FCPS Community Meetings to Discuss School Boundaries

Region 6 (in-person community meeting)

Community Session held December 12, 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 6 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 Accessibility

Many community members feel that transportation concerns should be prioritized in boundary decisions. Long bus rides and accessibility issues create significant challenges for students, particularly those who rely on public transportation or live in remote areas. There is a strong concern about how distance to school impacts both students' academic performance and their ability to participate in extracurricular activities.

Supporting Quotes:

- "Transportation concerns with attendance zones/distance."
- "Time on the bus – up to 1 hour is too long."
- "Attendance islands create long bus rides for kids."
- "Transportation concerns (distance, accessibility)."
- "Long commute times that prevent students from participating in extracurriculars, reducing family time."

Equity in Program Access

Community members strongly believe that every student should have equal access to academic programs such as IB, AP, and CTE, regardless of where they live. Many worry that boundary changes could worsen existing disparities or create new ones, particularly if certain schools receive more resources than others.

Supporting Quotes:

- "Student access to programs should not be dependent (exclusive) on where you live."
- "Will a boundary change actually change access and availability of programs?"
- "Equity – access to programming (IB/AP)."
- "Access to programs and equitable opportunities (CTE, IB, dual enrollment, etc.)."
- "Less overcrowding in schools."

School Overcrowding and Underutilization

Many parents and community members are concerned about the balance of enrollment across schools. Some schools are overcrowded while others are under capacity, leading to disparities in class sizes, available resources, and funding. Ensuring a well-balanced distribution of students is seen as a key priority.

Supporting Quotes:

- "Balancing school enrollment and capacity."
- Provide more details on where schools are overcrowded.
- "Capacity issues within schools – over and under capacity."
- "Facilities – avoiding temporary classrooms."
- "Impact of smaller class sizes."

Impact on Families and Community Stability

Many attendees expressed concerns about how boundary changes might disrupt family stability and community ties. They emphasized the importance of keeping neighborhoods together,

ensuring siblings attend the same schools, and minimizing disruptions caused by frequent boundary shifts.

Supporting Quotes:

- "Ripple effects from boundaries should address equity."
- "Get rid of split feeders."
- "Keeping peer groups together."
- "Disruptions to families/students/high school spirit."
- " Minimize disruptions to high school students, phased over 4 years, prioritizing adjustments."

Implementation and Transition Concerns

There is concern about how boundary changes will be implemented over time. Parents want clarity on whether there will be a phased transition, whether students will be 'grandfathered' into their current schools, and what support systems will be in place for students who are affected by the changes.

Supporting Quotes:

- "Will this be implemented over time? What will support look like during transition once changes are made?"
- "What will ripple effects look like? Grandfathering or phasing – Grandfathering or phasing (throughout levels [elementary/middle/high school]) – how to ensure no harm?"
- "How will student input be incorporated?"
- "Will students be able to stay in programs that are being phased out?"

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 Data

Community members strongly feel that data used in the boundary review must be accurate, up-to-date, and transparent. They express concerns about whether the information reflects

actual school capacities, staff allocations, and student needs. Many emphasize the need for clear and open communication on how data is gathered and applied.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "We need an accurate state assessment – where are programs currently offered? Staff capacities and student needs?"
- "Accurate scale of assessment: what level of programming is offered, where staff capacities are located, and what facilities are available."
- "How will data be shared and analyzed?"
- "What data is being used, and how timely is it?"

Equitable Access to Programs and Resources

Equity is a key concern for the community. Many express that data should highlight disparities in program access, particularly in specialized education such as IB, AP, and Advanced Academic Programs. Community members want data to ensure all students, regardless of location, receive the same opportunities.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "How can this support highlight the strengths of all schools? Will this help disrupt inequities?"
- "Why can't we move programs and not students?"
- "Schools' reputation impacts community perceptions – how to ensure fairness and equity?"
- "Access to Level 4 programming – we don't want families moving out of the pyramid."

Long-Term Planning and Community Growth

There is significant concern about how changing demographics, housing developments, and neighborhood growth will impact school boundaries. Community members want data that considers future student enrollment and infrastructure needs.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "How are we considering the context (new communities being built, influx of students) in the design process?"
- "Consider housing density in specific neighborhoods."
- "Look at and plan for future students (long-term planning)."
- "Take a position on developments and rezoning plans."

Student Experience and Well-Being

Beyond numbers, families stress the need for data on student experiences, mental health, and the social impact of boundary changes. They want insights on how transitions affect student well-being and peer connections.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Student voice – how is this being included? What programs do they want/need?"
- "Moving schools can be traumatic (are we grandfathering students?)."
- "Mental health data – how do changes impact sustained relationships?"
- "Let students stay at their existing school to reduce social pressure."

Transportation and Commute Considerations

Many community members highlight concerns about student travel times. They want data that accounts for bus routes, commuting distances, and whether students can reasonably access their assigned schools.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Impact on bus travel times."
- "Driving distance and proximity to major highways or intersections."
- "Proximity – average time on school buses and transit times."
- "Transportation safety – students should not be transferred to another school for safety reasons."

