

Student Demographics Community Task Force

Final Report

Goals:

Since 1995-96 the Moorhead Area Public Schools K-12 student population has declined by approximately 490 students. Over the next several years, demographic trends indicate enrollment will decline by several hundred more students without a concerted effort to reverse this trend. The resulting loss in state funding measures in the millions of dollars and threatens to severely erode the superior educational opportunities the Moorhead Area Public Schools has historically provided for our children.

The student demographics task force believes the Moorhead Area Public Schools must continue to offer exceptional learning opportunities to our children in high quality facilities. We must continue to strive for educational excellence using strategies that may include smaller learning communities for students in district schools, regardless of size. We must maintain programs that make our district exceptional. We must make an ongoing commitment to bring our buildings up to standards that support modern educational practices. We believe state-of-the-art schools would serve as an attraction for families to move to our community. In the near term, we need to counter current demographic trends and stabilize our student population. In the longer term, steady growth in student population is essential for maintaining excellent educational quality and financial stability in the Moorhead Area Public Schools and contributes to a vital, growing community.

We recommend the following action plan:

1. Reduce out migration

- a) Identify competitive forces.
- b) Use survey questions to compile a list of reasons for out migration.
- c) Identify any out migration factors which could be reduced or eliminated.
- d) Make plans to change out migration factors which can be reduced or eliminated.
- e) Explore the impact of charter schools and potential partnerships which they may provide.
- f) Moorhead Area Public Schools administrators should meet at least annually with Moorhead City Council and EDA board members to share student demographic trends, survey results, and marketing efforts.
- g) Develop an action plan in response to the work of the Justice Circles' recommendations to ensure the district provides equitable educational opportunities and quality for all students.

2) Enhance in migration

- a) Use survey questions to compile a list of reasons for in migration (perhaps ask EDA and Moorhead Public Service for assistance in surveying the preschool and no children households).
- b) Identify any in migration factors which could be magnified or marketed.
- c) Analyze factors causing lost enrollment; ask Moorhead EDA to make and distribute survey to Moorhead's largest employers.
- d) Develop a long-range plan to improve and replace school district infrastructure.

3) Market our schools' advantages

- a) Identify and dispel unfavorable myths regarding Moorhead schools and community living.
- b) As part of the Marketing Moorhead campaign, arrange for realtor and lender groups to tour one or two of our schools; Moorhead needs to be listed separately from Fargo on the realtors' Web site.
- c) Distribute information to Moorhead's major employers that would promote our schools as well as compare the costs of living in Moorhead vs. Fargo; this information would be distributed to all employees and newly hired employees.
- d) Use the media in a public relations effort to promote some noteworthy programs, such as post-secondary options, arts options, national awards, MN ranks in the top 10 in the nation for test scores, etc.
- e) Connect Moorhead schools with the community by providing frequent updates to all city residents about school activities, efforts, needs and success stories; consider a citywide newsletter, possibly in conjunction with the Park and Recreation brochure, Moorhead Insights city newsletter and/or the Community Education catalog; explore new technologies to promote district efforts; consider town hall meetings.

4) Encourage housing opportunities in Moorhead

- a) Encourage the Moorhead Economic Development Authority to act quickly and aggressively to develop policies and programs which are designed to encourage development of an inventory of all types of housing stock.
- b) Work with the Moorhead Economic Development Authority to market housing opportunities in Moorhead for all income levels.

The majority of task force members are willing to continue active participation once the survey is developed and when the results of the survey are finalized.