

Main Takeaways from the August 21 Elementary School Planning 2021 Meeting

This was the third ES school planning meeting this summer. We focused on the objectives and guiding principles reflected in the latest draft What-If boundary map scenarios. Following is a synthesis of the key messages and takeaways from that meeting.

Change is coming.

APS anticipates having 30,000+ students in 2021-22. With a new ES opening in 2021 and the need to place all neighborhood schools in their attendance zones, there will be a boundary process in 2020. If these two actions are the only ones taken, there would be a significant impact on schools county-wide. What-If boundary map scenarios were drafted to provide principals the opportunity to see some of the ways that boundary adjustments could develop. Based on principal input and the guiding principles developed in previous meetings, another iteration of What-If boundary map scenarios were shared, and principals discussed how to make the changes work best for students.

It is important to communicate key points clearly.

Principals agreed upon the following (originally shared at Aug. 8 meeting):

- Holistic, division-wide perspective
- All schools offer academic excellence
- Multiple pathways to student success
- Our principals, teachers and staff are ready to welcome all students
- Safe, healthy and supportive learning environments
- Balanced enrollment across schools
- Find efficiencies and keep resources in the classroom
- Minimize travel time to neighborhood schools
- All stakeholder input is welcome

As the process develops, timely updates need to be provided to principals prior to the public release of information.

Planning for the 2021-22 school year.

The planning process for 2021 seeks to meet the following objectives:

- Ensure all neighborhood schools sit within their attendance zones
- Balance enrollment across schools
 - Create attendance zone for new ES
 - Adjust boundaries at ES level
- Propose moves to support instruction and/or address seat imbalance across county
- Identify potential efficiencies
 - Locate PreK classes closer to where eligible students reside
 - Minimize travel time to neighborhood schools and increase on-time arrivals
- Begin alignment with the IPP framework

Guiding principles for making decisions in this process.

Based on the discussions with principals, staff work was guided by the following principles:

- Follow boundary policy considerations:
 - Balance demographics among schools when possible
 - Adhere to walk zones as much as possible
 - Use existing space as to maximize efficiency
 - Increase operational efficiencies to keep more resources in the classroom
- Put instructional needs in the forefront to guide planning processes
 - Consider site moves to balance demographics and support the instructional integrity of options
 - Locate PreK classes closer to where eligible students reside

Demographics matter.

What-if boundary maps scenarios were developed to explore ways to increase diversity in all schools. As was discussed in the August 8 meeting, housing patterns impact efforts to diversify schools while, at the same time, staff must balance family preferences to keep students closer to home.

Continued collaboration across departments and schools—and with all stakeholders—is necessary.

At the Aug. 27 School Board Work Session, the guiding principles and timeline will be shared. Throughout the school year, P&E is available to attend ES principal monthly or business meetings to discuss the boundary process and related items. As the planning process continues, principals will be provided updates and will be asked for their input.