

D-99 to retain student-teacher ratio for 2017-18

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DOWNERS GROVE - Downers Grove High School District 99 will keep its student-to-teacher ratio the same in the next school year, despite a continued downward trajectory in enrollment.

For the past several years, the district has contracted with analyst John Kasarda to provide a new Demographic and Enrollment Report, with the last coming in 2011.

At the Jan. 9 board of education meeting, Superintendent Hank Thiele said the study was typically done every five to six years to stay on top of the latest information.

"We were starting to notice that there was a widening gap between the prior Kasarda projections and our actual enrollment," Thiele said. "It started to look like the right time."

The projection looks at elementary and middle school enrollments, housing construction, births, deaths and other factors to determine conservative, median and higher possible numbers.

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Since 2008, the district has seen a large drop in enrollment, reaching more than 5,400 in that year. In 2011, the report projected 5,207 students in the district by the 2017 school year, revising it down to 4,927 in the more recent version.

"That's a pretty significant number," Assistant Superin-

tendent of Human Resources Pete Theis said. "And for us as we look at maximizing our resources it again points out why this was so important for us to take a look at new information."

The number could be inflated by transfer students in the summer, although the trajectory is still projected to continue generally downward.

The consultant projected a small spike in enrollment in the 2020-21 school year, up to

just less than 5,000 students, but for the district to likely hover around 4,900 annually.

Normally, that would make for a stressful situation as a district would need to consider reducing instructional staff due to enrollment.

However, the district will be seeing a large number of retirees over the next several years, expecting 13 retirees during the period staff would need to be reduced by nine full-time employees. Each depart-

ment over the next two years is likely to have at least one retirement.

In response, Thiele said, staff suggested the board keep the student-teacher ratio at its current 21.8 to 1 for its general education needs, where it has been for the past five years. He said staff are pleased by the current ratio, although he didn't rule out future changes after the district sees the changes in enrollment.

"I don't like to change too

many of these things at one time," he said.

The board will vote on the final staffing ratio Jan. 23, with numbers for the district's more specialized and smaller classroom numbers such as English-language learners, music and special education coming in March.

"It does mean less instructional positions, but it doesn't mean it will impact anybody currently employed," the superintendent said.