

Dear Communities,

We wanted to take a moment to thank the almost 500 parents who participated in our school choice survey, and to provide an overview of the results and what next steps the school board will take from it.

General statistics are as follows:

1. 481 responses were received (each response represents a child in current grades K-7) – this represents approximately 35% of the school population in those grades.
2. 90% of the responses received indicated that the student would not move next year
3. 10% of the responses indicated a desire to “definitely” or “probably” move next year
4. Each school in our district (Crossett Brook Middle, Fayston Elementary, Harwood Middle, Moretown Elementary, Thatcher Brook elementary, Warren) would receive a similar number of new students next year if those who responded “definitely” or “probably” actually followed through on that.
5. The most important factors to people when considering whether to move to another school are:
 - a. School atmosphere and learning culture
 - b. Educator/administrator quality
 - c. Peer group quality
 - d. Course offerings
6. The comments were in favor of school choice, even for those who did not indicate a desire to use it next year:
 - a. Many people talked about the importance of consistency for their children if they move, and indicated their “choice” would be to stay where they are if their family has to move.
 - b. A few wanted consistency for their children who have started Pre-K in a school other than the one they would be assigned by geography in Kindergarten.
 - c. A few noted that they do not want to switch, but value the option for others
 - d. A few noted that they need to do more homework and are not ready to make a change next year.
7. Some concerns were voiced that highlighted misconceptions:
 - a. Concern that students would be forced to move – this is absolutely not the case and not intended in the near future
 - b. Concern about closing schools – this is not the intent of the survey
 - c. Concern that some schools could become better than others based on choice – this is the exact opposite of what we intend. Rather, we hope to see greater equity in all schools, making choice a valuable option for parents who want to maintain consistency or respond to a particular child’s need – not a method to escape from an all-around bad situation.

Some of answers and key takeaways that the school board found in the survey results are as follows:

1. Is it valuable for the new unified school board to take the time to develop and implement a school choice policy immediately? We think the answer is an unequivocal yes. The numbers of those switching will likely not be huge, but offering the choice is of great value to those families.
2. Do the numbers of those switching help to make some small classes bigger (i.e. should we not consolidate very small classes because they could become too big if a lot of kids want to move in?)? We looked at a very detailed overview of how many students each class might gain or

lose, and the class sizes do not change significantly enough to impact the size of any class across the district. Thus the school board will be looking at the need to consolidate some classes (ones that are smaller than 10), so that we have a healthy number of students in each classroom. Note a few comments indicated a desire to move from classes that are too small.

3. Need to clear up any concerns based on misconceptions. This is partly being done with this letter. Please see #7 above.
4. Use the main drivers for school choice to inform our vision and actions. In particular, all members of the school board agree that the most important factors noted in #5 above should be equal in each school. The details may not be the same, but the learning culture, staff quality, peer group quality, and course offerings should be a net positive in all schools. This is the equity that we intend to strive toward.
5. Celebrate the fact that so many parents want to keep their kids in their current schools. All schools had at least one student who would likely move given a choice, but there doesn't seem to be one school that is full of kids who want to be elsewhere. We see the high level of kids who will stay where they are, in combination with the small but relatively equal number of kids exercising choice, as an indication of how good all of our schools are and at the same time how valuable school choice is for a variety of reasons not related to equity in offerings.

Once again, we would like to thank you for participating in our survey. We expect to continue asking for your input in the course of doing our work, and your engagement will ensure that we truly are doing our work for the good of all in our communities – so please keep in touch!

[begin boilerplate – use this in any/all communications?]

Below are 5 ways to engage with the HUUSD board to ensure that our work is done in the context of community values:

1. Participate in future surveys sent by the board.
2. Attend our board meetings on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the Month at the Harwood Union High School Library (please note even more meetings are scheduled now for budget development – find the full meeting schedule at: <http://www.wwsu.org/huUSD-board.php>).
3. Watch board meeting recordings at <http://www.mrvtv.com/>.
4. Review board meeting minutes posted at: (where are they? I couldn't find them)
5. Contact a board member with a specific request or question (names and contact information found at <http://www.wwsu.org/huUSD-board.php>) Yes? Should we provide guidance about what they should contact us about, or just leave it open?