

## Davenport School-Board Candidates Discuss Neighborhood Schools

Written by No Author

Tuesday, 02 September 2003 18:00

---

- [Discount - Autodesk Infrastructure Design Suite Ultimate 2014 \(32-bit & 64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy FL Studio 8 XXL \(en\)](#)
- [Buy OEM BurnAware Professional](#)
- [Buy Microsoft Windows Vista Ultimate with SP2 \(64bit\) \(en\)](#)
- [339.95\\$ Autodesk Inventor 2015 \(64-bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Autodesk AutoCAD 2014 MAC](#)
- [Buy Cheap Photoshop Elements 7 All-in-One For Dummies](#)
- [Download Acala DivX to iPod](#)
- [Discount - Autodesk Alias Surface 2014 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Download Corel VideoStudio Pro X3](#)
- [69.95\\$ Frischluft Flair for AE and PrPro cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap Microsoft MapPoint 2010 North America](#)

The Davenport Community School District (DCSD) will hold its election for the new board next Tuesday, September 9. It is more important than ever for voters to participate because this new school board will be making decisions that will have long-term impact not only on the quality of our children's education, but also on our community as a whole.

Such issues include setting the new boundaries for each school, which determines where students go to school based upon where they live, but also upon state criteria that require that schools conform to certain guidelines that try to ensure that all schools have an equal opportunity to educate our children.

The new board will also decide how to spend the remaining \$38 million in local sales-tax revenue that is earmarked for capital improvements. For example, this money could be spent to build a new, larger school versus upgrading existing smaller schools, or building smaller schools in neighborhoods that are at capacity. Therefore, knowing where the candidates stand on this particular issue is critical in casting this year's vote.

The following question was posed to the nine candidates running for four seats. Six responded; three did not. The three who *did not respond* were Larry Roberson, Patt Zamora, and Daniel Thurston.

**The new Davenport School Board will be reviewing and adjusting school boundaries and attendance zones next year. Such adjustments can significantly impact both the aggregate size of schools, as well as class sizes. In light of the recent closings of two elementary schools, Grant and Johnson, which resulted in maximizing student capacity for various schools within the district, this upcoming boundaries review will take on even greater importance. With this in mind, do you support the neighborhood-school concept? If yes, why? If no, why not? Please be specific, including what you believe the criteria should be in determining boundaries based upon your position for or against neighborhood schools.**

**Ralph Johanson:** I believe that the neighborhood school epitomizes the District philosophy. This single reason is sufficient to warrant continued use of the neighborhood school as a model

## Davenport School-Board Candidates Discuss Neighborhood Schools

Written by No Author

Tuesday, 02 September 2003 18:00

---

for our school system. The school system, and sometimes the specific school that is in a neighborhood, frequently are very important factors when people are buying homes.

I believe strongly that there should be strategic planning that goes into any of these large, all-encompassing issues. Therefore, it would not be prudent to change a philosophy like this mid-stream, without very careful consideration of the impacts. I believe that the strategies and philosophies of the District should represent the strategies and philosophies of the community. Our community is built from a lot of little neighborhoods, each of which is unique in some ways. But in all cases, I think that each neighborhood wants its own school; it wants to support the local youth. The smaller the geographical area, the more likely we are to get community support from others (besides parents) in a specific school neighborhood.

The criteria for the boundaries should be based on strategy and philosophy, not just dollars. The idea should be to enhance the neighborhood, not to make sure all kids ride a bus. Although the Board and the Administration must be accountable for the dollars, I think that we should use our vision of what the District should be, accept our philosophy of what our community is, develop strategies to make our vision a reality, and work real hard to find the money to make all this happen.

**Tim Tupper:** Neighborhood schools become a community working together for a common success. We must maintain and nurture these communities to help our children succeed. As a result of recent school closings, we have overcrowded elementary schools with nearly 600 students. In fact, this overcrowding will force us to spend money to add on to existing buildings.

As we consider school boundary changes we will need to assess the current capacity of elementary schools, the number of children that live in the area, the potential for growth in the area and the boundaries that define the existing school community so that we minimize any dislocation of existing students.

**Steve Hunter:** I support neighborhood schools. As a child I attended a one-room schoolhouse in rural Clinton County until fourth grade. It was a great learning experience with a most dedicated teacher who taught kindergarten through eighth grade in a single room. Unfortunately this original form of neighborhood school has almost entirely disappeared on account of economic and demographic changes in rural America.

In the Davenport School District we have 18 neighborhood elementary schools, one magnet elementary school and one preschool. These neighborhood schools also serve students from outside the immediate neighborhood of the schools who attend for a variety of reasons including voluntary transfers and for special classes. Unfortunately some students are not permitted to attend the closest neighborhood school to their homes because of balanced enrollment policies or on account of limited capacities of their neighborhood school.

In order to reduce these involuntary transfers as much as possible we need to re-draw boundaries to give first priorities to the children in the immediate neighborhood of the schools. In determining the boundaries we must give first consideration to the safety of the children in

## Davenport School-Board Candidates Discuss Neighborhood Schools

Written by No Author

Tuesday, 02 September 2003 18:00

---

crossing streets and highways. Secondly we need to balance the enrollment with the capacities of the schools to maximize the efficient use of staff and building resources in maintaining the best educational practices. Wherever boundaries are changed we need to transition the changes so that students are not transferred out of their existing schools.

**Nikki DeFauw:** Neighborhood schools are, undoubtedly, the best way to educate our children. Schools that have a strong neighborhood presence benefit from an increased sense of collaboration between parents, educators, and students. There is another equally important variable for neighborhood schools, however, and that is the size of those schools. According to the Web site Education World (<http://www.education-world.com>), "A compelling body of research shows that when students are part of smaller, and more intimate learning communities, they are more successful," according to Michael Klonsky, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago.

