

The Whole Grade Sharing Decision

The Collins-Maxwell School Board's unanimous vote to end Whole Grade Sharing conversations came down to one very simple issue: money. The very real possibility of losing a significant percentage of the district's children over the next four years was in the end the sole determination in making the decision. Much conversation was held over issues such as the location of facilities/events, what positions would be shared, who might be in those roles, and who else might be invited to the table for larger partnering opportunities.

But the issue of school finance and how the Collins-Maxwell community would be impacted trumped everything. To put this in simplest terms, consider how your own household would work if within four years you knew family income would drop by 30-40%. No family would sign up for that challenge. Collins-Maxwell board members could not put their school community in such peril.

As each board member spoke there was a clarity of purpose and great emotion. No one had taken this difficult decision lightly. This was clearly evident for all in attendance. It was not about "bullying", or pressure, but rather about economic facts. While our long time sports sharing partner Baxter might not miss a beat and likely flourish with a Whole Grade Sharing partnership, it was impossible to find a positive path forward for Collins-Maxwell when losing so many children.

Several weeks ago Collins-Maxwell offered an option of looking at a regional plan that could impact teaching and learning in this area for years to come. It was a big, ambitious idea and outside of a few enthusiasts did not gain the traction needed.

Last night board members reiterated their support for the recently renewed two-year sports sharing agreement that has served CMB for twenty-eight years. But asking the Collins-Maxwell board to financially implode their district was not something they could vote to do.

So a new chapter is about to unfold. New central office leadership will invigorate the district. Finances are much improved and plans for maintaining a strong financial program are in place. Teaching and Learning will have a new district leader and already much has been done to insure quality instruction for students.

Finally, it would be my hope as I leave that lessons have been learned. The sometimes petty bickering needs to stop. All small towns and school districts face challenges. Cooperation, trust, and understanding are the tools that will allow for successes. Mayors need to talk, city councils need to meet periodically, and people need to support their school district. Build upon this new opportunity to improve the future of your school district and communities. Everyone wins!!!