

FCPS Community Meetings to Discuss School Boundaries

Virtual Community Meetings

Virtual Community Meetings held on January 10, January 16, January 25, January 27, January 28 and February 10, 2025

In January and February 2025, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) held a series of virtual community meetings to gather input for the review of FCPS's school boundaries. During the community sessions, participants split into smaller groups to discuss and share their thoughts on four questions. This report summarizes the input shared by community members from the virtual sessions through themes and supporting excerpts. The four questions are as follows:

1. In the introduction, we explored various challenges related to the current school boundaries. Which of those do you feel should be the top priority when we create the boundary scenarios?
2. Based on your experience as a parent/caregiver and/or community member, what are some important data or insights we should consider?
3. What do you hope the outcomes of this boundary review process will be? How could this review process positively impact our community?
4. What questions do you have about the next steps in this boundary review process?

Question 1:

In the introduction, we explored various challenges related to the current school boundaries. Which of those do you feel should be the top priority when we create the boundary scenarios?

School Size & Capacity

Many community members expressed concerns about overcrowding in certain schools while others remain under-enrolled. They believe that any boundary adjustments should work toward balancing capacity without negatively impacting educational quality.

Supporting excerpts:

- "Overcrowding is a concern within some pyramids."
- "Enrollment Capacity. Work in different schools and one is very crowded with added modulars."
- "At a high school level with such a growth in population surely we need to build another high school."
- "Use of space that may be used for co-curricular (specialized) instruction, such as STEM."
- "Some schools serve several neighborhoods; want to ensure that community bonds are maintained."
- "How can we be creative with the size of school populations in a district as large as FCPS?"
- "Ensuring that issues that are trying to be addressed at schools aren't shifted to other schools."
- "For schools that are super overcrowded: Relieve the capacity challenges."
- "Resolves some issues that families may be facing, but ensure that this is not creating other problems."
- "Consider Capital Investments for new schools."

Transportation & Proximity

Proximity to schools and transportation concerns were frequently raised, with many parents emphasizing the challenges of long bus rides and inconvenient start times. They want boundary changes to minimize travel time and prioritize safe, efficient transportation.

Supporting excerpts:

- "Transportation - long bus rides to schools and start times that are very early don't make for safe transportation."
- "Buses come at 6:30 am to get kids to their high school."
- "Travel time - what are current travel times to and from school and how will boundary changes affect them?"
- "New boundary might change Title I status and thus negatively affecting students who need the benefits and support of Title I. In some cases, a split feeder situation can be supporting the equitable treatment of students."
- "What are the current traffic patterns and how will they be affected by boundary changes?"
- "Neighborhood connectivity - walking paths, etc."

Community & Social Continuity

Many parents emphasized the importance of keeping communities intact by ensuring that neighborhoods remain together within school boundaries. They expressed concerns about split feeders disrupting social ties and impacting student well-being.

Supporting excerpts:

- "Split feeders are a challenge when talking about student friendships and community."
- "Keeping neighborhoods together as well as consideration of phasing 'grandfathering' in of students."
- "Current elementary schools to stay together, don't split."
- "Keeping students cohorted together throughout their years in FCPS by limiting the number of transitions."
- "Preserve friend groups."
- "Students need to move around to find the right programs. How can we keep communities together?"
- "Minimizing Disruption."
- "Maintaining social ties / continuity between elementary, middle, and high school."
- "Keeping neighborhoods together and not splitting up streets in same neighborhood"
- "Ensuring a cohesive school community."

Access to Specialized Programs & Equity

Equitable access to academic programs, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and language immersion programs, was a major concern. Parents want to ensure that boundary changes do not limit opportunities for students to participate in these programs.

Supporting excerpts:

- "No matter where a student lives in the county they should have access to excellent choice programs."
- "Equitable programming, AP vs. IB is a typical barrier to students studying areas of interest."
- "Elective options/academy programs only available in certain regions/schools."

- "Equitable access to enrichment programs to ensure that parents don't feel like their children are leaving one school with more access to resources than the school they'd be reassigned to."
- "Only some schools offer IB and families choose to move here and live close to an iB school, or Dual immersion programs"
- "Dissolve AAP Centers has potential benefit, but resources should be equitable."
- "Bring more resources to the kids. That will benefit the schools more than rezoning."

