

Akron alters school boundaries

District tries to reduce confusion by redrawing areas where clusters overlap

By John Higgins

Beacon Journal staff writer

Published on Tuesday, Jan 11, 2011

The Akron school board approved changing several elementary enrollment boundaries Monday to remedy situations in which students attending the same elementary building might end up going to different high schools.

The Akron district is divided into seven geographical clusters that each have one high school, one middle school and four to five feeder elementary schools.

In some cases, the attendance area for an elementary school includes parts of different clusters, which makes it confusing for parents wondering where their children will go to middle school and high school.

The district is redrawing those areas to eliminate the overlaps.

Other changes will adjust borders to more closely match the capacity for each school.

Most boundary changes, which take effect next school year, involve fewer than 100 students, Superintendent David James said.

Changes to David Hill school's attendance area will affect the most students.

The school, at 1060 E. Archwood Ave. in southeastern Akron, opened as a rebuilt community learning center in 2007 as part of the district's nearly \$800 million construction project with the city.

David Hill draws students from an area that straddles the Garfield and East cluster boundary along South Arlington Street.

That means some of its students go to Roswell Kent Middle School, then Garfield High School, while others follow a path to East High School.

This is David Hill's last year in the Garfield cluster. Starting next school year, David Hill will send all of its students to the new, combined Goodyear Middle School/East High for grades 7-12.

The transition began this year when David Hill added sixth grade, like the other elementary schools in the East cluster.

The new David Hill attendance area matches the boundary between East and Garfield.

Children who live east of South Arlington will be in the East cluster and assigned to David Hill. Those who live west of South Arlington will be in the Garfield cluster, assigned to Barrett elementary.

Students won't have to cross South Arlington to get to school, and the alignment should eliminate confusion when it's time to progress to middle school, James said.

The change, however, means 106 students living west of South Arlington who were assigned to David Hill this year will attend Barrett in the fall.

Another 52 students living east of South Arlington who were assigned to Barrett this year will be assigned to David Hill in August.

"All of these students still are free to open-enroll anywhere they want in the district," James told the school board at its last meeting in December.

The other changes involve smaller numbers of students who live in odd pockets and islands that straddle borders.

Those students have had the option of attending elementary schools in either cluster, but most of those options now have been eliminated.

For example, parents who had a choice between Barber and Seiberling elementary in East Akron will have their children assigned to Barber.

Seiberling's enrollment exceeds 500 students, and plans for a new building are under way.

"It's huge," James said. "When we build the new building, we want to cut back on some of that capacity, and then Barber currently has the capacity to accept those additional students."

Parents who could choose between Betty Jane and Seiberling will be assigned to Betty Jane, where nearly all of their children go already, James said.

In North Akron, students who could choose Findley or Harris will be assigned to Findley.

In West Akron, in the area where West Exchange and Market streets meet at North Hawkins, parents can choose Resnik or Case schools. The district has eliminated that option and simply ratified the choice parents already were making.

"When we analyzed it, for the students who are north of Market Street, virtually all of them would enroll in Case; south of Market Street, they would go to Resnik," James said. "We're just going to make that assignment."

The district plans to hold several community meetings in the next few weeks to explain changes.

John Higgins can be reached at 330-996-3792 or jhiggins@thebeaconjournal.com. Read the education blog at <http://education.ohio.com/>.