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Horace Mann School to be closed

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The St. Joseph Board of Education voted unanimously Wednesday night to close Horace Mann Middle School at the end of the 1978-79 school year.

The district now will begin redrawing the middle school boundaries. It is expected that most of the students in the Horace Mann area will be transferred to Bode and Truman middle schools. Everett and Neely are the two elementary schools that feed into Horace Mann.

The decision came after the board heard a petition asking the board to continue operating the school. Also during the discussion, several persons criticized the board and administration for not having closed Horace Mann

the school is no longer required for the use of the district as of July 1, 1979, and that the business manager be authorized to direct the sale or lease of the property.

As suggested by school Superintendent Gerald Troester, the board's finance committee will work with community groups to obtain continued use of the school building.

The city has expressed interest in obtaining the building for use by the East Side Human Resources Center. John Lucas, a city councilman and executive director of the center, said Wednesday night that if the city does buy or lease the building and offers it to the center, the center's board of directors "would have to take a hard look at it because there is no way the center could afford to support it."

When she offered the motion, Mrs. Reed said: "The students at Horace Mann Middle School, I am convinced,

can obtain a better education by attending one of our other middle schools.

"The board cannot justify to the taxpayers five middle schools at below desired capacity when four buildings could provide the same educational facilities. Educationally, administratively, financially — the facts support the decision that must be made."

Administration figures show that enrollment in all the middle schools will decline through the 1979-80 school year. The figures show that even if Horace Mann is closed, the four remaining middle schools still would be 290 students below capacity in that year.

Horace Mann now has 171 students and a capacity of 250. The district projected that it would reach a low of 166 students in 1979-80 and then would have a gradual increase to 190 students in 1983-84.

The petition to keep Horace Mann open was submitted by the Committee for Continuing Community-Based Education. The petition suggests redistricting to bring more students into Horace Mann.

"The Horace Mann School district's feeder area is by far the smallest in the middle school system. This is because the boundary lines as now drawn up are not adequate to support the school. Truman Middle School has a present enrollment of 684 students and Bode's enrollment is listed as 501," the petition stated.

"Redistricting to allow 35 students from each of these districts to attend Horace Mann would allow the school to operate at a near capacity level and would not significantly reduce the enrollment at the other schools."

Troester said it would be "very pos-

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