The Web site continues, "Smaller schools provide significant advantages over large schools in a number of important areas that include:

"Personalization: Teachers are closely involved with each student. In such an environment, it's harder for a student to fall through the cracks;

"Climate: Teachers and students know one another personally, fostering a sense of community and promoting a climate of mutual respect that is tolerant, caring and safe;

"Student Achievement: Smaller classes promote improved student performance. Learning is more likely to be learner-centered;

"Morale: Teachers and students have a stronger sense of belonging and community;

"Extra-curricular activities: Students have more incentive to participate and have greater opportunities to develop leadership skills;

"Governance: Small schools are better able to make changes and to innovate."

Having established that small, neighborhood schools have greater success educating children, boundary changes must be reviewed with consideration of the following criteria:

- What is in the educational best interests of our children? I believe we must maintain small class sizes, insure that our schools can accommodate the families within established boundaries, and that building population totals must support the neighborhood school concept.

- What is the community's vision for our school district? I believe the School Board must make a concerted effort to engage the community in this decision-making process. While the recommendations of the Local School Improvement Advisory Committee will be valuable to our process, I do not believe it should be inclusive to it. I would like to see the District visit with each building's Parent/Teacher Associations as well as employees. Open forums, where the *exchang*  
e of

## Davenport School-Board Candidates Discuss Neighborhood Schools

Written by No Author

Tuesday, 02 September 2003 18:00

---

opinions is not allowed, are not adequate venues to gather input from the community.

- **Diversity/Balanced Enrollment:** One of the District's greatest assets is the diversity of our community. We must ensure our building populations reflect that of Davenport.
- **Safety Issues/Natural Boundaries:** Certain geographic barriers and major thoroughfares naturally delineate boundaries and should be taken into consideration. This is especially true when determining potential busing issues, and neighborhood walkers.
- **Population Growth Patterns:** The District must obtain reliable demographic data that projects population shifts within the community and new developments. We cannot presume that new housing equates single-family dwellings with school age children.

DCSD policies require the review of boundaries every seven years. Given the long-reaching impact of this review, we must take the time to do a thorough and adequate evaluation of both the District's and the community's needs. This must be done simultaneously with a discussion regarding the balance of the local option sales tax monies.

The closings of Grant and Johnson Elementary schools have resulted in buildings that struggle to maintain class sizes within recommended guidelines. The boundary review must remedy the overcrowding issues within these buildings. Furthermore, it must include not only consideration of a new elementary school in the northeast corridor of Davenport, but also one in the central city to replace Grant and Johnson schools.

**Mike Schroeder:** As a candidate for the Davenport School Board, I am a strong supporter of the neighborhood school concept. As a former high school teacher and Professor of Education at Augustana College, I am convinced that our commitment to small, manageable class size and neighborhood schools makes our district unique in the Quad Cities, and greatly enhances the quality of education received by our students.

As we look to adjust school boundaries and attendance zones, I believe that decisions should be made based on the following, equally important criteria: we should ensure racial and economic diversity in each school to the greatest extent possible, and that there is even enough distribution of students within attendance boundaries so that no buildings are overcrowded. Distance, travel, and safety concerns should also be taken into account. For example, we should try to minimize the need for students to cross especially busy streets, again to the greatest extent possible.

The decision to close Johnson and Grant schools was an agonizing one for those serving on the Board at that time, and for our entire community. As a candidate and as a citizen, I realize that closing schools is perhaps the most serious disinvestment that a community can make in a neighborhood. If I had been on the Board at that time, I would have fully investigated every possible option before voting to close Johnson and Grant. Even now, I'm not completely certain how I would have voted on that issue. Nobody wants to close schools. There is absolutely no long-range plan in place to do so, and anyone suggesting otherwise is acting irresponsibly. The fact that every building in the district has (or will soon) undergo significant repair and renovation

## Davenport School-Board Candidates Discuss Neighborhood Schools

Written by No Author

Tuesday, 02 September 2003 18:00

---

with funds from the county's educational sales tax demonstrates the administration's commitment to maintaining the district's infrastructure.

As an educator, I am convinced that we must fight to maintain small class size *across the district* as our number one priority; small class size (along with the presence of well educated, caring, and committed teachers and involved parents) is the most critical factor in ensuring the educational success of our children. Future financial decisions must be made with this priority in mind. As citizens, it will be *our* responsibility in the years ahead to fight for more state funding for local schools; only this will ensure that young people in Davenport will continue to receive a quality education.

**Katie Hanson:** Certainly there are many important considerations regarding school boundaries. There are curriculum issues, transportation issues, family issues, and community issues.

I served on the Davenport Local School Improvement Advisory Committee for the past two years. The group consists of parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders. We met regularly over the last two years to try to determine what key components need to be considered regarding future decisions of the district. We spoke at length about various models for determining boundaries. There was mixed opinion. Some people are very much in favor of neighborhood schools. Some people strongly support the concept of magnet schools that could offer a specific curriculum focus such as the arts or technology. Some would like to see a choice ... perhaps the option to apply to a magnet school or choose the school closest to the child's home. Some people feel that neighborhood schools are ideal for elementary students, but magnet schools might be a good choice for intermediate and high school students.

I am certainly for neighborhood schools if that seems to be what the majority of parents of Davenport school children would like and what seems to best address the needs of all the students in Davenport. I am for creating excellent opportunities for all of our children to learn and achieve. If elected to the board, I will make certain that the board considers current research, community opinion, and multiple possibilities before making such an important decision.