

BOARD BRIEFS

March 15, 2022, Board Business Meeting
Agendas, Minutes, and materials: bit.ly/d51boardagendas21
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Enrollment Forecast

D51's demographer, Shannon Bingham, is projecting a 7.5% decrease in the district's student population



between the 2021-22 school year and the 2026-27 school year, with a gradual loss of 0.9% to 2.1% of total enrollment taking place each year in between. This projection is based on several factors, including declining birth rates. Births in the parts of Mesa County covered by D51 have dropped from a high of 2,035 babies in 2007 to 1,483 babies in 2021. Another major factor in the demographer's projection is housing: housing costs have increased significantly in Colorado, which has pushed some families to leave Colorado or move somewhere other than Colorado. New development could bring more families to certain areas, especially on the west and northwest end of the valley, but declines overall in homes with young families are expected to outpace that growth.

Like just about every school district across the nation, District 51 lost students in 2020-21. D51 recovered students in 2021-22 at a slightly higher rate than most districts, but is still down to 21,328 students this year, compared to an enrollment of 22,040 students in 2019-20.

Mr. Bingham also mentioned that the district is due to perform routine reapportionment of director districts (the five districts in which the school board members live). The state requires reapportionment based on population data every four years. Mr. Bingham suggested the board review and select the next director district map as soon as next month.



GJHS Design Presentation

Board members received an update Tuesday on the design process for the new

Grand Junction High School. The project is currently in the design development review stage, and a site plan will be submitted to the city next month. Some utility work will begin this month, meetings with user groups are ongoing, and FCI (the construction company for the project) is working on an updated estimate for the project given current inflation for construction projects nationwide and adjustments that have been made to save money on GJHS and stay within a square footage goal.

Peter Icenogle from Blythe Group and JaDee Harsma from DLR Group reviewed plans for the new building at the board meeting. The building, which will be on the northeast side of the current campus, will have a main entrance with a vestibule on the southwest part of the building. The south end of the building will feature school offices; a performing arts center that can seat 1,467 people; a gym that can seat 1,700 or more people, a wrestling room, and an auxiliary gym; locker rooms and a weight room; a kitchen; a commons area that will double as cafeteria seating; a media center; a community room; and counseling offices. The north end of the building is designated for three stories of classrooms, teacher offices, and project breakout spaces for student collaboration. Classrooms are sorted into academies. The academies are four career-minded focus areas: Health Sciences and Human Services; Arts and Humanities; Business Entrepreneurship; and Engineering, Technology, and Natural Resources. A groundbreaking ceremony for the new school is set for June 8, and the new building is scheduled for completion in time to the start the 2024-25 school year.

Business Meeting Items

Board members voted unanimously to take the following actions:

* Hire Jennifer Marsh to serve as the district's Chief Academic Officer starting July 1.

* Adopt a resolution to sell property at Clifton Elementary to allow CDOT to construct road and sidewalk improvements in front of the school.

* Adopt a resolution to amend the Mesa Valley Community School charter contract (see March 1 Board Briefs).



Student Group Presentations

Board members heard presentations from three student groups on Tuesday.

D51 Speech and Debate students from various schools compete from September to March. At the recent state tournament, five D51 students qualified for the national competition, which will take place in June. Students said competing in Speech and Debate has helped them fine-tune their public speaking skills, gain confidence in their research and communication skills, grew their ability to see an issue from all perspectives, and helped them decipher which sources are credible. Coaches said many students are interested in Speech and Debate, but it is hard to retain coaches as well as judges, and they suggested the possibility of a double stipend.

A **Grand River Academy Yearbook Crew** student and teacher said GRA may have online and online hybrid programming, but students still have a common school culture, even on days when they're not in the classroom together. Yearbook helps capture that culture for all time and helps participating students develop skills such as communications, marketing, design, leadership and organization.

GJHS Family and Consumer Sciences programming offers a wide variety of classes to students, including child development, baking and pastry, teen choices, healthy relationships, fashion design, and American Sign Language. Students learn a variety of skills, from making their own clothes to managing money. The Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) group, which teaches leadership and family and consumer science skills, is headed to state next week to showcase one of their recent projects: turning preschoolers' drawings of monsters into real-life stuffed toys.

Ascent Classical Academy

Ascent Classical Academy, which has two state-authorized charter schools through CSI on the Front Range, has requested permission to work with CSI to establish a charter school in Grand Junction. Ascent would need permission from the D51 School Board to work with CSI instead of D51, as D51 has been the exclusive authorizer of charter schools within D51 boundaries since 2019. This is the first time a potential charter school has asked to work with the state since D51 gained exclusive authorization status.



Note from the School Board President

I wanted to say a huge thank you to all of the student groups that have come out to present to the board. This past Tuesday, we had Grand River Academy yearbook, Speech and Debate Team, and the Grand Junction High School Career & Technical Education Family and Consumer Science Program. If you missed the meeting or did not watch online, I'd encourage you to watch the meeting to hear what amazing things are happening in D51. The board appreciates the staff and students taking their time and putting themselves out there to present to the Board and the community.

The Speech and Debate Teams are always looking for help. If you are interested in learning more reach out to Tracy.Seremak@d51schools.org.

Also, if you are interested in being a part of a Watch D.O.G.S. group to help out in schools, contact School Board Vice President Will Jones for more information. We are looking for dads or any parent or guardian that would like to help out in our schools. This is a great opportunity for the community to partner with D51.

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