

# FCPS Community Meetings to Discuss School Boundaries

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## Region 2 (in-person community meeting)

Community Session held November 18, 2024

In November and December 2024, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) held a series of 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. Notes and insights were recorded on paper, then scanned and converted to text using optical character recognition. This report summarizes the input shared by community members from Region 2 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: Challenges

*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?*

### Transportation and Commute Time

Community members strongly expressed concerns about the impact of transportation logistics on students and families. Long commute times, inefficient bus routes, and traffic congestion were seen as major obstacles that affect students' sleep, safety, and overall well-being. Parents emphasized that excessive travel times diminish students' quality of life, limit after-school participation, and increase family burdens. The need for walkability and proximity to

neighborhood schools was highlighted as a critical factor in ensuring that children feel connected to their educational environment.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Too much time on the bus is a waste of time. Parents need to take the student to school."
- "Proximity to school is vital. Let walkers walk, keep neighborhoods together where possible, please."
- "Not taking into account new dense developments in your data → Current attendance projected in 5 years without considering new developments is bad data."
- "Travel time – Do boundaries make sense?"
- "Proximity – 12–15 mins is lengthy; try to keep it under 10 (even with traffic)."

## Overcrowding and Class Size

Overcrowded classrooms and imbalanced student distribution were major concerns raised during the meeting. Attendees expressed frustration that large class sizes negatively impact student learning experiences, teacher retention, and academic outcomes. Many felt that the uneven allocation of students across schools created unnecessary challenges, particularly when some schools had underutilized spaces while others were stretched beyond capacity. This imbalance led to concerns about temporary buildings, inadequate facilities, and teacher burnout.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Class sizes too large/overcrowding and schools too far."
- "Balanced/Reduced Class Sizes"
- "Uneven distribution of students → implications for school infrastructure (safety, teacher-student ratio, # of auxiliary classrooms, etc.)."
- "Lack of space. "
- "Temp buildings. Uneven distribution of students (class size)."

## Access to Equitable Academic Programs

Many community members voiced concerns over disparities in academic programming across schools, particularly regarding Advanced Academic Programs (AAP), foreign language courses, and extracurricular opportunities. Attendees emphasized that students should have access to high-quality programs regardless of their assigned school and that boundary changes should not disrupt access to specialized programs. The current system, which sometimes forces students to travel long distances to access these opportunities, was seen as inequitable and counterproductive.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Academic programs – some accessible programs (e.g., Kennedy Center/Affiliation)."
- "Programming should fit needs of kids."
- "Putting kids in schools based on having access to AAP or strong programs in STEM."
- "Access to programming – having language immersion, AAP."
- "Equity/access to programming – otherwise, we will continue to create winners & losers."

## Question 2: Data and Insights

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

### Accuracy and Transparency of Enrollment Data

Community members emphasized the need for accurate and transparent enrollment data to ensure fair and informed boundary decisions. Many questioned whether the data currently used for planning considers recent population trends, such as new housing developments and changing demographics. There was frustration that past data may not have been utilized effectively, leading to overcrowding in some schools while others remain underutilized.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "What data are you looking at now to assess school boundaries – Be specific."
- "Not taking into account new dense developments in your data → Current attendance projected in 5 years without considering new developments is bad data."
- "Can we really rely on census data to predict over/under-crowding – Where are you collecting future student ratios?"
- "More emphasis on community insights than numerical data."
- "Need accurate data for households."

### Impact of Boundary Changes on Student Outcomes

Attendees stressed the importance of assessing the long-term impact of boundary changes on student performance and academic success. Many expressed concerns about shifting students from high-performing schools to lower-ranked ones without considering how this move would affect their educational outcomes and future opportunities.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "How can you measure 'impact' if boundaries change (5 years)? Be specific on outcome data + how it is measured."

- "When you move students from a #10 school to a #110 school (ranked by FCPS), what is the impact on students who move (academic outcomes)?"
- "What/how do we measure success for our kids?"
- "Performance outcomes – Is there a connection between school attended + outcomes in life after college/what does life look like post-high school for all high schools?"

## Equitable Distribution of Resources

Participants were concerned that school boundary changes might not consider equity in funding, teacher distribution, and program availability. There was a strong call for ensuring that all students have access to high-quality resources, regardless of their assigned school. This included concerns about balancing PTA contributions, funding for Advanced Academic Programs (AAP), and class sizes.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Review budget allocation to ensure spent best/equitably."
- "What are you spending your billion-dollar budget on? Why is there a problem adequately funding all schools?"
- "Investment in housing based on school district."
- "Balancing of capacity when there is an imbalance at elementary, middle, and high school."
- "Equity/access to programming – otherwise, we will continue to create winners & losers."

## Transportation and Travel Time Data

Concerns about transportation logistics and commute times were frequently mentioned. Attendees highlighted the need for data on the number of buses required, travel distances, and safe pathways for students. Many wanted to ensure that school assignments prioritized reasonable commute times and reduced congestion.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "What is an optimal travel time – Will more bus drivers/buses be hired to limit travel times?"
- "Commute times and safe pathways."
- "Proximity based on distance – transportation issues."
- "Increase the number of walkers and decrease travel times."

## Long-Term Planning and Population Growth Projections

Community members called for a more proactive, long-term approach to boundary planning. They wanted data-driven projections that account for future housing developments, economic shifts, and school capacity expansions rather than reactionary changes every few years.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Projected population growth."
- "Long-term construction plans → several years out to forecast resources."
- "Historical data that impacts today's decisions → accountability."
- "What past data was used to determine current boundaries?"
- "Current & future facilities & plans for use to meet projected population growth."

