

School Board approves controversial Harbordale boundary proposal

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A top-performing Fort Lauderdale elementary school will accept more families from its surrounding neighborhood starting next year after the School Board approved a hotly contested boundary change late Wednesday night.

The boundaries for Harbordale Elementary, a B-rated school, will widen to include Victoria Park, Colee Hammock, Beverly Heights and Sunrise Key. Parents in those neighborhoods have long complained that their children are zoned to F- and D-rated schools.

"Unfortunately, my neighborhood does not have a good option for public education and that's why we're here," said Victoria Park resident Lorraine Rosario.

But Harbordale parents remained staunchly opposed to the plan, worried that the change would overcrowd the school, worsen traffic and affect the school's success.

"I don't understand why this one community is so entitled," said LeAnn Pliske, a parent of two students at Harbordale, who spoke against the plan. "I find it laughable that we're putting a Band-Aid on a situation that needs a broader fix."

Dozens of parents filled the auditorium at Plantation High for the final boundary vote, which has divided the community for months. Those dressed in red, the Harbordale school colors, urged the board to reject the plan; those in blue supported the plan.

Victoria Park residents said the boundary change was a win-win situation and would not displace current students, many who have been reassigned to the school from elsewhere in the district.

Under the plan, students from Victoria Park and surrounding neighborhoods would be phased in, one grade level at a time. Open seats at Harbordale would first go to students from Victoria Park and surrounding areas, then to reassigned students. Siblings of students attending the school would be given priority.

The Harbordale community, however, argued the move could reduce opportunities for students in other parts of the district also seeking to get out of local failing schools. Roughly 170 of Harbordale's 450 students do not live within the school's boundaries but have requested reassignment there.

The board on Wednesday also rejected a separate proposal to combine two campuses in Hallandale Beach to create a K-8 school.

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