

Clovis Unified parents question school boundary proposals

By Mackenzie Mays
mmays@fresnobee.com

Don Ulrich, Clovis Unified School District's assistant superintendent, asked the dozens of parents who filed into Clovis North High School on Monday night to first take a deep breath.

"We all know how emotional this is. It's tough. This is a tough thing for all of our families to go through. We recognize that," Ulrich said.

Monday was the first of several public meetings Clovis Unified will hold to address its plans to redraw school-attendance boundaries – a move that will affect students attending about half of the district's 32 elementary schools, depending on where they live.

The district released two nearly identical proposals [last week](#), pointing to growth projections and a need to balance enrollment numbers across schools.

The plan will force some elementary students to transfer to another school in the district, ultimately changing where they attend high school. The changes would go into effect next school year, and only affect students up through the fifth grade – depending on their neighborhood.

This is the first time Clovis Unified has redrawn attendance boundaries in 10 years, and is in response to the city's rapid residential development. Ulrich said redrawing boundaries will allow the district to avoid building new schools until it's absolutely necessary, and instead fill up schools that have room to spare while allowing others to avoid crowding.

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Don Ulrich, assistant superintendent at the Clovis Unified School District

For example: Clovis West High School is projected to enroll fewer than 2,000 students while Clovis High School is projected to hit the 3,000 mark.

"The easy thing, I guess you could say, would be to build a school or two in those crowded areas. But those schools cost," Ulrich said. "That's a choice we can make as a school district, but if we do that I want you to think about the taxpayer. Our schools are owned by the people in this room, but also by people who don't have kids in our schools."

The school board will finalize the plans in November, but not before meetings are held to allow parents to give input.

But people like Brian Blodgett – a parent of students at Granite Ridge Intermediate School and Maple Creek Elementary School – were skeptical Monday about how much their input mattered.

Blodgett was concerned that his youngest child would be forced to attend Clovis West, while his oldest is headed for Clovis North High School.

"Mainly, I just have questions ... but unless there's huge outrage, they're not going to change the plans," Blodgett said. "I love this school. I don't want to go to Clovis West. There's a difference."

Nicole Eichman, a parent of young elementary students, said she's not worried so much about which schools her students wind up at – as long as they get to stay on the same path.

“We’re at the start of our school journey. I just want to stick with the same school. I don’t want them to have to stop and make a change,” she said.

Meetings also will be held at Clovis High on Sept. 28 at 7 p.m.; and at Clovis East High on Sept. 30 at 7 p.m.

More information, including maps of the proposed new attendance zones, can be found at <http://www.cusd.com/boundaries/default.htm>.

Mackenzie Mays: [559-441-6412](tel:559-441-6412), [@MackenzieMays](https://www.instagram.com/MackenzieMays)