

TO: MCCSC Board of School Trustees
From: MCCSC Superintendent Dr. Jeff Hauswald
Date: December 12, 2023
Re: Balancing SES Between Elementary Schools Strategy

On Tuesday, November 14, 2023, the Board of School Trustees approved a motion made by a member of the Board of School Trustees (Item #7.05) requiring the Superintendent to "...present to the board a strategy(s) that would improve the balance of SES between our elementary schools."

"Balancing elementary SES" will be defined for this report by considering the individual definitions of these words and then as a whole. One definition of "balance" in the Oxford dictionary is "a condition in which different elements are equal or in the correct proportions"; elementary is defined by Indiana Code as "any combination of kindergarten and grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8"; Socioeconomic Status (SES) is defined by the Indiana Department of Education as "the number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch as based on income eligibility guidelines."

Taken together, "Balancing elementary SES" can be considered utilizing mean, median, mode, or standard deviation. For the recommendation of strategies, as required by the Board, range will be utilized for comparative purposes and for considering balance between schools. Range is defined as the difference between the lowest and highest value; in this case, the difference between the school with the lowest and highest percentage of SES.

The goal of balancing SES between elementary schools can be challenging. In 2001, Indiana created charter schools (IC 20-5.5-2) with the stated purposes of providing innovative and autonomous programs that (1) serve the different learning styles and needs of public school students; (2) offer public school students appropriate and innovative choices; (3) afford varied opportunities for professional educators; (4) allow public schools freedom and flexibility in exchange for exceptional levels of accountability; and (5) provide parents, students, community members, and local entities with an expanded opportunity for involvement in the public school system.

In the late 2000's, Indiana significantly reformed school finance. Property tax reform in 2008 resulted in Indiana's circuit breaker tax caps and were applied for taxes in 2009. In November 2010, voters approved the addition of property tax caps (commonly referred to as 1%-2%-3% tax caps) to Indiana's state Constitution. Near simultaneously, Indiana reduced property-taxes that supported K-12 schools and increased Indiana's sales tax. This change provided more State-provided funds for day-to-day operations of schools rather than through locally-levied property tax dollars for many day-to-day operations. Property taxes are still collected to fund transportation expenses, build and remodel schools, and pay some non-instructional staff wages, for example. Additionally, voter-approved referendum funds are levied at the local level and at MCCSC are used for salaries, wages and programming. Together, these changes resulted in a new model of K-12 school funding whereby "dollars followed students" and schools began

receiving a majority of its annual funding based upon enrollment (or ADM – average daily membership).

In 2011, Indiana launched its school voucher program, originally to help children of poverty to have alternatives to low-performing schools. However, these guidelines were quickly amended with requirements expanded which by 2023 resulted in what was commonly considered “near universal vouchers” with eligibility raised to a new income ceiling of 400% of what is required to qualify for free/reduced price lunch programs, equal to about \$220,000 for a family of four.

These new challenges create alternative schooling options for students and their families and can result in shifts to the demographics of individual schools as well as the district. For the 2023-2024 school year, MCCSC has seen a net transfer loss of 935 students. A majority of these transfers are to charter and private schools. MCCSC actually saw a net gain of 118 students for transfers from other public, non-charter, non-virtual K-12 schools.

In short, the efforts to balance elementary SES at schools is likely not a one-time fix and requires continuous review and revisions due, in part, to shifts in family demographics and mobility, but also due to Indiana’s new school choice environment.

Below is a 10-year history of SES percentages by elementary school as well as the SES range for each school year:

Elementary School	Current Enrollment	SES by Free/Reduced Lunch Rate as a Percent*									
		14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24
Fairview	376	90	86	86	87	83	84	86	75	84	78
Arlington Heights	322	60	59	59	57	58	50	51	46	63	65
Highland Park	344	59	59	53	59	60	54	57	53	58	65
Templeton	406	74	63	59	57	59	56	59	46	67	64
Grandview	421	58	57	57	57	56	57	48	41	61	54
Summit	614	49	50	50	52	49	47	44	36	49	52
Clear Creek	304	42	41	42	43	46	46	44	39	51	50
Lakeview	385	32	34	30	28	31	32	32	26	33	37
University	532	32	33	32	32	34	32	32	24	33	37
Unionville	232	31	29	27	33	35	27	29	22	26	32
Marlin	217	33	36	29	28	31	28	23	18	22	29
Rogers	328	20	16	16	19	22	20	18	13	26	26
Binford	491	19	17	15	16	17	17	18	20	20	21
Childs	493	10	11	7	9	11	9	9	10	13	15
District Avg		43	41	39	40	41	39	38	33	43	45
Total Enrollment		5878	5983	5981	6019	6023	5980	5388	5579	5491	5465
SES Range		80	75	79	78	72	73	75	65	71	65

*The 2023-2024 SES Percentages were submitted to the IDOE in October 2023 and are awaiting IDOE publishing.

