

Memo to: Arlington School Board
 From: Advisory Council on School Facilities and Capital Programs (FAC)
 Re: Revisions to Policy B-2.1 Boundary Policy and PIP (dated 19 AUG 2024)
 Date: 6 SEPT 2024

The FAC has been charged to advise on the condition and sufficiency of Arlington Public Schools (APS) capital infrastructure. School boundaries have significant impacts on the use of APS facilities and supporting services, such as transportation. APS Facilities and Operations (F&O) staff are point on efforts to keep student enrollment aligned with the capacity of our school facilities. Among the strategies available to staff to keep facility capacity utilization in sync with enrollment is to recommend boundary adjustments.

While boundary changes are not the preferred method to align facility capacity with enrollment, having a policy that establishes a transparent and predictable process is essential to manage public expectations while ensuring enough flexibility to consider impacts on a student-by-student basis. This policy meets this objective.

When staff proposed its first draft revisions to School Board policy B-2.1 and the policy’s implementation procedures (PIP) last year, the FAC submitted comments¹ and recommended several edits to the text. We appreciate that a number of our recommendations have been incorporated into the revised 19 August 2024 draft.

That said, we are proposing additional clarifications for better understanding:

Edits for Clarification – Policy

Line	Text/Edit Recommendation	Comment
106	“ <u>Utilization Cost-savings</u> Efficiency” or “Cost-savings”	“Efficiency” is not the clearest term given the explanation of this priority. We suggest an alternative header for the criterion. “Utilization” is a term used in the PIP.
136-137 & 106	“... based on the original educational specifications of the building.” “... utilizing school capacity, <u>including use of relocatables,</u> to minimize ... capital and operating costs.”	Earlier staff drafts of this policy/PIP included a reference to relocatables. This term is not included in the current draft. With this frame of reference, we support the “building design capacity” definition (lines 136-7) that is based on “the original educational specifications of the building.” When this term is used, we understand that additional capacity that may be achieved by relocatables is not included. We support this interpretation, since relocatables should not be a permanent solution to accommodating over-enrollment. That said, when the policy prioritizes boundary changes based on better “utilizing school capacity” as a means to minimize capital and operating costs, we understand that use of relocatables is such a cost-minimizing option. If our understanding is not correct, please let us know.

¹ 22 MAR 2024.

		Meanwhile, staff may want to consider adding the clause “, including use of relocatables,” or words to that effect to clarify that “building design capacity” is different from “school capacity.”
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Edits for Clarification – PIP

Line	Text/Edit Recommendation	Comment
34	“... community members residents in the affected communities”	Does the term “community members” mean “residents”? Suggest using a more descriptive term in addition to “families, staff, and students” to identify who this last “priority” group is.

Meanwhile, when does staff anticipate finishing this policy update? We are concerned that the revised policy’s September deadline for notifying the School Board about the need to evaluate possible boundary changes is fast approaching. Data available to us² indicates that a number of APS elementary schools have been below 15 percent capacity the last two school years, one of the conditions that can trigger boundary changes. Since the revised policy provides that APS must evaluate whether boundary changes are needed “at least every two years” and boundary changes were not considered last school year, we assume that a boundary change evaluation is warranted this school year.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please contact Cynthia Hilton, Chair, FAC, if you have any questions.

² FY 2025 Adopted Budget and Facility Optimization Studies.