Dunlap redraws school lines

School Board approves new boundaries for five elementary schools in rapidly growing district

DUNLAP —

When the newest school in the Dunlap School District opens in August 2012, most of its students will live in the newest houses in the district.

Surrounded by the most intensive residential development in the rapidly growing district, Hickory Grove Elementary School, currently under construction at Allen and West Hickory Grove roads, will draw its student population from many subdivisions that are less than 10 years old and others that haven't been built yet.

The School Board approved a new map that details which school students will attend when the district expands into a fifth elementary school one year from now. The changes mean some students will attend one school when the year starts next month and a different school next year. Additionally, some students who spent five years in the same grade school could spend their sixth and final year in a new one.

"The intention was to create the least amount of movement of students and families as possible," said Lisa Parker, the assistant superintendent who worked on the redistricting map. "We understand that change can be disruptive, which is why we've attempted to minimize that as we add in a new school into the district."

Several variations of the map were created by DecisionInsite, an enrollment impact specialist company hired by the district. The company assessed future subdivision growth in the district and projected enrollment trends. The district identified what it believed were appropriate sizes for the elementary and middle schools and made a decision not to divide subdivisions among different schools.

"The redistricting scenario that was selected most closely matched our criteria, which included: maintaining appropriate school size, balancing student demographics, keeping subdivisions together and ensuring neighborhood schools wherever possible," said Superintendent Jay Marino.

When the $21.5 million Hickory Grove school opens in 2012, it will be in the smallest district geographically but will house the most students. At a projected 467 students on opening day, it will be the biggest by more than 100 students of Dunlap's five elementary schools.

Parker said she hoped families wouldn't be disappointed if they didn't land in the shiny new Hickory Grove school.

"We believe students will receive a quality education in any of the five buildings," she said. "We had to draw the lines somewhere."

New middle school boundaries also were set. Those who live in the Hickory Grove, Wilder-Waite and Banner elementary school districts will attend Dunlap Middle School; those in Dunlap Grade and Ridgeview Elementary school districts will attend Dunlap Valley Middle School.

A letter to all district families was to be mailed on Thursday explaining the changes. The mailing includes a list of apartments and a list of subdivisions in the district and the corresponding elementary school district. Also, the district was to enable a "My School Locator" function on the district's website at dunlapcusd.net.