Property Values & Home Ownership Concerns

Many community members expressed concerns that changes in school boundaries could negatively impact property values. Some families specifically purchased homes based on school assignments, and they worry about the financial implications of boundary adjustments.

Supporting excerpts:

- "Bought house based on where the kids will go to their chosen school."
- "Home value being decreased."
- "Property values are a concern, don't want values to sink."
- "Minimizing people wanting to move homes to go back to their base school."
- "People assume they are going to benefit from the school they spent their money to live around."
- "Residents need clarification on a boundary shift's effect on property values."
- "What is the tax/revenue impact of redistricting?"
- "Concern about home values, and what a boundary change would do to them - how it would affect them."

Question 2:

Based on your experience as a parent/caregiver and/or community member, what are some important data or insights we should consider?

Enrollment Trends and Student Population Data

Community members emphasized the need for accurate and detailed enrollment data to ensure fair and effective boundary decisions. They want to see historical trends, current school capacities, and future projections to anticipate potential growth. Many believe

that data on population shifts and housing development should inform decisions to prevent future overcrowding or under-enrollment.

Supporting excerpts:

- “Analyze student to teacher ratios.”
- “Student enrollment data and trends over the last decade and how that matches policy changes and shifts to determine how enrollment might shift in the next decade.”
- “Reflect on past trends in population growth and look ahead to see when/where we might grow as a county.”
- “Do we currently connect with Fairfax County gov to know where new developments are going up or where new businesses will be headquartered?”
- “Consider Capital Investments for new schools.”
- “Simulation tool to give us data on students within a given area.”
- “Projected enrollment numbers of students - are more people moving away or in, new construction”
- “What options are available for those schools that are already overcrowded? Will it be busing or construction that best meets the needs?”
- “Capacity important to consider, number of trailers should be considered for definite.”
- “Data to consider: Tysons plan published by the county, grid expansions, and plans for future developments.”

School Performance and Academic Offerings

Community members expressed concerns about how boundary changes might impact school performance and academic programming. They want data on graduation rates, college preparedness, AP/IB program distribution, and special education resources. Many emphasized the need to maintain academic continuity for students affected by reassignment.

Supporting excerpts:

- “Graduation rates and attendance data (as well as other performance data) to explore the possible influencers of a boundary study and additional impacts/benefits.”
- “How many AP classes students are completing, colleges they attend, etc., differ vastly by school; academic performance by like student group at schools.”

- “Consider differences between IB and AAP programs, as IB has less room—does this drive differences in enrollment?”
- “Ensure that parents don’t feel like their children are leaving one school with more access to resources than another.”
- “Look at the performance of each school/pyramid individually. See where they need help and put the funds into the schools that need it. Changing the boundaries doesn’t help but boosts school”
- “While we appreciate the need for a boundary study, please remain mindful of school quality and performance - work to ensure consistent experiences for students”
- “Unsure on school ratings, can give good schools a bad name potentially”
- “Average SOL/standardized test scores.”
- “Great Schools ratings - college readiness, test scores etc are all aggregated from a rating system that is important to parents.”

Transportation and Commute Times

Concerns about transportation and commute times were frequently raised, with a focus on how boundary changes may affect bus routes, safety, and efficiency. Many parents worry about long bus rides, early pickup times, and increased traffic congestion due to new boundaries.

Supporting excerpts:

- “Commute time to each of the schools. Buses come at 6:30 am to get kids to their high school.”
- “They should take into consideration student travel time.”
- “Pedestrian and bus stop safety (both distance and time of day).”
- “The time it takes students to get to school should be considered. Commute times for students.”
- “What are current travel times to and from school and how will boundary changes affect them?”

Data Transparency and Decision-Making Process

Community members emphasized the need for greater transparency in how data is collected, analyzed, and used to inform boundary decisions. They want clear, accessible information on enrollment figures, capacity planning, transportation logistics, and how demographic factors influence decision-making. Many also requested public access to the data and opportunities to provide feedback on the analysis before finalizing any boundary changes.

