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EAST ST. LOUIS 189 TO CLOSE FIVE SCHOOLS

East St. Louis School District 189 will be closing five elementary schools for the 2012-13 school year in order to adjust to declining enrollment, to help reduce a budget deficit of approximately \$12 million and to stabilize attendance zones and staffing for several years in the future. Alta-Sita, J.M.D. Brown, Miles Davis, A.M. Jackson (K-8), and Lilly-Freeman Elementary Schools will be closing as of June 30, 2012.

The Vivian Adams Early Childhood Center will open next fall as a Pre-K-Kindergarten Center for the District utilizing additional space currently used by students at the adjacent James Williams Learning Center. James Avant, Gordon Bush, Paul L. Dunbar, Annette Officer, and Katie Wright Elementary Schools will serve students in grades 1-5. The approximately 60 middle school students attending A.M. Jackson Academy will attend Lincoln and Mason-Clark Middle Schools. Buildings were evaluated for enrollment capacity, energy efficiency, and the need for repairs prior to determining closures.

Programming will also be addressed. The addition of an Honors Program at both Clark and Lincoln Middle Schools will serve students with the need for accelerated instruction. Elementary programming is being reviewed for enhancements such as the addition of physical education classes for the 2012-13 school year and the exploration of themes for each school in 2013-14. Themes under consideration for review include STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), Fine Arts, and Foreign Language.

Elementary Principals for 2012-13 are Charlotte Edwards, Vivian Adams Early Childhood Center; Tina Frye, Avant Elementary; Roshanda Johnson, Bush Elementary; Barbara Humphrey, Dunbar Elementary; Kimberly Jones-Riley, Officer Elementary, and Gloria Little, Wright Elementary School. The principal's position at Lincoln Middle School is vacant, but will be filled prior to June 30.

"Closing five schools was a difficult recommendation to make to the Board," said Superintendent Arthur Culver. "These schools have rich histories in the District, and they are loved by students and parents. However, fiscal reality and declining enrollment force us to make hard choices. Hopefully, this will stop the trend of closing one or two schools per year and stabilize our schools for staff and students," he said.

A Town Hall Meeting will be held to discuss attendance boundaries for the elementary schools that will serve students next year. Parents and community members are invited to attend and provide input on April 26 at 6:00 p.m. at Mason-Clark Middle School.

"The Board is really saddened by the need to close these schools," said Board of Education President Lonzo Greenwood. "We don't want to lose our schools, but even more importantly, we don't want to lose our school district. Our loss of state and federal funds can't be replaced by our local taxes, and we are being forced to make cuts that are painful. The good news is that our outstanding students will return in the fall, and we will make every effort to see that they receive the highest quality education," he said.

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