

WUSD Experiencing Declining Enrollment

At this early stage in the school year WUSD enrollment is down 24 students compared to this time last year. This is a difficult sign as district-wide enrollment has been decreasing since the fall of 2008, dropping over 100 students since that point in time (other than this past year which was up slightly). School districts are funded based upon the previous year's 100th day enrollment so a decrease in funding will not become apparent until next school year.

Historically, enrollment in the District declines by about 5% from this point in time through the 100th day, which occurs in mid-January. This is typically due to students moving, or finding alternative options to make up high school graduation credits. We expect this trend to continue as it has been consistent over the past five school years, although our online learning school, Wickenburg Virtual Academy, has grown from 7 students last year to 24 students today. We will watch this growth closely as it could enable the District to begin chipping away at the 5% annual loss mentioned above.

Although the District's enrollment is declining in total, this is not consistent across all schools. Hassayampa Elementary is up slightly over this past year (2 students) and now sits at 393 students. Festival Foothills Elementary, located in the southern portion of the school district, has increased its enrollment to 222 students; an increase of 15 over this time last year. This represents the first year that Festival Foothills enrollment is larger than Vulture Peak Middle School. Vulture Peak is down by 11 students at this stage compared to last year, and continues to experience ongoing enrollment decline moving down to 211 students at this point. Vulture Peak's enrollment decline is a function of smaller classes transferring from Hassayampa as time progresses. This trend will likely continue to drive Vulture Peak's enrollment lower in years to come. Wickenburg High School (WHS) is experiencing the greatest student decline decreasing 46 students over this past year. Enrollment losses at WHS are primarily a function of the Nadaburg Unified School District transporting students to both WHS and Dysart this year rather than only to WHS.

We will continue to monitor the District's enrollment situation and pay special attention to gains made in our online program at Wickenburg Virtual Academy (WVA). It will be of special interest to me to learn whether increasing enrollment at WVA decreases our 5% loss ratio. If it does and the loss ratio declines this could have a positive impact on the District's enrollment moving forward. I will also keep a close watch on the enrollment at Festival Foothills Elementary. Pulte Homes is building on average 10 new residences per month in the development where the school is located so this increase in building activity might also positively impact the District's enrollment. We will continue to watch the trends on a monthly basis to determine where enrollment will land on the 100th day which occurs in January. I will keep the community informed of any major shifts.