



Update: Elementary Reorganization Board of Education Work Session May 22, 2006

The Board of Education voted unanimously to remove the Gearity, Noble, and Oxford scenarios from consideration to be closed. Prior to the vote, Board President Wendy Leatherberry made the following statement:

At our last work session, we viewed the scenarios, and I know that my colleagues have each been pouring over the scenarios and the data since then. Last Monday, at the Community Dialogue session, our residents also got a chance to review these scenarios. From numerous attendees, I heard clearly that, while there is still a difficult decision to make about closing a school, some of the scenarios clearly do not make sense for our students, our District or our community. This is the same conclusion that I have come to, and I know that similar comments have been made by my colleagues at recent Board meetings. As we prepare for our June 6 work session, I believe that it will help streamline the decision-making process if we can remove these scenarios from consideration.

To begin with, closing Gearity Elementary is clearly not in the best interests of our District or our community. It is a driving principle of this District to have an elementary school in both Cleveland Heights and University Heights so that we can effectively serve students in each city. Closing Gearity would eliminate the only elementary school that we have in University Heights. Additionally, this Board has made several decisions in the past year that would make closing Gearity an even greater challenge. In the past year, we have decided to retire the Millikin Early Childhood Center and move our early childhood programs to Gearity. We have also embarked on an academic partnership with John Carroll that will benefit both our District and the University. This innovative program is beginning at Gearity with the professional development component, and closing that school would present significant challenges to effectively maintaining our partnership. Because of these reasons, I believe that the Gearity scenario should be removed from consideration.

The other two scenarios that I think should be removed from consideration are Noble and Oxford. As we have seen in the scenarios, and as our community saw at the last Dialogue session, the scenarios for closing either of these schools would present huge challenges for our District. Closing Noble or Oxford would create a far larger disruption for more students than any of the other scenarios. In terms of the number of students who would have to change schools, and the number of students who would then have to be transported, Noble and Oxford mean the biggest disruption for the largest number of students across the District. From the beginning of this process, we have stated that one of the key priorities is to impact the fewest number of students. Because of this, the scenarios for Noble and Oxford are clearly unworkable and should be removed from consideration.

After reviewing all of the scenarios that we have been presented with, we obviously still have a tough decision to make. Even after our decision, there will still be much work to do, particularly in regard to new attendance zone boundaries, which will be finalized in October, and helping transition our students, families and staff. These attendance zone changes may impact students, whose school does not close, including Oxford, Noble or Gearity. But for the reasons I have just described, and so that we may focus on the challenging decision ahead, I therefore request a motion that we remove the Oxford, Noble and Gearity scenarios from consideration for closing.