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Dunlap district adds students for 13th year

High school will likely surpass 1,000 students for first time

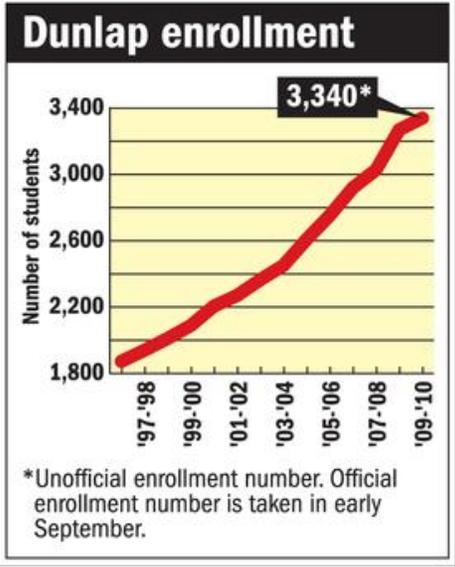
By **SCOTT HILYARD** (shilyard@pjstar.com)
 OF THE JOURNAL STAR
 Posted Aug 20, 2009 @ 07:41 PM

DUNLAP — The enrollment numbers aren't official, and no one's talking about overcrowded schools after the first full day of classes, but the Dunlap school district is showing a significant increase in its student population for the 13th consecutive school year.

In fact, Dunlap High School likely will start and finish the 2009-2010 school year with more than 1,000 students for the first time.

"The biggest increases are in the high school, where we get students from private schools and religious schools who come into the district in ninth grade," said District 323 Superintendent J. Jay Marino, who is new to the district. "It's too soon to know for sure, but it appears that the district continues to grow significantly, but maybe this year not as much as the previous year."

The official count won't be taken until early next month, but Marino estimated the district total at 3,340 students, up 70 from last year. But that number is likely to increase, and Marino acknowledged the actual increase could be as high as 110 students. Last year's increase was 242 students, the highest in the district's history, and that jump followed four straight years of triple-digit increases.



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But, there are signs that last year's increase was an anomaly and that the student population is stabilizing some. Although Dunlap High School Principal Tom Welsh counted 77 more students this year, bringing the school population to 1,065, increases in the district's two middle schools and four grade schools are more modest.

"There's plenty of room inside our classrooms, but there are no empty classrooms," said Greg Fairchild, principal of Banner Elementary. "It would be difficult to add a new section (grade) this year."

Banner ended last year with an enrollment in the low 430s and began the new one at about 440 students, Fairchild said. Growth was similarly modest at Dunlap Grade School and Wilder-Waite Elementary, with an increase of five and seven students respectively, according to the principals of those schools.

The new principal at Dunlap Middle School, Zac Chatterton, said his staff has told him that the number of students looks consistent with last year. Jason Holmes, principal at Dunlap Valley Middle School, which opened last year, said enrollment at his school rose unofficially from 375 to 402. He's particularly interested in the new sixth grade and its 142 students. Capacity for each of the three grades at the one-year-old middle school is 150 students.

"That's a bit of a red flag. We'll be watching that class," Holmes said. "But even with the 27 more students, everything looks normal. The building easily absorbs the increase."

Welsh said the cafeteria was full and slow on the first day of school Thursday, but he attributed that more to freshman orientation than to an overcrowded school.

"We knew we were going to increase because the freshman class was bigger than our out-going seniors," Welsh said. "As far as the cafeteria goes, that's just freshmen learning the ropes. We'll cut five minutes off that time on the second day of class."

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Comments (8)

alphamtbr 11 hours ago Report Abuse

'Dunlap' keeps growing because Peoria keeps issuing building permits in that area.

It would be interesting to know how many of these kids have a Peoria address?
How many leave south of the 474 by-pass (or what ever the officiate highway number)?
How many of the kids live closer to a Dist 150 school then a Dunlap school?

Regardless of your views on Dist 150 - The City of Peoria is causing all of Dunlaps growth.

questioning the status quo 10 hours ago Report Abuse

I would be curious how many students on average are in each classroom.

Pancho 10 hours ago Report Abuse

yeah, way to go fat cat excec.

dunlapmom 8 hours ago Report Abuse

It's funny that they failed to mention that there are 2 county police at the high school now too. And I know of at least one class with 35 students in it.

Jethro9191 6 hours ago Report Abuse

Dunlap is growing because people hate Peoria!

list

- Men face at least 21 years in prison
- El Paso wind farm out of air
- Even ER vets in awe
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- Marriage licenses and divorces

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District 150 no longer grows with the City of Peoria's boundaries.

Thus, when the City of Peoria annexes territory for growth, Dunlap schools are beneficiaries, not Peoria Public Schools.

This came about in the late 1960's, when racist legislators locally led a movement to repeal a law which had provided for the City's growth and District 150's growth to match borders. For instance, when Richwoods lands were annexed into the city, the District 150 borders expanded accordingly. But once the racist legislators acted, there was no longer an expansion for District 150 when the city's borders expanded.

The racism was in retaliation for District 150 developing busing programs in the mid-1960's.

littleangel 49 minutes ago  Report Abuse

People are purposely buying homes in the Dunlap district because they are unhappy with Peoria Public Schools, period. Old leadership with old ideas are still making decisions in 150, so until the district cleans house with all the retired consultants nothing will ever change.

BC 22 minutes ago  Report Abuse

Parents who care about their kid's education will shift to areas where other parents have the same attitudes and expectations. Same goes for the opposite. Schools are as good as the people who attend and the parents who live in the district. There are some who won't learn and nothing will every change that. They could be put in the best performing school in the state and the results would be the same. For some parents the kids are just a meal ticket on the SSI lunch wagon. If the child is constantly absent, and obviously not cared for, remove him to a group home where school is a priority. Faced with losing the little SSI generator maybe the folks will tend a bit more to his education. This isn't the fault of the teachers, or the schools, and is not something they can change.

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