FACILITIES SERVICES
Facilities Planning
Local School Boundaries, Program Assignments, and School Closings

This policy supersedes Policy 8130.76.

I. PURPOSE

To describe the authority of the Fairfax County School Board to determine the assignment of students to schools and programs, to close schools and programs where appropriate, and to define the considerations and procedures for such determinations.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE LAST PUBLICATION

A. The policy has been amended to include an expedited boundary study option.

B. Policy sections have been re-ordered to simplify and expedite the process for boundary changes, and adds section IX, section X, and section XI.

C. Section VI. title has been changed and section reworded for clarity.

D. Section VII. is new and should be reviewed in its entirety.

E. Section VIII. is new and should be reviewed in its entirety.

F. Section IX. title has been changed.

G. Section X. is new and should be read in its entirety.

III. AUTHORITY

The Fairfax County School Board is vested with the authority to “Provide for the consolidation of schools or redistricting of school boundaries or adopt pupil assignment plans whenever such procedure will contribute to the efficiency of the school division.”

[Code of Virginia: Section 22.1-79 (4)]

IV. ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS

The basic policy of the Fairfax County School Board: A student shall attend be to assign pupils to the schools and programs that serve the areas of their his or her residences based on the school boundary, unless Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) determines that a different instructional program is required to meet the student’s needs in accordance with the local school boundaries and service areas established by the School Board. Exceptions to this policy will be made in accordance with the current version of Regulation 2230, Student Transfer Process Assignments to Schools (Student Transfers)—Procedure for Exceptions for Intracounty Student Assignments.

IV. REASONS FOR CONSIDERING BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS, PROGRAM ASSIGNMENT CHANGES, AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

The School Board may close a school, change a school boundary, or adjust a program assignment or location in order to maintain or improve operating efficiency and/or instructional effectiveness. In general, such adjustments may relieve facility crowding,
make effective use of new or existing space, avoid underuse of buildings, better relate program resources to needs, and/or reduce operating costs. Input from the Facilities Planning Advisory Council shall also be considered. Reasons that may require revision of previously established school boundaries are:

A. Capacity surplus or deficit of an existing school  
B. Equitable access to educational opportunities  
C. The opening of a new school  
D. The closing of a school  
E. Alleviation of attendance islands  
F. A natural disaster, such as a fire

V. SCOPING

Prior to boundary adjustments, the Department of Facilities and Transportation Services will provide the School Board options for the scoping:

A. The efficient and educationally effective use of the capacity of each school  
B. Evaluate program placement at each school to determine if relocation of a program can alleviate overcrowding

VI. EXPEDITED BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT

The Division Superintendent is directed to consider the need to make adjustments governed by this policy and to take the actions indicated accordingly. The Superintendent is authorized to recommend expedited adjustments to school attendance areas, after consultation with the affected School Board representative(s), and after publicly noticed meetings are held in the affected school communities, when any one of the following circumstances occurs:

A. An emergency or other overriding public need requires such a change within an expedited time frame.  
B. Less than fifteen percent of the enrollment of each school will be affected, and analysis indicates the change will improve the operating efficiency of the school division.

The Division Superintendent will provide the recommended adjustment to the School Board as an information and action item for School Board approval at a regularly scheduled meeting. The Division Superintendent is further directed to report any such changes to the School Board and the public.

VII. STANDARD BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT
For boundary adjustments affecting fifteen percent or more of the enrollment at a school, the Division Superintendent is directed to consider the need to make adjustments governed by this policy. The Division Superintendent will provide the recommended adjustment to the School Board pursuant to section X., Public Notice, outlined below. The Division Superintendent is further directed to report any such changes to the School Board and the public. Other adjustments governed by this policy shall be made according to the considerations and procedures specified below.

IXVI-. IMPLEMENTING CONSIDERATIONS GOVERNING ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL BOUNDARIES

Schools identified with a reason for boundary adjustments in Section IV of this policy shall, adhering to the One Fairfax Policy, have a variety of elements examined when establishing new school boundaries including: Numerous factors may be considered when consolidating schools, redistricting school boundaries, or adopting pupil assignment plans. The following examples of these factors are not presented in priority order. Any or all of these factors may be relevant in a particular consolidation, redistricting, or assignment plan:

A. the socioeconomic and/or racial characteristics composition of students in affected schools populations;

B. The geographic location proximity of affected schools in relationship to the surrounding student population residences;