Supporting excerpts:

- “Can we see the data as it is a work in progress? See the schools that are potentially being involved/considered in the process.”
- “At what point does the data show that capital improvements to schools are a better solution? (increasing capacity/investing in existing schools or building new schools, as opposed to boundary changes)”
- “Is the data analysis going to be made public?”
- “Who is doing the data analysis? - Thru consulting -”
- “How will these answers to these questions be answered? (FAQ on website??)”
- “Where can the data be accessed? It’s important to understand what data goes into the decision-making.”
- “Will they look at boundaries that were changed in the last 10 years and try to not move them again?”
- “One of the major points of our group’s discussion was regarding data transparency, reiterating one of the other groups’ highlights.”
- “It would be important to provide the community with the data from the data collection process such as enrollment and capacity, transportation, proximity information.”
- “Being able to see what and how data is used to make decisions regarding the proposed school boundaries.”
- “One of the major points of our group’s discussion was regarding data transparency, reiterating one of the other groups’ highlights. It would be important to provide the community with the data from the data collection process such as enrollment and capacity, transportation, proximity information. Additionally, being able to see what and how data is used to make decisions regarding the proposed school boundaries.”

Question 3:

*What do you hope the outcomes of this boundary review process will be?
How could this review process positively impact our community?*

Minimizing Disruption to Students and Families

Community members expressed a strong desire to minimize disruptions for students, ensuring stability in their academic and social environments. Many parents worry about students being forced to change schools in the middle of their education, which could affect their mental health and academic performance. There is strong support for grandfathering policies that allow students to complete their education at their current schools.

- "Minimal impact to students/disruption."
- "Students will not have to move during their Senior year."
- "Grandfathering to finish out in the same pyramid will be an option."
- "FCPS understands people want longer transition time so kids don't have to move schools mid-experience."
- "Keeping social continuity for students with pyramids (elementary → middle → high school) to keep friends together."
- "Grandfather kids of secondary or elementary schools to avoid disruption."
- "Do not move existing 7–12th graders."
- "Siblings should stay together regardless!"

Equitable Access to Programs and Resources

Many families emphasized the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of where they live, have equal access to educational programs. Concerns were raised about disparities in access to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and specialized programs like gifted and language immersion. Parents and students hope boundary adjustments will focus on bringing programs to all schools rather than forcing students to travel long distances to access them.

- "Programs are bolstered without needing to shuffle students."
- "Even distribution of resources across the county."
- "Bring programs to students, not vice versa."
- "Ensure that ESOL students and special education programs are evenly distributed."
- "Local AAP access."
- "More options for AAP, Special Ed, Title I, etc., for families to find the right programs for their students locally without needing to sacrifice long-distance travel."
- "Disparities in course offerings will be eliminated."
- "Why do some schools have 26 AP choices vs. 9 at a similar school?"

Transparency and Community Engagement

Families want a clear and transparent decision-making process, with more direct involvement from the community. There is widespread concern about the lack of clear communication regarding how boundary decisions are made and what data is used. Parents expect the school board to actively listen to their feedback and incorporate it into the final decisions.

- "Listen to and incorporate feedback—especially from caregivers."
- "More data on consultation and transparency."
- "Transparency—focus on what needs to be addressed."
- "We want transparency and hope the school board will take the opportunity to be clear and open."
- "Process transparency (town halls, clear data, and input from representatives)."
- "Transparency of the review of boundaries."
- "Eager to see public data on how decisions are made."
- "Ensure the decision-making process is community-driven and fair."

Transportation and Proximity Considerations

Many parents emphasized the importance of keeping students close to their schools to reduce long and inefficient commutes. There is strong support for prioritizing walkability, improving bus routes, and reducing transportation times for students. Community members also highlighted the need for better planning to prevent students from having to cross dangerous roads or rely on extensive busing.

- "Reduce transportation times."
- "Shorter bus times for elementary students."
- "Walking or biking options specifically for high-school in the boundary."
- "Concerns about lack of sidewalks impacting walkability."
- "Students should not have to cross major highways to reach their schools safely."
- "Better bus routes - less passing of other schools, shorter rides/distance to stops."
- "Time on bus—traffic and bus patterns."
- "Transportation costs should be factored into the decision-making process."

Stability of Communities and Home Values

Parents expressed concerns about the impact of boundary changes on neighborhood cohesion and home values. Many families purchased homes specifically for their school assignments and fear that redistricting could negatively affect their property values. There is hope that boundary adjustments will maintain community stability and minimize economic disruptions.

