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Dear Friend(s) of Public Education:

Geodemographic studies have been used by school districts in a variety of ways. Often, districts will use these studies as tools for public engagement campaigns or as environmental scans for school district services. Sometimes, these studies are used to kick-off campaigns for new or enhancements to existing facilities. As school enrollments become less predictable because of economic and both internal and external community factors, some school districts have turned to primary and secondary research to lessen the uncertainty in decisions that will have future impacts on district operations. Geodemographic studies have proven useful in providing the framework for this research and the interpretation of statistical findings.

Geodemographic studies use school district geography and other complementary geographic data to produce maps and graphics which show the spatial distribution of various statistical characteristics including population, households, and housing change as well as the spatial distribution of school district enrollments. These studies may be designed to research general community trends, specific community developments, or trends and changes in enrollments. Findings are compared in some studies to trends in district or attendance area enrollments or, if the need dictates, to changes occurring in land use, property ownership, and housing turnover. School districts may choose to use this information for a variety of purposes including transportation routing, redrawing attendance areas, locating school programs, and closing or building new facilities. Occasionally, statistical and map information is used to interview city or county officials, realtors, developers, and others that are aware of changes occurring in the district or to conduct community surveys. The research design of these studies is open to modification with specific research questions and concerns that are of immediate interest to district officials, staff, and the community at large.

I have assembled a “shopping list” of geodemographic study elements that have been used by school districts for strategic planning. Depending on the purpose and the research questions of the study, various sources of data may be used and districts are able to pick and choose the services that are needed. These sources included independent population and housing estimates and projections, live birth records, current and historical student records, parcel and tax assessment data, local government data which may include building and occupancy permits, surveys of private and parochial schools, and community household surveys. Windshield surveys are available for communicating particular types of changes occurring within neighborhoods using point-on-map locations and links to digital photography. Any or all of these data may be useful for developing and conducting interviews which may generate additional factual and anecdotal information about community trends.

I hope the shopping list and accompanying illustrative slides on this web site are helpful. If I can provide additional information, references, or if you would care to discuss this with me, please feel free to contact me by email at [ckofron@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ckofron@sbcglobal.net). I look forward to talking and working with you.

Sincerely,



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