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Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

October 19, 2007

Dear Staff,

In the interest of keeping you informed of the Board of Education's redistricting efforts, I want to update you on last night's Redistricting Committee meeting. In order to accommodate the large number of attendees, the Committee met in the Westhill High School auditorium. The Committee reviewed the reasons redistricting is necessary and the criteria that will be used in evaluating redistricting scenarios. The Committee then made several decisions concerning how it will proceed.

First, the Committee provided the following reasons for redistricting:

- The last comprehensive redistricting occurred in 1998. Since then, school enrollments have fluctuated, resulting in imbalances based on building capacities.
- There are imbalances in the socio-economic make-up of school populations.
- The Board of Education must incorporate the Interdistrict Environmental Magnet School, which is scheduled to open in September 2009, into its enrollment districts and fiscal plan.

The Committee also outlined the criteria it will follow in making any decisions:

- Balance school enrollment by building capacity.
- Increase the number of walkers.
- Decrease the length of bus rides and the number of bus riders.
- Minimize fiscal impact.
- Maintain school feeder patterns.
- Minimize disruption of students/families.
- Use the new integration metric to balance schools to within +/- 10% of metric. As a result of the recent Supreme Court decision on school integration, the Board will no longer consider race in assigning students to schools. Instead, the following student factors will be considered:
 - Qualify for free/reduced lunch status according to federal guidelines.
 - Enrollment as an English Language Learner (ELL), as defined by State criteria.

(continued)

Starr to staff (2)

- Reside in income-restricted housing in Stamford.
(educationally non-disadvantaged students do not meet any of these criteria)

A table indicating projected school demographics using the new metric is below:

School	% Race/Ethnicity <i>(old criterion)</i>	% Free/Reduced Lunch, ELL, Income Restricted Housing <i>(new criteria)</i>
Davenport	57.2	50.4
Hart	74.9	57.6
Toquam	58.9	41.4
KT Murphy	74.8	70.3
Newfield	45.2	30.7
Northeast	49.6	41.1
Rogers	71.8	64
Roxbury	49.6	39.2
Springdale	58.7	52.0
Stark	74.0	60.0
Stillmeadow	65.8	44.3
Westover	51.2	31.3
Cloonan	57.5	38.4
Dolan	57.1	40.7
Turn of River	56.7	46.9
Scofield	52.3	33.9
Rippowam	57.0	45.3
Stamford High	55.7	37.1
Westhill	57.9	35.2
AITE	54.7	32.5
DISTRICT TOTAL	58.2	42.8

During nearly three hours of discussion and data analysis, the Committee made the following decisions:

- No middle school will close. The potential savings do not justify the disruption to students and families.
- Westover Magnet and Hart Magnet will not merge. The Committee will examine the costs of expanding the Westover model to Hart without the proposed reconfiguration.

(continued)

Starr to staff (3)

- The possibility of closing an elementary school is still on the table because the pre K-8 Interdistrict Environmental Magnet will open in 2009 and facilities costs must be saved in a time of tight budgets.
- Any changes would not likely take place until 2009.
- The Boards of Finance and Representatives will be included in future discussions about how to proceed, as will the community.

It was wonderful to see so many parents, teachers, and administrators at the meeting last night. These are very complicated issues that require all of us to learn about the forces impacting our schools. I am particularly impressed with the Board's approach to this effort. Since February, they have been methodical, deliberate, and objective in their analysis of data. Unlike the last attempt at redistricting in 2005, we are not using outside consultants. My thanks to Director of Research Judy Singer, Chief Financial Officer Bill Dunn, and many others who have completed this work on top of their usual duties and done an excellent job at all of it.

As indicated above, the Board has asked me to look into replicating the Westover model at Hart. While I appreciate the Board's interest in expanding successful programs, my view is a bit broader. I believe the success of Westover is due to five factors: rigid adherence to core curriculum, regular ongoing assessment of student progress toward standards, regular time for teachers to collaborate, differentiated instruction, and parent involvement. These are practices that we are implementing throughout the district with curriculum development, our new math curriculum, the emerging Office of Family Engagement, and Professional Learning Communities. These are the elements of all good schools. While it is certainly worthwhile for us to learn from each other, we must also respect the local context of our schools and build on their unique strengths. That said, if we expect to achieve our mission of ensuring each and every student is prepared for college, we must use only the most effective practices to help our children meet that goal.

I look forward to continuing this discussion and receiving your input. A public hearing on redistricting will take place next Tuesday, October 30th at 7:00 p.m. in the Westhill High School auditorium, 125 Roxbury Road. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua Starr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

