April 25, 2018

Dear Gahanna-Jefferson Families,

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools has been monitoring elementary and middle school enrollment numbers for a couple of years, knowing some realignment of school boundaries would eventually be needed. It is a common practice for school districts to continually monitor enrollment to ensure building populations are balanced and able to serve students in an equitable, educationally sound manner. We understand the impact redistricting has on students and families, and we are empathetic to the emotions that some families endure when faced with redistricting efforts.

At this time, there is a need to address our imbalanced middle school enrollment to assure we can meet all students’ educational needs. For instance, our enrollment at Middle School West is projected to have 223 more students than Middle School East, while Middle School South will have 187 more. Research tells us class size and student-teacher ratios matter a great deal, so balancing middle school numbers is extremely important educationally.

When we first communicated these changes, our initial focus was on the families that would be most immediately impacted. We recognize that our broader communication sent to families in neighborhoods that will be affected over the longer term should have come sooner, and we regret any concern caused by this delay.

Earlier in the year, we met with a parent committee of representatives from every elementary and middle school to gain a better understanding of what parents would like our district to take into consideration when planning these efforts. The main priorities from the parent group included:

- Maintaining neighborhood schools
- Creating a plan that would allow for growth and reduce the need for frequent changes in the future
- Balancing class sizes and enrollment numbers across the district to ensure equity and access to quality learning

With these ideas in mind, we considered several options while trying to come up with a workable middle school realignment plan that would impact as few families as possible. After a thoughtful analysis of enrollment numbers, we made the decision to utilize a 6th grade roll-in option that would impact the smallest number of students and allow for gradual relief in enrollment over time. This plan supports the value we place in neighborhood schools and allows students to go to school with students from their neighborhood, specifically:

Middle School East will welcome students from:
- Neighborhoods north of Havens Corners Road, east of Hamilton Road (previously MSS)
- Rocky Creek Apartments (previously MSW)

Middle School South will welcome students from:
- Rocky Fork Heights neighborhood (previously MSW)

Students with older siblings currently in a middle school will be permitted to attend that same school with their sibling, and busing will be available for two years during the roll-in process so that families are not split apart.

We are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible for our students and families. More information about the details of this project will be available on the district website prior to the end of the school year.

Thank you,

Steve Barrett
Superintendent

Jill Elliott
Assistant Superintendent