

## In the Numbers: A Look at Changes in Elementary School Populations

<b>Elementary School Enrollments and Number of Sections - 2006 vs. 2012*</b>						
<b>Elementary School</b>	<b>2006-07 Enrollment</b>	<b>2006-07 Sections</b>	<b>2012-13 Enrollment</b>	<b>2012 -13 Sections</b>	<b>Enrollment Change 2006 to 2012</b>	<b>Section Change 2006 to 2012</b>
Wrightstown	363	16	324	14	-39	-2
Holland	534	21	366	15	-168	-6
Rolling Hills	463	21	401	19	-62	-2
Richboro	526	22	479	20	-47	-2
Hillcrest	551	23	499	20	-52	-3
M. Welch	711	29	613	25	-98	-4
Churchville	677	28	644	26	-33	-2
Newtown	782	32	661	27	-121	-5
Sol Feinstone	798	33	698	29	-100	-4
Goodnoe	774	31	796	31	22	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6179</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>5481</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>-698</b>	<b>-30</b>

\*October enrollment is used

At their September 20, 2012 meeting, the Council Rock School Board approved completion of an updated district demographic and enrollment study. Because the last such study was completed in 2006 by the Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL), Citizens For Education (CFE) has compiled a comparison of Council Rock's elementary enrollment data from 2006 and 2012. The *In the Numbers* chart above provides the number of all students, including special education, in each elementary school in 2006 and in 2012, and the district-wide difference in enrollment and regular education sections. These numbers show a decreasing elementary population with significant shifts in enrollment since 2006, creating a wide disparity in the number of students in the smaller elementary schools and the larger schools.

**The 2006 PEL study was contracted to guide the district as it prioritized three elementary school renovations, but preceded the downturn in the economy.** Renovations included 13 permanent classroom additions to replace 13 trailers at two different buildings. Churchville's \$13.6 million renovation included an addition that exchanged its 7 trailers for 7 permanent classrooms. Holland's in-progress renovation/addition, approved for \$18 million, is replacing 6 trailers with 6 permanent classrooms. Goodnoe's projected \$18 million capital project plan that removes 8 trailers includes an expansion of at least 6 classrooms, with an option for 4 more.

**Council Rock enrollment data shows that all elementary Schools except Goodnoe (already the largest) have enrollment declines.** *In the Numbers* shows that since 2006, while these three renovation and addition projects were being planned and/or put into operation, Council Rock's overall elementary school enrollment dropped by 698 students and 30 regular

education sections. *In the Numbers* shows the location of the enrollment decline by school, and where the district has classroom space that is no longer needed for regular education sections.

**There is a wide range of decreases in enrollment in each school, from a low of 33 students to a high of 168.** This has created a Council Rock where the variability in number of students in a school is even more disparate than it was in 2006. Since 2006, two schools that have no trailers (Maureen M. Welch and Newtown), and a third school with just 2 trailers (Sol Feinstone) have had 46% of the elementary enrollment losses, losing a combined 319 students and 13 sections. Combine these losses with Holland, which is currently having all of its trailers replaced, and the district is down 487 students; 70% of all the losses in just 4 schools.

**The uneven enrollment decline, a lack of a school size philosophy, and the absence of any district-wide elementary redistricting for 12 years, have all contributed to the disparity between the number of students in each of the elementary schools.** There is a huge disparity in the sizes of the district's elementary schools. The five smallest elementary schools (in order: Wrightstown, Holland, Rolling Hills, Richboro and Hillcrest) have enrollments between 324 and 499. The five largest elementary schools (in order: Maureen M. Welch, Churchville, Newtown, Sol Feinstone and Goodnoe) have enrollments between 613 and 796. These smaller school/larger school distinctions could be creating vastly different experiences for students.

In 2006 there was only one school in the 300-student range (Wrightstown with 363) and in 2012 there are two (Wrightstown and Holland). In 2006 there was only one school in the 400-student range (Rolling Hills), this year there are three (Hillcrest, Richboro and Rolling Hills). This year, even though section losses in some schools put them under capacity, nothing has been done to make school enrollments more equitable.

**Without a school size philosophy, the district began replacing all trailers with permanent classrooms.** One of the side effects of the over \$50 million in capital debt is the addition of 6 permanent classrooms at Holland, the school with the largest enrollment decline (168 students and 6 sections). Similarly, the district added or is adding more permanent classrooms to the two largest schools even though their neighboring schools with no trailers have had substantially declining enrollment and the capacity to take on more students. Newtown, with just 27 sections in 42 classrooms, shares a sending boundary line with Goodnoe and Maureen M. Welch, with 25 sections in 37 classrooms, is next to Churchville's sending area. The Churchville and Goodnoe additions will give those schools permanent capacity to house twice as many students as the district's two smallest enrolled schools (Wrightstown and Holland).

**Redistricting and school closings can further affect each school's enrollment.** If sending areas are not changed, Holland will become the district's newest state of the art elementary school and will be greatly under capacity. Without growth, or a redistricting, the gap in enrollment at Churchville and Goodnoe versus their neighboring schools, with declining enrollment, could continue to widen. Even if enrollment continues to decline at all schools, a

school closing could increase enrollment at the larger capacity schools (Churchville, Goodnoe, Newtown, and Maureen Welch<sup>1</sup>).

**Citizens For Education agrees with Superintendent Mark Klein who stated an updated demographic study is essential information before “another round of capital projects.”** He went on to say, “Projections from a smaller microcosm for the school enrollment categories and the district enrollment itself” will give decision makers a very much needed “30,000 ft. view.” Hopefully, the outcome of the Pennsylvania Economy League 2012 report will be a good first step in guiding decisions on renovation planning capacities and/or sending area adjustments.

<sup>1</sup>. In the Numbers - Elementary Buildings and Classroom Sizes reported in Citizens For Education’s fall 2010 newsletter (see [www.citizensforeducation.com](http://www.citizensforeducation.com)).