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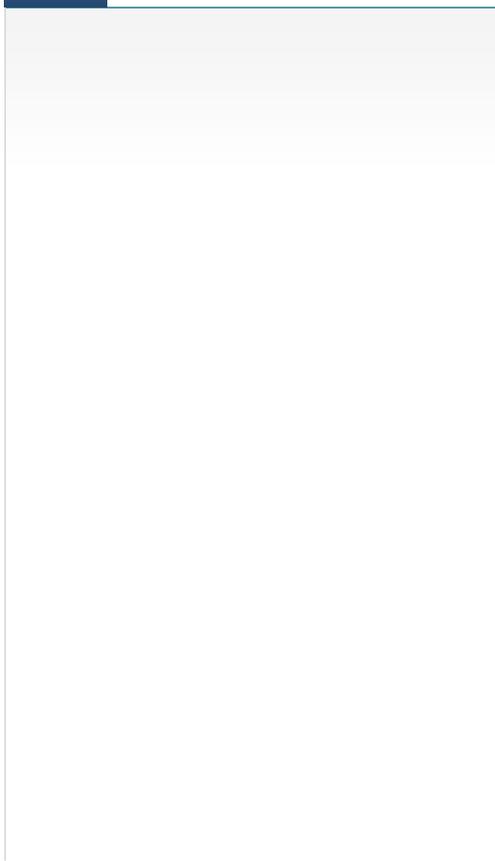
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Dunlap schools pack 'em in Enrollment increases larger than preliminary estimates

Photos



By Scott Hilyard (shilyard@pjstar.com) Journal Star Posted Aug 27, 2009 @ 09:12 PM

DUNLAP — It's official: The Dunlap school district will continue its steady growth into the 2009-10 school year with increases in numbers across the board of elementary, middle and high school students.

The increase of 142 students in the district was significantly more than preliminary estimates from last week after the first day of school. The official tally, taken on the sixth day of the new school year, stands at 3,412 students.

"It's a little more than we first talked about," said District 323 Superintendent J. Jay Marino. "While there are challenges that accompany growth, it's also a great sign that the district is attractive to families looking for a good education. We're pleased that we're desirable."

It's the 13th consecutive year of increased enrollment and the sixth consecutive year of increased enrollment of at least 108 students. Last year, the district experienced its biggest jump with 242 new students, an increase of 7.4 percent. The district has doubled in size since 1990.

This year, the biggest increase is at the high school, with 82 new students. That brings the high school enrollment to 1,070, an increase of 7.6 percent.

Among the biggest concerns is at Dunlap Valley Middle School where the biggest class, the incoming sixth grade, is at 141 students. That's nine below the 150-student capacity

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## Growth chart

In the 1997-98 school year, the Dunlap school district started its current run of student enrollment increases. Enrollment has increased in 19 of the past 21 school years. Here's a by-the-numbers look at how the district grew:

Year	Students	Increase
1997-98	1,940	67
1998-99	2,011	71
1999-00	2,089	78
2000-01	2,206	117
2001-02	2,270	64
2002-03	2,365	95
2003-04	2,451	86
2004-05	2,608	157
2005-06	2,753	145
2006-07	2,920	167
2007-08	3,028	108
2008-09	3,270	242
2009-10	3,412	142

SOURCE: Dunlap Community Unit School District 323

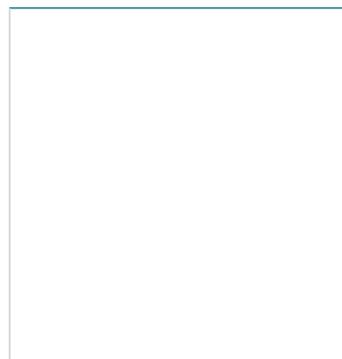
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for the wing that contains the sixth-grade classrooms in the district's newest school, that just began its second year of operation.

The biggest elementary classes are in Dunlap Grade School, the district's smallest school, where there is little room for growth. It's two fourth grades are at 28 and 29 students; it's two fifth grades both have 30 students in them.

"You try to come up with solutions to keep class sizes small," Marino said. "But it's not always a numbers game, there are a lot of variables. In some cases we have students passing by a closer school to their home in the bus on the way to another school where there's more room."

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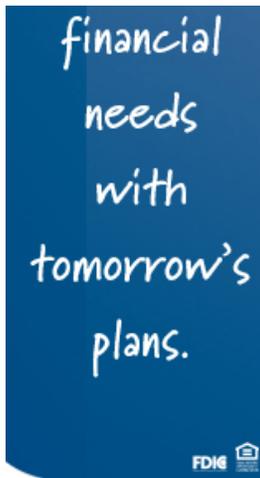
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