



Executive Summary

The Belle Plaine Schools District #716 provides education to students in the community of Belle Plaine and the surrounding area. The district encompasses 105.38 sq. miles in Scott County along Highway 169.

The total enrollment change in District #716 has averaged 15 students per year for the past 5 years (from 2007-08 through 2012-13).

The enrollment history of the district and the births in the zip codes served by the district were reviewed as part of the study. Interviews were conducted with representatives from the city of Belle Plaine and Scott County, local business, realtors, nonpublic school administrators and school district staff to gain their perspective on growth and development within the district. This review and information provided the basis for making the assumptions to develop enrollment projections for the next 10 years.

Based on the analysis of the enrollment history, the information reviewed and the interviews conducted the study team made the following observations:

1. Scott County was the fastest growing county in Minnesota between 2000 and 2010.
2. The population of the district is projected to increase 1.11% annually between the 2012 estimates and the projections for 2017.
3. The total number of children ages 0-14 is projected to decrease from the 2012 estimates to the 2017 projections. The number of children ages 15-18 is projected to increase between the 2012 estimates and 2017 projections.
4. 35% of the female population of the district is of child bearing age in 2012. By 2017, this population is projected to be 33% of the female population.
5. More than half (51.25%) of the homes in the district have school aged children in 2012. This percentage is projected to remain stable through the projections for 2017.
6. The number of building permits issued for single-family homes in the district has slowed in recent years.
7. An average of 103 single family homes and 9 townhomes have sold in District #716 in the years from 2008 through March 2013.
8. In neighboring districts, LeSueur-Henderson is the only district which saw enrollment decline in the fall 2012-13.
9. The total enrollment change in the district has averaged +15.3 students per year for the years 2007-08 through 2012-13.
10. The variation between the entering Kindergarten class and the graduating 12th grade class averaged 15.3 students from 2007-08 through 2012-13. The entering Kindergarten class was larger than the graduating 12th grade class from the previous spring.

11. District #716 loses more resident students to charter or other districts than it gains through open enrollment into the district.
12. The enrollment of the nonpublic schools in the district will continue at similar levels for the next 10 years.

Recommendations

1. This enrollment must be reviewed annually to determine if the projections are realized and to modify the projections each year based on the actual enrollment realized. The district may consider convening a committee to annually review the enrollments realized and dialogue the factors in the district that may have changed in the previous year. Also, these projections are for 10 years – which assume the anticipated Kindergarten enrollment of children who are not yet born. This requires additional attention to ensure the accuracy of these enrollments.
2. Enrollment projections are now significantly influenced by parental choices and program offerings. This complicates the exactness of enrollment planning. In Minnesota, in addition to competition from charter schools, we see and hear television and radio ads for the Minnesota Online Public Schools and for other school districts. Some school districts have developed programs such as all-day kindergarten, Spanish or other language immersion programs that are attractive to parents seeking alternative programs for their children.
3. Competition for K-12 students is likely to increase. Public schools must compete for students. School districts have some influence over the course of events but must manage their resources to remain solvent. School districts must plan, analyze current information, and plan again and again.

The enrollment history for 2011-12, the realized enrollment for 2012-13 and the projected enrollment for 2013-14 through 2022-23 are presented in the following graph.

