

County School Board

My name is Arvid Nelson, we have lived in Clay County for thirty (30) years. We have raised two children schooled in the public school system and they in turn live in Clay county and our five grand daughters are in or will be schooled in the Clay district public schools.

I am a U S Navy Master Chief retired and you might well detect some traits or sayings held on to from my active duty service.

I respect and am very thankful for the outstanding job the Clay District School Board has been and is doing. The broad spectrum of responsibilities, in a continuing and fast growing district, is an awesome task facing the School Board.

I am going to propose a course of action that will satisfy every interested and or effected person in this room or lives in the effected areas.

For the last couple months and this evening, many people have voiced their concerns about the different reported, possible or rumored changes in regards to the closing of one elementary school and the redistricting of the remaining elementary schools in and around northeast Clay County. Almost every objection voiced reports how the unwanted change will negatively impact them personally.

I acknowledge all changes suggested to this point benefit one school or another but WILL in fact negatively impact another school. My suggestion WILL NOT negatively impact one school nor one school administrator, faculty member, student nor parent. I have a novel suggestion that will make everyone in the audience happy.

If I say something three times, it is very important. DO NOT close any elementary school.

Each school is looked at or is felt to be a neighborhood school. This is good. Close a school and redistricting will cause students and parents much turmoil. By not closing an elementary school you have pleased every elementary school administrator, teacher, parent and student.

I have perused the Educational Facilities General Planning document (some 50 pages) on the school district's web site. The school capacity cart is most interesting. I have talked with the Facility Planning Department. I would like the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Board at the appropriate time.

As a lay person, I find it hard to understand how it is determined all elementary schools have a facility list of 862 students each and an average school capacity of 830 students. I have looked at the county property appraiser's records and find some elementary schools are situated on as little as 15 acres up to 60 acres, have only one to as many as ten buildings, encompassing 3,200 sq ft up to 93,300 sq ft.

The District might see all elementary schools as similar or equal but I can not see the same picture. I mentioned earlier, we are an ever growing county and this causes many challenges for you. I ask you to ferret out any area of the county that might have a unique situation that does not meet the modality or general state when compared to the majority of our district.

For instance, some elementary schools (i.e. Grove Park, Montclair, Orange Park, S Bryan Jennings, W E Cherry) are in a extremely low or NO growth area. This area is built out. These elementary schools' student load is projected to be constant for the long term.

I am suggesting you establish a district policy that when a school is identified in a low or no projected growth area, you determine that school's true permanent capacity. If it is under capacity, find a way to effectively use the excess facilities. If the school is over capacity, put portables on site.

DO NOT CLOSE ANY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

Do not tell us why you can not do this but instead tell us how you can make this happen.

I thank you for your time and attention.