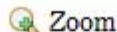


Dunlap enrollment is up

3 percent gain is unusually modest, but grade schools bursting

Photos



Dunlap School District 323 continues to grow

Here's a look by the numbers at the growth in Dunlap School District 323 in the last decade with the year, the student enrollment and the change from the prior year.

School year	Enrollment	Enrollment Increase	Percent increase
2002-03	2,365	+95	4 percent
2003-04	2,451	+86	4 percent
2004-05	2,608	+157	6 percent
2005-06	2,753	+145	5 percent
2006-07	2,920	+167	6 percent
2007-08	3,028	+108	4 percent
2008-09	3,270	+242	8 percent
2009-10	3,412	+142	4 percent
2010-11	3,582	+170	5 percent
2011-12	3,701	+119	3 percent

SOURCE: Dunlap School District 323

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DUNLAP — The student population continues to grow in Dunlap School District 323, although the percent increase at the beginning of the school year is the smallest it has been in 10 years.

The district gained 119 students, a 3 percent increase from last year, bringing the total to 3,701 students.

"We're a little less than our projections, about 20 students off," said Superintendent Jay Marino. "But I don't think you can take too much from that. The trend continues to be growth in the district."

With Hickory Grove Elementary School under construction with plans to open in August 2012, the district is a year away from easing congestion in the elementary schools. Banner Elementary was crowded last year with 470 students in grades kindergarten through fifth. This year there are 502 students in the school.

"It is crowded. There is no doubt about it," said Principal Greg Fairchild. "We are conducting school business in what is essentially a hallway."

The English as a Second Language teacher and a literacy aide share hallway space with a divider between them. There is no music or art room. Teachers travel from classroom to classroom with all their supplies on a cart. Orchestra practices in the foyer.

"We've been pretty crowded for the last three or four years. That's just been life at Banner," Fairchild said. "But the light at the end of the tunnel is a year away with the opening of the new school. The teachers have been fabulous and flexible and are making the most of all available space."



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Dunlap has experienced 15 consecutive years of growth in the district, dating back to the 1996-97 school year. The largest single-year growth was 242 new students, an 8 percent increase from the prior year, in 2008. The smallest increase was 3 percent this year and in 1996.

The sustained growth has doubled the student population in the last two decades.

"The great myth is that all of these students are coming out of District 150, and that's just not true. The trend has been that about half of new students are coming from out of state or out of country," Marino said.

A commissioned analysis of this year's student population numbers should be available in the fall.

The district redrew its elementary school boundaries this summer in preparation of the opening of Hickory Grove, which will house 450 students, expandable to 600.

The next facility needs in the district will be a home for district offices, which moved out of the high school two years ago to make classroom space. The board has made no decision on whether to continue to lease or build office space. A 24-classroom, two-story addition to the high school is the next school building project.

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