

## 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 operational efficiency and/or instructional effectiveness 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 8155, "*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 attendance zone changes are to be considered. Typically, the evaluation will take place within the context of the Capital Improvement Program budget process, but a change may also be recommended at any time to address overcrowding or other instructional concerns. An attendance zone change may also be initiated at the direction of the School Board.

2. Initiation. When conditions exist for an attendance zone change, the Superintendent will recommend to the School Board that options for change be developed. The 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 encourage public participation throughout the process and will hold at least one public hearing prior to taking action on any attendance zone change.

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 identified schools, 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 school to a public charter school in which a conversion results in the closing or consolidating of an existing school.
- b. New Residential Development. New unoccupied housing requiring an attendance zone change to avoid overcrowding at a school.
- c. Minimal Overcrowding and/or 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 the identified school.
- d. Emergency Need. An emergency or other overriding public need requiring an attendance zone change.

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

- a. Facilities. Effective use of new and existing school facilities.
  - (i) Utilize projected student enrollment and school capacity as principal measures of determining efficient use of educational facilities.
  - (ii) Promote reasonable balancing of student enrollment within the school system to avoid over or underutilization of facilities or equitable distribution of programs and resources.
  - (iii) Minimize long-term use of modular classrooms that cause a school to operate at more than its capacity.
  - (iv) Minimize future capital and operational budget costs.
- b. Proximity. Keep students close to their schools.
  - (i) Base attendance zones on geographic proximity as measured by distance traveled using established routes of transportation.

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- (ii) Prioritize assignment of adjacent neighborhoods and communities to a school.
  - (iii) Promote attendance zones that are contiguous, whenever possible.
  - (iv) Encourage reasonable walking zones to foster healthier lifestyles, promote a cleaner environment and reduce transportation costs.
- c. Community. Encourage the link between schools and communities by promoting the concept of community schools and avoiding the splitting of communities between schools, whenever possible.
  - d. Accessibility. Identify 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).
  - e. Stability. Promote long-term attendance zone stability.
  - f. Cluster Alignment. Support 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.

5. Additional Implementation Considerations. The School Board may consider any factors in implementing 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. Other factors that may be considered regarding changing a school attendance zone include: the impact on neighborhoods; long-range capital plans; the socioeconomic characteristics of school population and the overall impact on students and families.

C. Administrative Attendance Zone Change Process. The Superintendent may initiate an administrative attendance zone change under certain distinct circumstances to address technical inaccuracies and/or practical problems (e.g., land is developed and where a school attendance zone once bisected a field that had no consequence, it now bisects a house). The Superintendent shall notify the School Board of all administrative changes at the time of the implementation.

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[Former Policy 2-32]

Adopted: 9/25/01

Revised: 2/23/10, 9/25/12, 9/9/14, 8/8/17

Current Revision: 1/11/22

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Leg Refs: Code of Virginia § [22.1-79\(4\) and \(8\)](#), [Virginia Constitution Article VIII, § 7](#)

Cross Refs: Policy [8155](#), School Assignment

Policy [8160](#), Exceptions to School Assignment Due to Attendance Zone Change