

## **FACILITIES SERVICES**

### **Facilities Planning**

#### **Local School Boundaries and Program Assignments**

This policy supersedes Policy 8130.7.

### **PURPOSE**

To define the school boundary policy for the assignment of students to schools and programs, to close or open or consolidate schools and programs where appropriate, and to outline the considerations for such determinations.

#### **I. SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE LAST PUBLICATION**

The entire policy has been updated.

#### **II. AUTHORITY**

The Fairfax County School Board is vested with the authority to “provide for the consolidation of schools or redistricting of school boundaries or adopt pupil assignment plans whenever such procedure will contribute to the efficiency of the school division.” [Code of Virginia: Section 22.1-79 (4)]

Implementation of this policy is delegated by the School Board to the Division Superintendent.

#### **III. ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS AND SCHOOL BOUNDARIES**

The goal of FCPS’ school boundary establishment, program assignment or location adjustments, or opening or closing a school is to maintain or improve operational excellence and efficiency to sustain a world-class education system, as delineated by Section V below. FCPS is committed to providing facilities across the division that are equitably equipped and funded to provide safe and accessible school settings.

Students shall attend the schools and programs that serve the geographic areas of their residences in accordance with the local school boundaries and service areas established by the School Board. Exceptions to this policy will be made in accordance with the current version of Regulation 2230, Student Transfer Process.

Establishment of boundaries and adjustments shall be made without respect to magisterial districts or postal addresses and, whenever possible, shall not affect the same occupied dwellings any more often than once in three years.

#### IV. PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The School Board shall “obtain public comment through a public hearing not less than seven days after reasonable notice to the public in a newspaper of general circulation in the school division prior to providing (i) for the consolidation of schools...(iii)...for redistricting of school boundaries or adopting any pupil assignment plan affecting the assignment of 15 percent or more of the pupils in average daily membership in the affected school.” [Code of Virginia: Section 22.1-79 (8)]

Community engagement shall occur prior to the implementation of any division boundary adjustments as outlined in Regulation 8130.XX, as required by state law. The division reserves the right to base final decisions on the needs of all students in the division.

For emergency temporary boundary adjustments pursuant to Section VII (A) below, no public hearing shall be required.

For the comprehensive review of divisionwide boundaries pursuant to Section VI below, community engagement shall occur both before the review begins and at completion of the review. Results of cyclical review shall be presented to the Board and to the community. Community engagement before the review begins and upon conclusion of the review shall include at minimum in person and virtual meetings in each region and via electronic communications with the community.

Public engagement shall occur in each affected school pyramid before changes are proposed and again after changes are proposed but before any changes are finalized and voted on by the board. Public engagement at minimum includes pyramid community meetings with in-person and virtual options, pyramid wide surveys, and outreach to engage communities, as well as outreach to communities with students placed within the pyramid for programming or other reasons.

For expedited boundary adjustments pursuant to Section VII (B) below, public engagement shall take place in the impacted pyramids before changes are proposed and after again changes are proposed but before any changes are finalized and prior to any board vote on proposed expedited boundary adjustment. Engagement at minimum includes publicly noticed community meetings in each impacted pyramid with in-person and virtual options, pyramid wide surveys, and outreach to engage communities.

## V. ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL BOUNDARIES ADJUSTMENTS, INCLUDING SCHOOL OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS

A comprehensive review of divisionwide boundaries shall be conducted at least every five years by the Division Superintendent, and any adjustments shall be recommended to the School Board for approval.

Upon this review, in alignment with the Strategic Plan, the Superintendent shall prioritize the following criteria, in no particular order, when recommending individual school boundaries:

- **Access to Programming:** Ensure equitable access to programs and facilities, and consider impact on school programs and populations.
- **Enrollment/Capacity:** Using student enrollment projections, balance available capacity across the school division and maximize efficient and effective use of school facilities, as per best practices for capacity utilization and program needs while eliminating or preventing the establishment of split feeders, whenever possible.
- **Proximity:** Promote contiguous attendance zones and maintain neighborhood groupings (to include condominium and apartment complexes) to eliminate and/or prevent establishment of attendance islands.
- **Transportation:** Provide for walking and bussing safety and limit transportation times and ensure efficient transportation routes with attendance areas.

As each school community and location is unique, the Superintendent may also consider the following criteria, in no particular order:

- Maintain relationship with school pyramid groupings.
- Minimize disruption of students' instructional programs.
- Minimize future capital and operational budget costs.
- Minimize use of temporary classrooms and modular units.
- Promote stability by focusing on long-term attendance zone stability.
- Reasonably allow for all students from the adjacent neighborhoods and communities to attend a school, taking into consideration natural and man-made barriers (e.g., major roads, geographic features).
- Support optimal family/caregiver involvement.

## VI. OFF-CYCLE BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

- A. **Emergency Adjustment:** When there is a catastrophic or emergency situation, the Superintendent is authorized to administratively adjust school attendance

areas on a temporary basis and after notification to the School Board and the affected communities.

The Superintendent shall provide quarterly updates on the status of temporary adjustment, to include its expected duration. If the emergency adjustment is expected to become permanent (or at the direction of the School Board), the Superintendent shall follow the procedure for expedited adjustments.

**B. Expedited Adjustment:** The Superintendent is authorized to recommend expedited adjustment to school attendance areas, after consultation with the School Board and after publicly-noticed meetings are held in the affected school communities if any of the following instances occur:

- New unoccupied housing requires reassignment to avoid school crowding
- to accommodate student transportation
- in those cases where estimated membership substantially exceeds program capacity of a school
- program changes
- School openings or closings
- unforeseen construction related challenges or delays

The Division Superintendent will provide all recommended adjustments to the School Board for School Board approval at a regularly scheduled meeting.

## **VII. PHASING OF ADJUSTMENTS**

When possible, adjustments under this policy shall be implemented through attrition and phasing. The School Board may approve a grade-by-grade phase-in of adjustments for students beginning with the incoming class at the middle or high school levels, when feasible. The School Board may adopt other phasing plans as appropriate to the individual boundary study. Parents of rising sixth (or fifth) graders, eighth graders, and twelfth graders affected by a boundary change may, at the discretion of the School Board, be provided the option of having their students remain in the school they attended prior to the change.

Legal Reference: Code of Virginia Sections 22.1-79 (4) and (8)

See also the current version of:

Policy 1440, Educational Equity Policy  
Regulation 2230, Student Transfer Process  
FCPS Strategic Plan

Policy  
adopted: July 1, 1986  
Revised: November 6, 1986  
Revised: July 20, 1989  
Revised: September 24, 1998  
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