



Fairfax County
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Boundary Policy Review

June 25, 2024

Overview

The Fairfax County School Board is reviewing a draft update to the FCPS Boundary Policy ([Policy 8130](#)) for possible approval

- The boundary policy specifies the criteria and process by which school boundaries are set or adjusted. It does not define any particular school boundary
- It was first approved in 1986
- No holistic review of boundaries or this policy has occurred in nearly four decades
- A better, current policy would help address community concerns about issues such as temporary classrooms (trailers), instructional program locations, overcrowding, facility renovation timelines, and transportation
- **No specific boundary changes are proposed or a part of this policy review**

Benefits of an Up-to-Date Policy

Research shows good boundary adjustment decisions may be linked to better student achievement through instructional quality, budget optimization, and enhanced student well-being

June 25, 2024 Work Session



Policy 8130 History

- First adopted July 1, 1986; last revised May 9, 2013
- 2018: School Board began a review of policy 8130. Four School Board work sessions were held ([10-15-18](#), [2-25-19](#), [3-11-19](#), and [7-22-19](#))
- July 2019: The board requested the superintendent hire a consultant to identify best practices in boundary policy and engage in community discussion
- Fall 2021: MGT Consulting Group held three virtual community meetings to share information about the boundary policy review and collected stakeholder input via a survey
- December 14, 2021: MGT presented final report, including the [Boundary Policy Best Practices Review Report](#) and [Boundary Study Report](#)
- 2021: Additional work on boundary policy was paused to focus on return to school during COVID-19
- January 2024: Board voted to restart review of Policy 8130 and sent policy to Governance Committee to revise and bring draft to the board.

2024 Governance Committee Review

The School Board resumed the review of Policy 8130 in 2024. The School Board Governance Committee met on the following dates to review the policy:

- Feb. 22, 2024
- March 12, 2024
- April 15, 2024
- April 16, 2024
- May 15, 2024
- May 20, 2024
- June 18, 2024 – Final Governance Committee draft approval

All meetings were open and public notice was provided

Summary of Impact of Proposed Policy Changes

New draft Policy 8130 benefits the community because it:

- Clearly states implementation belongs to the Division Superintendent to depoliticize process of determining potential changes
- Provides for 5-year cyclical review to maximize effective use of facilities and delivery of excellent education
- Prioritizes the critical criteria – including proximity – that must be followed with additional criteria recommended for potential consideration
- Strengthens public input and engagement requirements
- Strengthens board oversight by requiring full School Board approval of any adjustment, with exceptions for temporary emergencies

Comparison of Current Policy and Draft Policy

In the next slides, we will review

- The current policy and
- The proposed changes
- The next steps

Purpose - Section I

Current Policy

Describe School Board authority to

- Assign students to schools and programs
- Close schools and programs, where appropriate
- Define considerations and procedures for the above

Proposed Policy

Define School Board boundary policy for

- Assign students to schools and programs
- Open or close schools and programs where appropriate
- Outline considerations for such determinations

Policy Authority - Section III

Both Current and Proposed Policy:

- School Board has full authority per state code over
 - Consolidation of schools
 - Redistricting of school boundaries
 - Adoption of pupil assignment plans
- Superintendent is responsible for implementing the policies, as with all policies - this is specified in the new policy

Side-by-Side: Overarching Goal: Assignment of Students - Section IV

Current Policy Section IV

- The basic policy of the Fairfax County School Board shall be to assign pupils to the schools and programs that serve the areas of their residences in accordance with the local school boundaries and service areas established by the School Board

New Draft Section IV

- Goal ... is to maintain or improve operational excellence and efficiency to sustain a world-class education system FCPS is committed to providing facilities across the division that are equitably equipped and funded to provide safe and accessible school settings

Side-by-Side: Overall Goal: Assignment of Students - Section IV (con't)

Current Policy

- Overall reasons: maintain or improve operating efficiency and/or instructional effectiveness, relieve facility crowding, make effective use of new or existing space, avoid underuse of buildings, and/or reduce operating costs.

