

Dodge City, Kansas

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Dodge City is located in southwest Kansas in Ford County. Hispanic immigration to Dodge City has been predicated upon the availability of work in two beef processing plants located in the community. Additional attraction for employees is based on ancillary businesses created by the needs of both plants. Furthermore, dairy farms have located in the area creating demand for extra employees. Both National Beef and Excel have been in Dodge City for more than twenty years and are considered the major employers in the county. Aggregate numbers of both employers total approximately 5,000 employees.

New immigration has created a dramatic effect upon Dodge City. All service-oriented facilities have felt the need for expansion to meet the diverse needs of rapid growth. Salient domains impacted include housing, medical facilities, law enforcement, the need for bilingual services, and the availability of emergency supplies such as food, clothing, and blankets. The most impacted has been public education. Currently, Dodge City Public Schools has need of additional facilities.

Within a period of twenty years, the demographics in the community changed dramatically. Currently, over 50% of the population in Dodge City is Hispanic. During the same time period the school population K-12 went from 20% minority to over 60%. Currently, 80-90% of the elementary population is Hispanic.

Changes in demographics coupled with issues of xenophobia or extreme hatred of foreigners have created a visible dichotomy in Dodge City. The benefit provided by the tax base generated by employees of both beef plants is viewed as a positive impact, yet there is still resistance to full inclusion of Hispanics within the community. Discrimination, racism, and the pervasive feeling that they will leave soon still continue to have strong influences in the community. Yet, the community enjoys the fruits of their labors.

Nevertheless, forward thinking community leaders have promoted initiatives toward inclusion of Hispanics in many areas. City stakeholders feel a need for newcomers to undertake comprehensive ownership of the community. These efforts have generated interest among the Hispanic people; to date, there is an Excel Advisory Panel and a Concilio Latino Americano. Both organizations are directed toward understanding, promoting, and facilitating the inclusion of the Hispanic in Dodge City. However, the efforts have not been as successful as anticipated. The disenfranchisement of the Hispanic, lack of avenues for communication, the rejection of the synthesis of full acculturation, lack of assimilation, and the perception by most longstanding community members that newcomers do not want to learn the language, do not participate in American traditions, or support the local way of life serve as barriers that impede inclusion. Additionally, the inflexibility demonstrated by community members in recognizing universal, value-added benefit to the community by newcomers, the lack of community support toward educating the newcomer, refusing to internalize that a new reality has been created, and that as a community it is impossible to return to days gone by, serve to stall the inevitable. Immigrants, for practical reasons, will generally not return to their country of origin.

Currently, USD 443 suffers a lack of classroom space. There is a pressing need for an elementary school, a middle school, and possibly a second high school. A community-wide committee has been formed to analyze the following: (a) available resources, and (b) immediate

needs and future projections. The committee will make recommendations to the school board based on findings. It is anticipated that a bond issue will be presented as a viable recommendation by the committee. Given the tenor of the local political climate and taxes, it is debatable whether such an endeavor will succeed. Nevertheless, educational implications will remain. Overcrowding will continue, dramatic growth will continue, and the district will experience a paucity of sound educational programming based on the counterproductive dynamics of overcrowding of existing facilities.

Migrant Program Services

The district is committed to the precept that “All Will Learn.” Consistent with No Child Left Behind, the district has made significant strides to ensure that all students achieve academically. Through the Migrant Program the following strands and services have been developed and employed to provide support to migrant students and families.

- Newcomer Programs 2nd – 12th grade. These programs provide survival English to students that are new to the district and have demonstrated that they are non-English speakers
- A K – 3 Dual Language strand at Northwest Elementary
- Two ESL teams at the middle school
- Transition classes at the intermediate center to provide support to students that have exited the Newcomer Program; yet, still need additional support to master content and language
- ESL class at the high school to provide support to students who have exited Providing American Culture through Education (PACE) classes
- ESL transition class to provide assistance to level 3 students
- Paraprofessionals to assist teachers in the classroom
- Four liaisons/recruiters to recruit and assist families with their needs. Additionally, these recruiters help families to acclimate to their new environment
- PAC to assist and provide direction to Migrant Program and with Family Nights
- Heritage Panel Program at high school. This program helps students identify racism and discrimination acts at school and in the community, educates and equips students with skills and knowledge about leadership, and exposes students to different universities and colleges throughout Kansas
- Support intensive and extensive staff development in the areas of sheltered instruction and cooperative learning to all staff
- Assist with Summer School and related activities that include delivery of literacy packets to families and provide a Jump Start experience to new kindergarten students
- Provide assistance with the pre-k program that serves migrant children through the Head Start Program
- Assist with the purchase of supplies and materials that are researched based and proven to assist migrant and ESL students
- One liaison/recruiter at the high school to improve home school connections and monitor progress of migrant students