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?

Equity in Access to Programs and Resources

Community members strongly advocate for equitable access to educational programs, resources, and opportunities across all schools. Many express that boundary changes should ensure that every school has the same level of access to quality programs, regardless of location or historical reputation.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Every school provides equal access to programming, regardless of transportation or school ratings."
- "Equitable access for Annandale and Langley High Schools would be ideal."
- "Ensure that students are going to their assigned school and not being addressed to other schools of choice."
- "Each boundary should provide equitable access to programming and sports."
- "Universal access to AAP in every pyramid (not just moving to an AAP center)."

Stronger Sense of Community and Neighborhood Stability

Families want boundary changes to foster a stronger sense of community and minimize disruption to students' social connections. Many express the importance of keeping neighborhoods together and ensuring that changes do not create instability.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Keep neighborhoods together and offer programs at all schools (access for all students to go to the same school)."
- "Keeping communities together."
- "Avoid breaking up neighborhoods and communities."
- "Prevention of separation – ensure the community is onboard."
- "Try as best as possible to stay in the community."

Transparency and Community Involvement

Many community members emphasize the importance of a transparent process where their voices are heard and considered. They want clear communication about decisions and multiple opportunities for engagement.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Ensuring parent and family input is actively considered and used to drive decisions."
- "Transparency is necessary throughout the process."
- "Boundary changes are explained clearly and transparently."
- "Listen to parents' views and ensure all voices are heard."
- "Truly use community input for decision-making."

Reduced Travel and Transportation Burdens

Concerns about long commutes and transportation inefficiencies drive the hope that new boundaries will reduce travel times for students and allow them more time for academics and extracurricular activities.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Reduce transportation times by having kids attend schools near them."
- "Positive impact on less travel time if all have access to programs."
- "Impact on bus travel times."
- "Proximity and equitable access to programming have a huge impact on school culture and experience."
- "Keep boundaries consistent as much as possible to maintain travel times and reduce burdens on families."

More Efficient Use of Resources

Community members want boundary changes to lead to better distribution of resources, including funding, staffing, and extracurricular opportunities. They believe this process should ensure that all schools have what they need to support student success.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Become more efficient with resources so that funds go into schools where they are needed most."
- "Restructure resources going to schools, so it's not just based on demographics/size of community."
- "The county could reinvest funds saved into schools and students."
- "Allocating programs consistently across all schools."
- "Equitable access to programs and booster organization equity in each school."

Question 4: Questions About the Process

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

Transparency and Decision-Making Process

Community members express concerns about how decisions will be made and who will have the final say. They seek clarity on how input will be used and whether data and findings will be accessible to the public.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Will the data collected become public? What are the data points?"
- "How much does our community input count for?"
- "Who is accountable for these changes? Is the school board in process?"
- "What other opportunities are there for engagement and giving feedback?"

- "How are the priorities weighted? What are the other 7 priorities?"

Implementation Timeline and Rollout Process

Many parents and community members want details about when changes will take effect and how they will be implemented. Concerns include whether students will be grandfathered into current schools and how long the transition period will last.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "When will this take effect? What is the timeline?"
- "How is the rollout going to affect kids? Will there be grandfathering?"
- "Timeline of movement – when will they be grandfathered?"
- "Will parents/families have another opportunity to review options?"
- "Define this and the next five years (anchor children)."

Impact on Students and Families

Community members are concerned about how changes will affect students' experiences, including their academic opportunities, social stability, and mental well-being. Many wonder if provisions will be made to minimize negative impacts on families.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "How will student input be incorporated?"
- "What happens if there is overwhelming opposition?"
- "How will FCPS addressing challenges raised by families?"
- "Are we accounting for future changes in neighborhoods? What is the rollout process?"
- "How will transfer policies be addressed?"

Use of Data and Equity Considerations

There are concerns about what data will be used to drive decisions and whether it will accurately reflect community needs. Many want assurance that equity is at the center of decision-making and that data analysis will highlight disparities.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "What data is being used, and how timely is it?"
- "What specific data is being used to define equity and access?"
- "What is the data behind the benefits listed? What are the goals?"
- "What tools are being used for equity evaluations?"
- "How will data be shared and analyzed?"

Alternative Solutions Beyond Redistricting

Some community members question whether redistricting is the only solution. They suggest alternative strategies such as adjusting school programs, shifting funding, or using phased approaches to reduce disruption.

Supporting Excerpts:
- "Will this also look at redesigning programs, not just boundaries? Is the goal enrollment or access to programs?"
- "Are there ways to address some of these issues without redistricting?"
- "If there is more equity, will there be less pressure to transfer?"
- "Finding solutions to address issues other than changing boundaries."
- "Is this just about boundary changes or a more holistic evaluation of programs (academic and extracurricular)?"