if there were transportation issues with not transporting to certain areas and Mr. Watson said there is a radius or distance they go but this would be something we will have to work with transportation to figure out different scenarios.

Mr. Watson reviewed the cohort data for the last seven years. He said cohort data followed the same group of students from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Ms. Lloyd asked if the charter schools make a big impact because they do not have a high school for charter/private schools. Mr. Watson said we do see that every year when those 8th graders come in as 9th graders. Ms. Haws asked if there is data on when people graduate college and if people stay in Pocatello after they get degrees. Ms. Stevens said in her area they have a lot of young families and professors in that area. Ms. Astin stated that she lives in the Washington area and there are a lot of professors that live in that area with young families.

Discussion/Questions/Resources

- ArcGIS-Geographic Information System
 - o Tools for mapping, analyzing, managing and sharing spatial data

Mr. Watson said the ArcGIS is a system we have used for years and it will be important for us to use this to help guide some of our discussions. He said the ArcGIS representative would be more than happy to come to one of our meetings if the committee felt it would be beneficial. He said he can also get different demographic information, or free and reduced eligibility numbers if needed.

Timeline and Next Steps

- Communications Plan Timeline

Mr. Watson said the timeline was included in the packet. He said the committee would have an opportunity to present recommendations in November, but that date could be extended if the committee was not ready. Ms. Stevens said last year the district had assessments done on a few of the buildings. Mr. Watson said the district hired an outside firm to go through a few of the facilities that the Board wanted more information on. He said he would bring the findings to the next meeting. He said a lot of the buildings were built a lot time ago, maybe in the 80s but Washington is around 105 years old. Ms. Lloyd asked if attendance was a goal for the committee. Mr. Watson said that will not be one of our goals, just the enrollment/attendance areas. Ms. Kelsey asked if we have the rate of development for Pocatello. Mr. Watson said he will see if he can get that information from the city.

Mr. Watson asked if the community input could be moved to December. He said he was hopeful the committee would have a recommendation for the Board in November. He said there will be five meetings for now but if we need to push anything back, we will extend the meeting timeline based on need. Mr. Watson said the findings from community input would be presented in January, and the Board may have the district conduct some focus groups based on recommendations from the committee. Ms. Stevens said it would be beneficial to have the ArcGIS person at the next meeting to be able to manipulate the data. Mr. Watson said the plan is to start looking at numbers and new data at the next meeting.

The Committee Adjourned at 6:28 p.m.