CHANGING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ZONES

The Loudoun County School Board is vested with the authority through the Code of Virginia to provide for the consolidation of schools, the redistricting of school attendance zones and/or the adoption of student assignment plans whenever such procedure will contribute to the efficiency of the school division.

The School Board shall assign students to the school and programs that serve the areas of their residences, in accordance with the local school attendance zones and service areas established by the School Board. Exceptions to this policy will be made in accordance with School Board Policies 8-20, “School Assignment” and 8160 “Exceptions to School Assignment Due to Attendance Zone Change.”

A. Reasons for Considering Attendance Zone Adjustments. The School Board may change an attendance zone to maintain or improve operating efficiency and/or to maximize instructional effectiveness. In general, adjustments may relieve facility crowding, better utilize existing space, avoid underutilized school facilities, to better allocate program resources and/or reduce operating costs.

B. Standard Attendance Zone Change Process.

1. Evaluation. At least annually, the Superintendent will evaluate whether or not attendance zone changes are to be considered. Typically, the evaluation will take place within the context of the Capital Improvement Program budget process, but changes may also be recommended at any time to address overcrowding or other concerns. Attendance zone changes may also be initiated at the direction of the School Board.

2. Initiation. When conditions exist for school attendance zone changes, the Superintendent will recommend to the School Board that options for change be developed. These options will identify schools potentially affected by the attendance zone changes, the means by which the public will be involved in the attendance zone change process and a calendar for the attendance zone change process. Once a decision is made by the School Board to initiate an attendance zone change process, the School Board will seek to encourage public participation throughout this process and will hold at least one public hearing prior to taking action on any attendance zone changes.

3. Exceptions. The Superintendent may recommend an abbreviated attendance zone change process, consisting of at least one public hearing, after consultation with the School Board members representing the schools affected, when one of the following circumstances occurs:
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a. Charter School Conversion. The conversion of all or a part of an existing public school to a public charter school in which a conversion results in the closing or consolidating of an existing public school within another public school.

b. New Residential Development. New unoccupied housing requires an attendance zone change to avoid overcrowding at a school.

c. Minimal Overcrowding and Cluster Alignment. If school overcrowding exists or a small percentage of students matriculate together to a secondary school that may be resolved with reassignment of ten (10) percent or less of current student enrollment of each school involved.

d. Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) Expansion. If reassignment of fifteen (15) percent or less of the projected student enrollment within a school's attendance zone will allow for an increase of at least one full-day kindergarten classroom to expand full-day kindergarten at that school without overcrowding another school.

e. Emergency Need. An emergency or other overriding public need requires an attendance zone change.

C. Factors Considered in Attendance Zone Changes. When changing school attendance zones, the School Board will consider, but not be limited to, the following criteria whenever possible:

1. Facilities. Effective use of new and existing school facilities.

   a. Utilize projected student enrollment and facility program capacity as principle measures of determining efficient use of educational facilities.

   b. Promote reasonable balancing of enrollment within the school system to avoid over or underutilization of facilities or equitable distribution of programs and resources.

   c. Minimize long-term use of mobile or modular classrooms that cause a school to operate at more than its designed core capacity.
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d. Minimize future capital and operational budget costs.

2. Proximity. Keeping students close to their schools.

a. Attendance zones shall be based upon geographic proximity as measured by distance traveled using established routes of transportation.

b. Adjacent neighborhoods and communities to a school should be given attendance priority to that school.

c. Attendance zones should be contiguous, whenever possible.

d. Efforts will be made to encourage walking as the primary means of transportation to a school and promote reasonable walking zones in order to encourage healthier students, promote a cleaner environment and reduce transportation costs.

3. Community. Encouraging the link between schools and communities by promoting the concept of community schools and avoiding the splitting of communities between schools, whenever possible.

4. Demographics. Demographic characteristics of the students and communities will be considered based upon available English Language Learners (ELL) and free/reduced meal data.

5. Accessibility. The reasonable ability for students to attend a school from all portions of the attendance zone, taking into consideration natural and man-made barriers (e.g., major roads, geographic features).


7. Cluster Alignment. The alignment of elementary, middle and high schools into cohesive operational clusters (unified school feeder system) in which students remain with their educational cohorts to the greatest extent possible.

The School Board may consider any factors in making an attendance zone change. In the exercise of its authority, the School Board recognizes that it may not be reasonably practicable to reconcile each and every factor in any attendance zone change, but any attendance zone plan adopted by the School Board should be based upon the above factors to the greatest extent possible.
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[Former Policy 2-32]
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Leg Refs: Code of Virginia § 22.1-79(4) and (8), Virginia Constitution Article VIII, §7
Cross Refs: Policy 8-20, School Assignment
Policy 8160, Exceptions to School Assignment Due to Attendance Zone Change