- "People move into certain areas to attend certain schools/greatly impacts home values."
- "Home values can change with boundary lines."
- "Impact on property values and economy based on rezoning, with a shift out of public school into private school."
- "Concerned that boundary changes could concentrate low-income students in certain schools."
- "Afraid that lower-income neighborhoods will all be linked together and lose access to all resources + people."
- "Keep kids in their pyramid or give parents the option to choose."
- "Hope that FC does not get 'shaken up.'"
- "Ensuring that families can stay in the same school system without moving."

Question 4:

What questions do you have about the next steps in this boundary review process?

Transparency and Decision-Making Process

Many community members expressed concerns about the transparency of the boundary review process. They want clear communication about how decisions will be made, who is involved, and what data is being used. There is a strong desire for more open discussions and explanations from officials to ensure trust in the process.

- "How will FCPS ensure transparency in this process? What meetings beyond these 'data collection' meetings will discuss the findings?"
- "Explain how decisions are actually being made? How is 'equity' being defined?"
- "How will criteria be weighted?"
- "Who is prioritizing this and how? What is the top priority? (core criteria + weight)."

- "Why wasn't this process more transparent?"
- "Will the suggested boundaries be open for discussion?"
- "We would like transparency on the methodology used to create the scenarios."
- "Eager to see public data on how decisions are made."

Timeline and Implementation

Parents and community members want to know when changes will take effect and how they will be rolled out. Many are concerned about whether there will be a phased approach or an immediate implementation. There is a strong demand for clarity on the transition plan to minimize disruptions to students and families.

- "When does this actually take effect? When would boundaries be redrawn & how will this be phased in?"
- "How gradually is rollout? Phase-in?"
- "What is the timeline for execution in the plan? Are students grandfathered in?"
- "Why is FCPS not taking a more phased approach? Can we not be more effective looking at fixing attendance islands first?"
- "Is the entire county impacted by this review?"
- "Will the changes be implemented in shifts or piecemeal? Or will they be made all at once?"
- "Will and how many opportunities will there be for revision after they provide the draft scenarios?"
- "In spring 2025 will we have a real draft? Will it be shared?"

Community Engagement and Input

Community members want more opportunities to provide input and be involved in the decision-making process. There is concern that only a small segment of the population is being consulted and that feedback from parents, students, and property owners is not being fully considered. They want assurances that their voices will be heard and valued in shaping the final decisions.

- "How is feedback being elicited/consulted from parties (i.e., residents, property owners, etc.) who do not have kids in FCPS (property value impacts, etc.)?"
- "How can people get involved in the actual decision-making? Who are the people? Is it true they had to sign an NDA?"
- "How and when is data shared?"
- "Opportunities for feedback when data shared."

- "What opportunities will there be to provide additional feedback?"
- "Who is seeing the data? Are there any consulting groups brought in?"
- "Are they effectively gathering community feedback?"
- "How will all of this feedback be synthesized and shared?"

Impact on Special Programs and Student Needs

Many community members worry about how boundary changes will impact special education, language immersion, and gifted programs. They want to know if programs will move with students or if students will need to transfer to access the same resources. There are also concerns about ensuring continuity for students with special needs and providing appropriate support.

- "How will this affect special education kids and services?"
- "How/what services will be implemented to help kids (with and without IEPs) adjust to change?"
- "Will programs move with students? If my student goes from a school with AAP, or a basketball team, will those programs be available there?"
- "How will this affect language immersion classes?"
- "Ensure that ESOL students and special education programs are evenly distributed."
- "Are students with high test scores being migrated intentionally to schools with low test scores?"
- "What does equitable access actually mean?"
- "How will FCPS mitigate mental health needs of our students?"

Access to Data and Analysis

There is a strong demand for access to the data used in making boundary decisions. Community members want to see enrollment projections, capacity reports, and analyses of potential impacts. They also want assurances that data is being collected and interpreted objectively, without bias.

- "Will the community see the data?"
- "Decision criteria made available."
- "Where/how is data being utilized in reworking school zones?"
- "Will public have access to data collected/dashboard to view?"
- "What are the methods of how they're analyzing data?"
- "Would you provide a transparent review of the data collected and allow for an independent review before making recommendations?"
- "Why are community surveys not occurring before data analysis?"

- "How is FCPS calculating enrollment projections? Accounting for development/planned approvals?"