## Question 3: Outcomes

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

## Improved Student-Teacher Ratios and Academic Support

Community members expressed a strong desire for reduced class sizes and improved student-teacher ratios. Many believe that overcrowded classrooms lead to diminished learning experiences, reduced teacher effectiveness, and increased stress for both educators and students. The ability to provide more one-on-one academic support and individualized attention was a top priority.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Improved student-teacher ratio."
- "Learning standards improved for improved mental health – e.g., smaller student-teacher ratios should ↑ access to teachers for questions."
- "Balanced/Reduced Class Sizes: Teacher retention, Academic outcomes, Fewer trailers, Mental health ↑."
- "Manageable school population and teacher-student ratios."
- "Smaller classroom sizes."

## Equitable Access to Academic Programs

Many parents and students raised concerns about ensuring equal access to high-quality academic programs across all schools. Attendees emphasized the importance of standardized

curricula, ensuring that all students have access to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), foreign languages, and STEM courses, regardless of school location.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Curriculum across all schools should be advanced. Clubs, sports, AP/Honors equal at all schools – Trade opportunities available to all."
- "Equitable access to resources (programming)."
- "What/how do we measure success for our kids?"
- "Increased equity/access to programs."
- "Larger immersion, AAP, Art, Music, Technology."

## Community Stability and Neighborhood Cohesion

A frequently discussed concern was the impact of boundary changes on neighborhood cohesion and community engagement. Many community members expressed frustration that frequent redistricting disrupts established social networks, leading to difficulties in maintaining strong parental involvement and local school support.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Neighborhoods kept together and follow the same feeders → from elementary to high school."
- "Greater community engagement – What does parent engagement look like for all classes of parents? ↑ Increased language support based on school's population."
- "Preserve community that has roots."
- "Not breaking up families tied to program availability."
- "Building the capacity → builds/strengthens community."

## Transportation and Commute Time Reduction

Transportation issues, including commute times, congestion, and safe travel routes, were a major point of discussion. Many emphasized that shorter travel times improve students' quality of life by allowing for more rest, extracurricular participation, and reduced transportation costs.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Reduced travel, congestion on roads, pollution."
- "Less drive time = better quality of life."
- "Proximity – kids going to school near their community, please."
- "Shorter drive commutes."
- "Commute times and safe pathways."

## Long-Term Planning and Stability

Community members stressed the importance of sustainable, long-term solutions rather than frequent changes that create uncertainty. They called for proactive planning that accounts for future population growth and economic shifts to avoid the need for repeated redistricting every few years.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Consistency for reasonable time periods. Every five years may seem too often."
- "Longer-term plans that are flexible enough to accommodate projected population changes."
- "Sustainable structure/plan – adequate model/funding for all of growth → for School Board & Board of Supervisors to align on long-term planning."
- "Historical data that impacts today's decisions → accountability."
- "Projected population growth."

## Question 4: Questions About the Process

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

### Decision-Making Authority and Process

Community members expressed concerns about who ultimately makes the decisions regarding boundary changes and how much influence public opinion will have. Many are unsure if the school board has the final say or if the superintendent has the authority to make unilateral decisions. They also want clarity on the role of advisory committees and external consultants in shaping the final outcomes.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "Does the school board have final veto power, or do they need to look at majority community opinion?"
- "Are multiple scenarios being designed, and then the superintendent has final decision-making?"
- "When it goes to the superintendent for review – is all the data + suggestions being made available to the public?"
- "Who are the people making decisions and what are they doing?"

- "The committee will recommend a draft, but the board will make the final decision – what measures will be put in place to ensure equitable? Integrity of the change/outside influences."

## Implementation Timeline and Transition Planning

Many parents and community members are concerned about how long it will take to implement the boundary changes and how the transition will be managed. Questions focus on whether the rollout will be phased or immediate and what measures will be put in place to support students and families during the transition.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "How long will implementation take?"
- "Will there be a phased approach to implementation?"
- "Confidence in understanding what to expect. Feels like mass disruption every 5 yrs."
- "If every 5 yrs feels too often and makes a lot of things more unpredictable."
- "What is a realistic timeline for implementation?"

## Data Transparency and Public Access to Information

Community members are seeking transparency in the data and analysis used for decision-making. Many want to see real-time access to boundary drafts, demographic projections, and financial considerations to ensure informed community engagement.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "How transparent is the data collected going to be before making a decision?"
- "What tools will be available for the community to process/understand potential options?"
- "Do we get to see data before execution phase? Show us data along the way."
- "Have very transparent sharing of data."
- "How can you anonymously share data in a transparent way (remove student identifiers) so we can see student data?"

## Equity, Funding, and Community Impact

There is widespread concern about how boundary changes will impact school funding, federal support, and local property values. Many want to ensure that decisions do not disproportionately affect certain communities or create unintended financial burdens.

Supporting Excerpts:

- "How are you accounting for property value depreciation if boundary changes take place?"



- "How are you accounting for federal funding with different federal administrations and their appropriation of funds?"
- "Transparency with budget → Feels like moving kids around to 'fit' when there is a billion dollars that can be spent wisely. What are the build plans?"
- "Will all regions be implementing the plans at the same time? If not, how will the order be determined?"
- "Are we only discussing current school buildings, or considering new buildings?"