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# NEWS

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## **FAMILIES OFFERED CHOICE OF SCHOOLS UNDER NCLB LAW**

**WATERLOO** – Families in the Waterloo Schools who requested a transfer of their child under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law are being notified of their 2011-12 school year placement. Under the School Choice requirement of NCLB, K-12 districts across the country must offer a transfer for students whose resident school is deemed “In Need of Assistance” (SINA) based on standardized test scores. The transfer offered is to a school that is not In Need of Assistance.

The SINA designation is given to schools in which annual achievement goals were not met by all subgroups of students. Subgroups must be at least 30 students and include special needs, English Language Learner, low socio-economic, and students in various racial groups. Even though many students in a school are achieving at high levels, NCLB imposes sanctions if any sub-group in the school is not reaching goals or improving enough. “Our priority is for each and every student to achieve at high levels” said Superintendent Gary Norris. “We won’t be satisfied until we can overcome the barriers to learning for every one of our students.”

“Effective teaching and high levels of learning are present in classrooms here every day. Where we’re not reaching our goals for every student, we’ll continue to provide more professional development for teachers and administrators on the best research-proven strategies and to create a learning environment that engages students. Increasing rigor and relevance of instruction, holding ourselves accountable, and continually monitoring the effectiveness of our work will pay off in higher achievement across the board.”

“In our schools with the greatest needs, we have extended the student school year and the teacher contract day,

giving us more time to meet individual needs,” Norris noted.

This year, Orange Elementary and Lou Henry Elementary, both in Waterloo, were the receiving schools offered under the School Choice requirement. Parents or guardians of 126 students requested a transfer; of those, 44 will be attending Orange; 56 will be attending Lou Henry. The other 26 students will transfer to other elementaries at the parent’s request.

Norris added that the process has been completed much earlier this year than last. “We wanted to give parents the most lead time we could to make a decision and to receive a school placement. We completed this process about two-and-a half weeks earlier this year compared to last year.”

“We’re happy we can accommodate the parent requests this year, while minimizing the costs. The City of Waterloo was especially helpful in working with us on the building codes. We are able to install a modular unit, with two fully equipped classrooms, at Lou Henry for a much lower cost this year, compared to the units we installed at Kingsley last year. This is a win-win for parents, taxpayers, and school staff.”

“The transfer application process worked well. All parents received either their first or second choice, and those who preferred a specific school other than those available through the NCLB Choice process, were also able to secure their preferred school.”

“NCLB requires the Choice transfer to be offered even when a school district does not have capacity at the receiving schools. We have to add capacity, in our case, through the use of modular classrooms.”

“The good news about the modulares is that they have all the technology, safety, and accessibility features of a regular classroom. Each unit has two classrooms and restroom facilities. The four classrooms at Kingsley have worked well to meet last year’s need for additional space on a campus with limited area.”

The District expects the transfer numbers may vary slightly in the coming weeks, as new families move into the area or others who have made a Choice transfer opt to stay in their home school.

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