Recently, the Board approved a relocation of the ALPS program from University Elementary to Fairview Elementary. For the 2023-2024 school year, an ALPS classroom was added at Fairview Elementary for Grades 3 and 4. The Grade 4 ALPS classroom was eliminated at University Elementary. For the 2024-2025 school year, the ALPS Grade 5 classroom will be moved to Fairview Elementary. Finally, for the 2025-2026 school year, the ALPS Grade 6

classroom will be moved to Fairview Elementary. The total transition time for the movement of ALPS from University Elementary to Fairview Elementary will be three years.

In the first year, the addition of two ALPS classrooms at Fairview Elementary contributed to a 6% decrease in the school's free/reduced lunch rate. The addition of a Grade 5 and Grade 6 ALPS classroom is currently projected to result in a 2025-2026 SES rate at Fairview Elementary of 74% with an increase of the SES rate at University Elementary School to 41%. This is assuming all other variables hold constant, so actual results may vary from these estimates.

The strategies provided within this report focus on school reconfigurations and not redistricting. The act of combining two schools and creating new grade-span configurations collapses two existing districts, but does not move the existing district lines through a redistricting process. Redistricting requires additional analyses to ensure compliance with federal and state guidelines, including race discrimination considerations and special education compliance. Regardless, any reconfigurations would be reviewed by the MCCSC legal counsel.

Strategy #1: Consolidate Childs Elementary & Templeton Elementary. Over a three-year transition, reconfigure Childs Elementary to a Primary School serving grades PK-2 and Templeton Elementary to an Intermediate School serving grades 3-6. Transition PK & K to Childs Elementary and Grades 3 & 4 to Templeton Elementary in Year 1; transition Grade 1 to Childs Elementary and Grade 5 to Templeton Elementary in Year 2; transition Grade 2 to Childs Elementary and Grade 6 to Templeton Elementary in Year 3.

Based upon current enrollment and SES percentages at these two elementary schools, the estimated result in this change over a three-year time period would be to create an approximate SES percentage rate at Childs and Templeton elementary schools of 37%. This strategy would change the SES range for all fourteen elementary schools from a range of 63% for the 2023-2024 school year – with Fairview Elementary at 78% and Childs Elementary at 15% TO a predicted range of 53% - with Fairview Elementary at 74% and Binford Elementary at 21% for the 2026-2027 school year. In summary, this strategy would further reduce the overall range of SES percentage rates by 6%. As previously stated, this predicted range assumes all other variables hold constant.

Strategy #2: Consolidate University Elementary & Fairview Elementary. Over a three-year transition, reconfigure University Elementary to a Primary School serving grades PK-3 and Fairview Elementary to an Intermediate School serving grades 4-6. Transition PK & K to University Elementary and Grade 4 to Fairview Elementary in Year 1; transition Grade 1 to University Elementary and Grade 5 to Fairview Elementary in Year 2; transition Grade 2 to University Elementary and Grade 6 to Fairview Elementary in Year 3.

Based upon current enrollment and SES at these two elementary schools, the estimated result in this change over a three-year time period would be to create an approximate SES percentage rate at University and Fairview elementary schools of 54%. This strategy would change the SES range for all fourteen elementary schools from a range of 63% for the 2023-2024 school year – with Fairview Elementary at 78% and Childs Elementary at 15% TO a predicted range of 50% – with Arlington Elementary/Highland Park Elementary at 65% and Childs Elementary at 15% for

the 2026-2027 school year. In summary, this strategy would reduce the overall range of SES percentage rates by 13%. As previously stated, this predicted range assumes all other variables hold constant.

Strategy #2 could be enacted with Strategy #1. If both strategies were enacted, based upon current enrollment and SES at the four combined schools (i.e. Fairview, University, Childs and Templeton elementary schools), these combined strategies would change the SES range for all fourteen elementary schools from a range of 63% for the 2023-2024 school year – with Fairview Elementary at 78% and Childs Elementary at 15% TO a predicted range of 44% - with Arlington Elementary/Highland Park at 65% and Binford Elementary at 21%.

References

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