

FCPS Boundary Review

In-Person Community Meetings Qualitative Data Review

Policy 8130 Priority: **Access to Programming**

Ensure equitable access to programs and facilities, and consider impact on school programs and populations

Summary

In the recent community meetings, participants highlighted the critical need to ensure equitable access to academic and extracurricular programming across schools. Key discussions centered around the importance of (1) equitable access to programming, (2) specialized programs and resources, (3) after-school and extracurricular activities, and (4) transportation challenges affecting program access. The following analysis outlines these major themes, their significance, and supporting insights from community input.

Themes Related to Enrollment and Capacity

1. Equitable Access to Programs

Many community members emphasized the need for uniform opportunities across schools, ensuring that advanced academic programs (AAP), IB, AP, and other specialized curricula are accessible to all students regardless of their school or region. Community members also highlighted the importance of making these programs accessible through better transportation and resource allocation.

Why important: Many community members felt disparities in program availability create inequities, limiting opportunities for some students based solely on geographic boundaries.

Sample quotes:

- "What advanced academic programs are offered in the area? At each school? Why isn't everything offered at all schools?"
- "Access to programming—different things, some being more of an option than a forced option. All high schools don't have the same options and should."
- "Expand IB/AP offerings."
- "STEM program at Edison pulls people from MV."
- "Need programming to be roughly equivalent everywhere."

- "Access to programming causing class sizes to fluctuate—large class sizes for the programs dilute the effectiveness."
- "Ensure equitable access to resources and classroom distribution."
- "Access to specialty programs is limited."
- "Programs offered (e.g., ELL learners, immersion, AAP)—are there teachers at the local school?"
- "Students lose time in transit to schools with special programs."

2. Specialized Programs and Resources

The availability of specialized resources, such as those for special education, ESL, or extracurricular activities, was cited as inconsistent across the district. Parents and community members voiced concerns about the barriers these gaps create, especially for students needing tailored support or programs not offered in their schools. This has led to students being forced to transfer schools, which can disrupt their education and social connections.

Why important: Consistent access to specialized programs ensures equity and compliance with legal mandates, providing all students with the support needed for academic and personal success.

Sample quotes:

- "Special education availability in each pyramid. Distribution of resources."
- "What support/changes will be required for language support (ESL) based on boundary changes? Staff must be able to support."
- "Equitable resources based on population and demographics."
- "Does a student have a real chance of staying with an elementary/middle/high school track that is shared by peers/friends?"
- "What are the projections on the impact on budgets to bring the same programs to all schools?"
- "Resource support needs to be standard: autism, language barriers, learning differences."
- "Increase student-based needs, especially special education."

- “Make sure there is sufficient support for English as a second language and other particular needs for the school.”

3. After-School and Extracurricular Activities

Community members highlighted the critical role of after-school programs and extracurricular activities, noting that inequitable access limits student participation and broader development opportunities. Transportation was a frequently mentioned barrier, with some students unable to participate due to the lack of late buses or long commute times. Community members also stressed the need for these programs to be affordable, well-staffed, and inclusive to all demographics.

Why important: Access to after-school/extracurricular activities must be equitable, as disparities can exacerbate social and academic inequalities.

Sample quotes:

- "Access to after/before school care, improve those options. There shouldn't be years-long waitlists."
- "Parents/guardians who don't have cars (navigating transportation in order to pick up students or attend events)."
- "Walt Whitman late bus grant is really important to do extracurriculars—equitable access to resources."
- "How does this affect extracurriculars (sports, music, etc.), especially at HS campuses?"
- “Programming examples include homework help and extracurriculars.”
- "Community meet + greets → more inclusion of parents at their home site to keep them engaged."
- “Could make schools more similar in cross-programming and high school extracurricular equity.”
- “Better experiences for students – extracurriculars.”
- “Existing school communities will be affected—room moms, after-school volunteers, and reading helpers may not transfer if moved.”
- “Availability of after-school programs -> What if my kids lose programs they have already?”

4. Transportation Challenges Impacting Program Access

Transportation challenges were a recurring theme, with community members emphasizing its impact on equitable program access and student well-being. Long bus rides and insufficient late transportation options were cited as significant obstacles to participation in school programs. The need for safer, shorter commutes and better walkability was frequently linked to program availability and student inclusion.

Why important: A lack of adequate transportation options can be a barrier to accessing programming in an equitable way.

Sample quotes:

- "Length of bus ride because they're needing to go beyond their zone."
- "Transportation challenges need to be addressed (buses)."
- "Distance for bussing—focus on the shortest distances."
- "In areas of overpopulation, when buses are full, students are left behind waiting for a late bus arrival."
- "Keep communities together. Reduce busing long distances. Localization is necessary."
- "If we can keep attendance levels equitable, other programs and transportation issues may get solved."
- "Transportation—not just limiting time, but also keeping in mind outside-of-school activities."
- "Ensure access to programming (e.g., AAP as an option with transportation provided)."
- "Similar transportation for programs that are not universally available at your base school."

5. Expanding Programming Across More Schools

Community members advocated for expanding specialized and advanced programs to more schools across the district to address geographic inequities. This approach would reduce the need for extensive bussing and ensure all students have access to similar opportunities regardless of their location.

Why important: Expanding programming to more schools reduces geographic inequities, improves access for underserved students, and minimizes transportation challenges.

Sample quotes:

- “More equal access to programming or better transportation to centers with that programming (Spanish immersion; IB; AAP).”
- “How will special programs be allotted or changed in Title I schools to build up population (Spanish immersion, AAP)?”
- “Equity of programs—more schools should have programs like language.”
- “Expand access to more programs across the county to reduce inequities.”
- “What is the plan for increasing program budget to allow for access to programs?”
- “Shift AAP programs to more schools instead of rezoning.”
- “More programs at more schools.”
- “Adding more programs in more locations to reduce travel such as increase in AAP (Advanced Academic Program) offerings at more schools.”