C. The safety of walking and busing safety routes;

D. Operational efficiency, to include long-range capital plans and busing times and costs;

E. Contiguous school attendance areas. Avoid the creation of attendance islands

Projected school enrollment and capacity; walking distances; natural and man-made geographic features; the impact on neighborhoods; school feeder alignments; the distribution of programs and resources; the overall impact on families and students; and comparative long-term costs. Adjustments shall when boundary changes are being considered by the School Board, the changes shall not be made without respect to the boundaries of individual schools, administrative areas, zip codes, or magisterial districts or postal addresses and, whenever possible;

VII. RESTRICTIONS ON BOUNDARY CHANGES

The School Board is committed to the use of long-range planning techniques to minimize the necessity for frequent boundary changes. Every effort shall be made to limit boundary changes for not affect the same occupied dwellings any residential unit to no more often than once during a three-year period except as required by the opening of a new school, the closing of a school, or a natural disaster. Whenever such changes are made, every effort shall be made to lessen educational and social disruptions. The consideration of these factors and such adjustments shall involve affected communities to the extent reasonable.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS
The Division Superintendent shall recommend annually to the School Board to adjust school boundaries and program boundaries in response to an existing boundary being misaligned with a geographic feature (i.e. lot lines and new roadways) as determined by the Department of Facilities and Transportation Services. This may also include minor adjustments related to pipe stems and cul-de-sacs to maintain or improve operating efficiency.

The Superintendent is directed to consider the need to make adjustments governed by this policy and to take the actions indicated accordingly. The Superintendent is authorized to administratively adjust school attendance areas, after consultation with the affected School Board representative(s), when any one of the following circumstances occurs:

A. An emergency or other overriding public need requires such a change.
B. New unoccupied housing requires reassignment to avoid school crowding or to facilitate student transportation.
C. Less than five percent of the enrollment of each school will be affected, and analysis indicates the change will improve the operating efficiency of the school division.

The Division Superintendent is directed to report any such changes to the School Board and the public.

**IX. REASON TO INITIATE A SCHOOL CLOSING**

When a public school building appears to the Division Superintendent to be unfit for occupancy, it shall be his duty to close the same and immediately to give notice thereof in writing to the members of the School Board. No public school shall be held therein nor shall any state or local funds be applied to support any school in such building until the Division Superintendent shall certify in writing to the School Board that he is satisfied with the condition of such building and with the appliances pertaining thereto. (Code of Virginia, section 22.1-136)

**X. PUBLIC NOTICE**

The School Board shall “obtain public comment through a public hearing not less than ten days after reasonable notice to the public in a newspaper of general circulation in the school division prior to providing (i) for the consolidation of schools or s... (iii) for redistricting of school boundaries or adopting any pupil assignment plan affecting the assignment of 15 fifteen percent or more of the pupils in average daily membership in the affected school.” [(Code of Virginia: Section 22.1-79 (8))] For administrative boundary adjustments or expedited boundary study adjustments affecting the assignment of less than fifteen percent of the pupils in average daily membership in the affected school, no public hearing shall be required.

**XI. STUDENT CONTINUITY PHASING OF ADJUSTMENTS**

When possible, adjustments under this policy shall be implemented through attrition and phasing. The School Board adoption of a boundary adjustment, exceptions for students choosing to remain at their current school in their final year of elementary, middle, or high school will be made in accordance with the current version of Regulation 2230, Section B:7, Senior Status. may approve a grade-by-grade phase-in of adjustments for students beginning with the incoming class at the middle or high school.
levels, when feasible. The School Board may adopt other phasing plans as appropriate to the individual boundary study.

Parents of rising sixth (or fifth) graders, eighth graders, and twelfth graders affected by a boundary change may, at the discretion of the School Board, be provided the option of having their students remain in the school they attended prior to the change.

XII. REVIEW OF POLICY

The School Board shall review this policy at least once every five years and revise this policy as needed. (Code of Virginia, section 22.1-253.13:7).


See also the current version of:
- Policy 2670: Programs for Students with Disabilities
- Policy 8110: Five-year Capital Improvement Program Planning
- Regulation 2230, Student Assignments to Schools (Student Transfers Process) Procedure for Exceptions for Intracounty Student Assignments
- Regulation 2670: Free, Appropriate Education for Students with Disabilities
- Regulation 3333: Location Guidelines
- Regulation 8110: Five-year Capital Improvement Program Planning
- Regulation 8120: School Planning
- Regulation 8130: Local School Boundaries, Program Assignments, and School Closings

Policy
- adopted: July 1, 1986
- Revised: November 6, 1986
- Revised: July 20, 1989
- Revised: September 24, 1998
- Revised: July 27, 2000
- Revised: October 11, 2002
- Revised: November 4, 2010
- Revised: May 9, 2013