

Montgomery County Public Schools

Boundary Study Process

Community Involvement Process

Purpose of the Process

The purpose of community involvement in school boundary studies is to solicit community input for the superintendent to review prior to making a boundary change recommendation to the Board of Education. The process also provides community input for the Board of Education to consider before it makes a final decision. The process is guided by the Board of Education Long-range Educational Facilities Policy (FAA) and Regulation FAA RA.

Community Representation

Cluster coordinators work with their PTA leaders to identify representatives to serve on a boundary advisory committee. In addition, high school student representatives may serve on high school boundary studies. Principals are charged with identifying these student representatives. There is a degree of flexibility in terms of boundary advisory committee size and number of representatives per school. The composition of the committee is determined in consultation with cluster coordinators and Division of Long-range Planning (DLRP) staff.

Committee Responsibilities

The role of boundary advisory committees is primarily to advise the superintendent on community issues and desires regarding boundary changes. Representatives on these committees are responsible for participating in committee discussions, sharing committee activities with the communities they represent, fairly representing the views of their communities during the process, evaluating staff-developed options, and transmitting a report on the committee work at the end of the process to the superintendent and the Board of Education. School PTAs also may attach position papers to the committee report.

DLRP Staff Responsibilities

DLRP staff conducts public information meetings at the beginning and near the end of the process. DLRP staff facilitates committee meetings, responds to requests for information, develops boundary options, and assists the committee in compiling its report to the superintendent.

Public Information Meetings

DLRP staff conducts two public information meetings for the community. The first meeting occurs before the first committee meeting and is intended to provide information on why a boundary change process is needed, how it will be conducted, and what the timeline for decision-making will be. The second meeting occurs near the end of the committee process to advise the broader community of the options developed and to gather community feedback on option preferences.

Committee Meetings

The boundary advisory committee process is conducted over the course of four to six structured meetings. Committee meetings are usually scheduled every other week. This schedule allows time for committee members to get back to their constituents through PTA meetings and special community meetings. In some cases, more frequent committee meetings may be necessary. A description of the activities for each committee meeting follows.

Committee Meeting #1

At the first committee meeting, ground rules are established, committee member roles and staff member roles are clearly defined, an explanation of the process and timeline for meetings is discussed, and data on enrollment trends and facility utilization is provided. DLRP staff then facilitates a discussion of the criteria that are important to committee members in redrawing school boundaries. The committee criteria are used by staff in developing boundary options, and by the committee in evaluating boundary options. The committee also reviews a map showing zones used for the development of options.

Committee Meeting #2

At the second committee meeting, DLRP staff presents the first round of boundary options and discusses how each option addresses the committee criteria. Three to five options are usually presented at this meeting. Following the second committee meeting, representatives are urged to conduct PTA meetings to solicit feedback on the pros and cons of the first round of boundary options.

Committee Meeting #3

At the third committee meeting, DLRP staff facilitates a discussion on the first round of boundary options by asking committee members to discuss the pros and cons for the options in terms of how well each option addresses the committee criteria. At the close of the discussion, the committee is asked whether it feels a second round of options is needed to better address committee criteria. A maximum of ten options may be developed throughout the process. If no second round of boundary options is requested, then meetings 4 and 5 may be cancelled.

Committee Meeting #4 (if needed)

If a second round of boundary options is requested, DLRP staff presents these options in the same manner as the first round of boundary options. At the close of the meeting, committee members are urged to seek community input on the second round, as they did on the first round, and be prepared at the next meeting to discuss pros and cons of each option.

Committee Meeting #5 (if needed)

If a second round of options has been developed, committee members repeat the process of presenting pros and cons as was done for the third meeting.

Committee Meeting #6

A draft committee report is prepared by the DLRP staff to present a neutral discussion of the committee process and concerns raised by the committee members. At this meeting, the committee report is finalized and member evaluation forms for all options are collected. In addition to committee evaluation of options, school PTAs may submit position papers for inclusion in the report.

Superintendent and Board of Education Process

Most boundary advisory committees meet in the spring. After reviewing the boundary options and committee input with staff, the superintendent prepares a recommendation to the Board of Education for boundary changes in mid-October as part of the CIP process. The Board of Education conducts a work session in early November during which Board of Education members may request that alternatives to the superintendent's recommendation be developed for consideration. To be officially considered, a Board member requested alternative must receive a majority vote of Board members. The Board work session is followed in mid-November by a public hearing on the superintendent's recommendation and any Board of Education requested alternatives. After the public hearing, the Board of Education takes action on boundary changes in late November. In most cases, adopted boundary changes are implemented the following school year. If the boundary advisory committee meets in the winter, then the superintendent issues a recommendation in February, and the Board of Education action occurs in March.