New Draft

- Students shall attend schools and programs that serve geographic areas where they live in accordance with established local school boundaries and service areas
- Adjustments cannot reflect magisterial districts or postal addresses and, whenever possible, cannot affect the same homes any more often than once in three years
- Addresses specific criteria in following section

Side-by-Side: Adjustment Types

Current Policy - Sections VI, VII, VIII

- **Administrative**

- Superintendent can act, w/consultation of affected SB reps
 - Emergency/public need
 - New housing
 - <5% students affected
 - Board vote not required

- **Expedited**

- Superintendent may recommend, after public meetings in affected communities and consultation with affected SB reps
 - Emergency
 - <15% students affected
 - Board vote required
 - Public comment/hearing not required

- **Standard**

- >15% of students affected
- Public comment/public hearing
- Board vote required

New Draft - Section IV and VII

Comprehensive Review

- Every five years
- Board vote required

Off-Cycle Adjustments

- **Emergency**

- When necessary due to catastrophe
- Temporary
- no board vote required unless permanent, then follows expedited process

- **Expedited**

- Superintendent authorized to act after public meetings
- Requires board vote

* *Public Engagement moved to Section V*

Criteria for Boundary Changes

Current - Section IX - implementation considerations and no priority order

- Considerations include proximity to residences; projected school enrollment and capacity; walking and busing safety; natural and man-made geographic features; neighborhood impact; school feeder alignments; contiguous school attendance areas; long-range capital plans; the socioeconomic characteristics of school populations; the distribution of programs and resources
- Adjustments made without respect to magisterial districts or postal addresses
- Whenever possible, shall not affect the same occupied dwellings any more often than once in three years.

Proposed - Section IV and VII

Five Year Cyclical Review:

- Shall/May framework for prioritization for Supt. to recommend boundaries
- Streamlines criteria
- Requires board approval
- Priority criteria - shall be used
 - Access to programming
 - Enrollment/capacity
 - Proximity
 - Transportation
- Additional criteria - may be used
 - School pyramids
 - Minimize disruption
 - Support family involvement
 - Reduce use of temporary space
 - Promote stability
 - Minimize costs

Criteria for Boundary Changes (con't)

Current - Section IX -implementation considerations and no priority order

- Considerations include proximity to residences; projected school enrollment and capacity; walking and busing safety; natural and man-made geographic features; neighborhood impact; school feeder alignments; contiguous school attendance areas; long-range capital plans; the socioeconomic characteristics of school populations; the distribution of programs and resources
- Adjustments made without respect to magisterial districts or postal addresses
- Whenever possible, shall not affect the same occupied dwellings any more often than once in three years.
(above)

Proposed - Section IV and VII

Off Cycle Adjustments:

Emergency Adjustment (temporary):
Board approval not required unless change is to become permanent

- Catastrophic or emergency

Expedited Adjustments - requires board approval. Criteria:

- New unoccupied housing requires reassignment to avoid school crowding
- student transportation issues
- estimated membership substantially exceeds program capacity
- program changes
- school openings or closings
- unforeseen construction related challenges or delays

Side-by-Side: Phasing

Current Policy - Section XI

- When possible, adjustments implemented through attrition and phasing
- School Board may approve grade-by-grade phase-in starting in middle and high schools
- Implement other phasing plans as appropriate
- Parents of rising 6th (or 5th), 8th and 12th graders may, at discretion of school board, opt to have their student stay at same school

New Draft - Section VIII

- When possible, adjustments under this policy shall be implemented through attrition and limited phasing
- Effort to ensure consistency of phasing, when possible

Side-by-Side: Public Notice

Current Policy

- Requires public hearing with at least 10 days' public notice, for
 - Consolidation of schools
 - School boundary changes - 15% or more of student population affected
- No public hearing required for administrative or expedited boundary adjustments
- Meetings required in affected school communities for expedited adjustments, not administrative

New Draft

Cyclical Review:

- Cyclical Review made public - results presented to board and community
- Community engagement required before, during, and after any comprehensive review of division-wide boundaries. In-person and virtual meetings in each region, as well as electronic communications
- Additional meetings, outreach, surveys etc. required in affected pyramids before changes proposed and before changes are finalized
- Public hearing required with at least seven days' public notice for boundary adjustments affecting more than 15% of population, per VA code

Side-by-Side: Public Notice

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- Meetings required in affected school communities for expedited adjustments, not administrative (as above)

New Draft

- For expedited adjustments, public engagement required in affected pyramids before, during and after proposals made
 - In-person and virtual community meetings
 - Surveys
 - Other outreach
- For Emergency temporary adjustments, public hearings are not required.

Policy Update Approval Process

Next Steps

- Board discusses Governance draft at today's work session.
- Governance Committee finalizes policy after board discussion
- After public notice via New Business at a preceding meeting, full School Board votes at a regular board meeting after draft is finalized.
- Once adopted by the School Board, the Superintendent implements the updated policy, with robust community engagement before boundary adjustments as required by the policy.