



3652 Blue Creek Road • Billings, MT 59101
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November 18, 2024

Hunter Kelly
Planner I, City of Billings
210 N 27th Street
Billings, MT 59101

Re: Blue Creek School SD3 Enrollment

Mr. Kelly,

This letter is in reference to our phone conversation regarding enrollment at Blue Creek school, School District 3. Information will be provided the four points:

1. Misinformation that the school district is at capacity
2. Current and historical enrollment
3. Open enrollment in the state of MT
4. Land owned by the school district

1. **Misinformation that the school district is at capacity:** This is inaccurate and unfortunate this was presented to you by an individual. You are welcome to refer this individual to the district, we would be happy to communicate correct information to them as well. As previously conveyed in meetings attended by administration, phone communications, and email communications, the school district is currently not at capacity nor is the school overloaded.
2. **Current and historical enrollment:** Also previously conveyed, enrollment has declined over the years. Attached is a table showing the enrollment history for the past 20 years, additional years may be provided if needed. BOY-Beginning of Year enrollment and EOY-End of Year Enrollment are displayed. For a few years this information was not available so overall enrollment is provided for comparison. As you can see enrollment has declined.

At the peak of enrollment, the building had the capacity of approximately 235 students, operating 11 classrooms at that time. There has been a decline in the number of students as well as the number of staff. The school went from needing 11 classrooms, to the current year, where there are only 8 classrooms needed. It should also be noted, that even with those eight classrooms, the school is under accreditation standards in all of those rooms. We have many constituents with non-school-aged children and not as much new building as other areas of the city etc. At this point, the school district is able to sustain enrollments based on new home construction, new families moving in, or open enrollment requests (see item 3).

3. **Open enrollment in the state of MT:** An additional impact on enrollment is due to the new open enrollment law (HB 203) which was just implemented in the state of Montana in the fall of 2024. This allows any family to choose a school of their desire and the district of residence is responsible to pay that tuition. For example, if the family of a second grader residing in the Blue Creek School District chooses to enroll that student in a neighboring school district, and they are accepted, Blue Creek School, SD3 is responsible for those tuition costs to the enrolling district. We do have families who have chosen to utilize this option which impacts our enrollment. The same may be for families moving into new construction homes, rentals, or purchasing previously owned homes in Blue Creek School, SD3. We may also receive students whose families make a request to Blue Creek School, SD3, for enrollment. Thus, we stand to lose or gain students based on this.
4. **Land owned by the school district:** Lastly, Blue Creek School, SD3, still owns land in the Briarwood Subdivision. The original intent was to build a second building to house grades 5 through 8. At the time, the decline in the economy, and more recently the decline in enrollment, this did not come to fruition. The trustees chose to keep that land should enrollment increase to the point that there is a need. Many factors would need to come into play for that however. Again, open enrollment affects this overall as well as the needs of the district.

In summary, Blue Creek desires enrollment of students and their families at this time in order to continue the topnotch education and positive learning experiences we are able to provide. Thank you for your interest in our school. I am available for further communications or questions.

Respectfully,

Mrs. Rude

Mrs. Cathi Rude,
Superintendent/Principal
rude@bluecreekschool.org
406-259-065 ext 6

Cc: Anna Vickers, Planning Division Manager, City of Billings
Encl: enrollment history

Blue Creek School SD3 Enrollment History

Year	BOY Total Enrollment	EOY Total Enrollment	Overall enrollment (prior to SY 2009-2010)
SY 2004-2005	unavailable	unavailable	200
SY 2005-2006	unavailable	unavailable	208
SY 2006-2007	unavailable	unavailable	229
SY 2007-2008	unavailable	unavailable	217
SY 2008-2009	unavailable	unavailable	203
SY 2009-2010	190	189	
SY 2010-2011	195	202	
SY 2011-2012	197	196	
SY 2012-2013	195	191	
SY 2013-2014	199	201	
SY 2014-2015	201	190	
SY 2015-2016	198	207	
SY 2016-2017	196	197	
SY 2017-2018	194	195	
SY 2018-2019	189	203	
SY 2019-2020	192	183	
SY 2020-2021	177	180	
SY 2021-2022	178	182	
SY 2022-2023	185	178	
SY 2023-2024	174	169	
SY 2024-2025	146	?	