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ELKHART COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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Dear Elkhart Community Schools families:

In the fall of 2015, Elkhart Community Schools embarked on the development of a strategic plan designed to guide the direction of the district from 2017-2022. Initial steps in the process included community meetings and surveys led by Ball State University, then the establishment of a focus group comprised of parents, staff members, and community members who presented the Board of School Trustees with recommendations. The Board established a series of community meetings over June-July 2016 to receive community input. During the past two months, the Board has carefully considered the community feedback as they developed the strategic plan.

I believe the Board will place the 2017-2022 strategic plan on the Board meeting agenda for consideration next month. The plan gives the district a framework to follow as we engage in long-term planning to provide even better opportunities for your children.

Concepts being considered by the Board include important steps to strengthen the education we offer all students, and expand the impact our schools and students have on the community. A key concept of the plan being considered by the Board is a commitment to strengthen our relationships with parents and families.

One major component of the Board's plan includes pursuing the necessary steps to unify and reshape our two high school campuses into one vibrant and innovative campus. The Board proposes to create a unique freshman division, while developing a one-of-a-kind career/college campus for doers, creators, and thinkers of all kinds. The Board proposes a campus which is flexible, innovative, and ahead of its time; bringing the areas of STEM, Health Sciences, Business, Innovation, Advanced Placement, Early College, Dual College credit, the Arts, and Advanced Manufacturing to create new and unique educational opportunities which will educate our students and serve the greater Elkhart community.

The Board is also considering a movement toward creating true 6, 7, and 8 grade middle school offerings with block scheduling. This component includes the addition of sixth grade to North Side and West Side Middle Schools; creation of a middle school at the freshman division; and development of a school of choice at Pierre Moran Middle School. The Pierre Moran campus would also be home to the district's administration office. If the middle school proposal moves forward, it would create the opportunity to expand PreK offerings in all elementary buildings.

Although the proposals speak to change in grade configuration, the nature of the strategic plan's changes would not be realized until the fall of 2020. A strong strategic plan allows the district to focus on the attainment of long-term goals, while we continue to maintain our high quality of teaching and education. Many of the aspects of the plan which do not require configuration changes are already underway, including our commitment to one-to-one technology, expanded PreK offerings, increased rigor at the middle school level, and the development of a robust early college program.

I encourage you to review the exciting plan the Board has developed for the future of education in Elkhart. A draft of the proposals being considered by the Board can be found on the district website at <http://elkhart.k12.in.us/StrategicPlan>.

Sincerely
Robert Haworth, PhD
Superintendent of Schools