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Student shuffling explored

New school boundaries leave some dismayed

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The Campbell County Board of Education listened Monday night as parents voiced their concerns about a redistricting plan. The meeting was the first since parents of 600 students were notified that their children would be attending a different elementary school next year.

The redistricting was prompted by the closing of Highland Heights Elementary to make way for a new school with more room and better facilities. Crossroads Elementary will open next fall off U.S. 27 near the AA Highway.

To fill Crossroads and plan for growth at other schools, the district says it must reassign 600 students from four of its five elementaries. Only children at Grant's Lick Elementary will stay put.

Superintendent Anthony Strong said some parents were probably surprised by the letters they received recently.

For instance, students from Highland Heights Elementary probably expected to be attending the new school, Strong said. Instead, he has proposed sending a few to Cline, partly because a road barrier like U.S. 27 makes a natural school boundary, he said.

Angela Sharp, a parent of two elementary-age children, doesn't see the logic behind the redistricting plan. Her children attend Cline. Last month, she and her husband bought a new home. One consideration in the purchase was that they didn't want the kids to change schools. They thought they were safe when they moved a block and a half from Cline.

"However, being on the east side of 27, we are being redistricted to the new Crossroads," she said. "The kids can literally walk across the street to Cline." To make the matter more exasperating to her, if she had stayed at her old home - near Crossroads but on the west side of 27 - one her children still would be assigned to Cline.

It's true that some children will ride past one school to get to another. But that would happen under virtually any configuration, Strong said, because Cline and Crossroads are less than two miles apart.

"Our biggest concern is we just don't understand why the school district is taking the kids all over the place," said Beth Mills, the mother of a third-grader. "It seems like the logical thing would be to send them to whatever is closest."

Highland Heights was at least three miles from Cline. The district couldn't find enough affordable land to build the new school in the same area, Strong said.

Under this plan, Crossroads will open with a projected 570 students, leaving room for an additional 130. Campbell Ridge will have about 525 students next fall, with room for another 150.

Overall, the plan creates space for 550 new students spread among all the schools.

Board member Richard Mason encouraged parents to be part of the process. "It's not set in stone," he said.

The school board will vote on the plan Jan. 8.

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