

# FCPS Community Meetings to Discuss School Boundaries

## All in-person community meetings

This document summarizes the key challenges that community members identified under Question 1 regarding school boundary changes, along with direct excerpts from their discussions.

### 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?

## Overcrowding and Capacity Issues

Many community members expressed concern about overcrowding in schools, which affects everything from classroom size to access to basic facilities like lockers and lunchrooms. Overcrowding puts stress on both students and teachers, leading to burnout and reduced learning effectiveness. Families worry about the long-term impact of continued enrollment growth without sufficient expansion of school infrastructure.

- "Overcrowded schools."
- "Enrollment capacity - In some cases, not enough lockers, issues with sports equity in competition amongst teams."
- "Enrollment/capacity - teacher burnout with larger class sizes."
- "Capacity - enough space in school buildings → avoid overcrowding in schools & student/teacher ratio is appropriate."
- "Lunch times are impacted by overcrowding."
- "Concerns about relying on trailers and modular classrooms due to space issues."
- "Desire to see a reduction in class sizes to support student well-being."
- "Concerns about future development increasing enrollment beyond current capacity."

## Equitable Access to Programs and Resources

Parents and students highlighted significant disparities in access to educational programs, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), language immersion, and gifted programs. Many felt that access to specialized programming should not depend on where a student lives, but instead should be equally available across all schools. Without equitable

access, some students miss out on opportunities for enrichment, leading to long-term academic and career disadvantages.

- "Access to programming - Different things taught at some being more of an option than a forced option."
- "Need programming to be roughly equivalent everywhere."
- "Equitable mix of students + resources; maintain diversity."
- "Ensuring staff retention + support."
- "Equitable access requires an increase in program budget."
- "All high schools don't have the same options and should, boundaries should offer all options."
- "More equal access to programming or better transportation to centers with that programming (Spanish immersion; IB; AAP)."
- "Advanced academic programs should be available in all schools."

## Transportation and Commute Length

Many parents and students expressed frustration over long commute times caused by school boundaries that do not prioritize proximity. Some students have to take lengthy bus rides, sometimes passing multiple schools on the way to their assigned school. Walkability and safe routes to school were also raised as concerns, with limited sidewalk access and major highways creating unsafe conditions.

- "Proximity to elementary (walkability, can then follow that group onward, more choice with high school options)."
- "Better bus routes - less passing of other schools, shorter rides/distance to stops."
- "Walt Whitman - 100% bus in - issue of attendance island and can't walk to school."
- "More high school students should have reasonable bus routes to reduce commute times."
- "Students should not have to cross major highways to reach their schools safely."
- "Concerns about lack of sidewalks impacting walkability."
- "Some students have extremely long commutes despite living closer to other schools."
- "Traffic congestion caused by inefficient boundary placements."

## Community Continuity and Stability

Families value stability in school assignments and worry about how frequent boundary changes will disrupt students' social and academic lives. Maintaining school pyramids, where students move together from elementary to middle to high school, is seen as essential for continuity. Some parents urged decision-makers to consider grandfathering policies, ensuring that students already settled in a school can stay until they finish their current stage.

- "Keeping communities together."
- "History/continuity within a community and a school - siblings having attended, moving between schools instead of staying in one long term."
- "Concern about students losing their social groups when moved to a different school."
- "People don't want boundaries to change every five years."
- "Desire to maintain school pyramids so that students move together from elementary to middle to high school."
- "Concerns that changing boundaries too frequently will hurt neighborhood cohesion."
- "Grandfathering options should be considered for students who are close to finishing at their current school."
- "Avoid splitting friend groups unnecessarily."

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Many participants stressed the importance of ensuring school boundaries do not contribute to economic and racial segregation. Concerns were raised that certain boundary changes could isolate lower-income neighborhoods, limiting students' access to well-funded schools and resources. Community members advocated for policies that preserve diverse student populations and ensure equitable funding across all schools.

- "Equitable mix of students + resources; maintain diversity."
- "Afraid that lower-income neighborhoods will all be linked together and lose access to all resources + people."
- "Maintaining racial and socio-economic diversity should be a priority."
- "Concern that boundary changes could concentrate low-income students in certain schools."
- "Ensure that underrepresented communities have a voice in decision-making."
- "Risk of gentrification and school zoning affecting minority populations."
- "Some schools have more access to technology and funding than others."
- "Ensure that ESOL students and special education programs are evenly distributed."