

Dear CCPTA:

I am responding to CCPTA questions included in your Nov. 6 revised letter to Dr. Durán and Members of the School Board on the Fall 2020 Elementary School Boundary Process.

Questions about Efficiency

1. *Is Efficiency (balancing enrollment and capacity) a goal of this process? APS writes (FAQ, Data #4): “Staff has not stated that this process was undertaken to achieve balance between capacity and enrollment. Our objectives in this boundary process are to develop attendance zones for our new school facilities opening in Fall 2021 at the Key and Reed sites and bring enrollment to manageable levels at our elementary schools.”*

Every boundary process is shaped by School Board Policy [B-2.1 Boundaries](#). The policy consideration of efficiency is addressed in this process by assigning students to the new school facilities that will open in Fall 2021 and bringing enrollment to manageable levels. Efficiency is also addressed in this process by the 600 additional students who will now be able to walk to their neighborhood school in 2021-22 rather than require APS transportation services.

2. *What is the difference between “bringing enrollment to manageable levels at our elementary schools” and “achieving balance between capacity and enrollment”? Please clarify.*

Bringing enrollment to manageable levels refers to bringing enrollment in our schools to a level that a specific site can manage, including:

- Ensuring common area spaces can accommodate the projected level of enrollment
- Ensuring there are sufficient number of instructional spaces and classrooms to accommodate enrollment, which could include use of relocatable classrooms
- Scheduling no more three lunch periods at the school

For this boundary process, we have also aimed to accommodate student enrollment within the permanent capacity of a site, while continuing to use relocatable classrooms as a tool for managing future enrollment above projected levels. When we seek to achieve balance between capacity and enrollment in a boundary process, we may reassign students in order to bring enrollment across schools much closer to the permanent seats as seen in the published building capacity; however, relocatable classrooms will continue to be part of how APS manages enrollment growth, as we see spikes in growth in specific areas across the county.

3. *Please note that when the CCPTA delivered its Boundary Process Recommendations in April 2019, we noted that unclear goals have been an issue in previous boundary processes (for example, the middle school process in 2017 and the elementary school process in 2018, both of which the community understood would balance enrollment across schools and in fact did not.) We ask that you clarify these goals so that families have confidence in this process and feel that their input during community engagement is meaningful and relevant to the process.*

Due to the pandemic and input received by APS, we quickly shifted the scope of this boundary process from a countywide process to one with a narrower focus. Specifically, the goal of this

process is to accomplish the following in a way that limits the number of students reassigned to another school in this boundary process:

- Create attendance zones for the Fall 2021 opening of the new neighborhood elementary school at the Key site and the new building at the Reed site;
- Place Arlington Science Focus School (ASFS) within its attendance zone;
- Bring enrollment to more manageable levels for the five schools that must be part of this process in order to achieve the above two objectives; and
- Preserve flexibility for a broader, countywide elementary school boundary process in 2022.

Questions about Capacity (corrected version)

1. *If Capacity is a consideration, then we observe that none of the proposals currently being considered (the Initial Proposal, Option A, and Option B) completely alleviates capacity issues at the schools currently under consideration. The Initial Proposal exacerbates overcapacity conditions at three schools (Ashlawn, Glebe, and Key Immersion). It appears that Option A leaves four schools (ASFS, Glebe, Key Immersion, McKinley) at more than 100% permanent capacity, and Option B also leaves four schools (Ashlawn, Glebe, Key Immersion, and McKinley) at overcapacity.*

This item was discussed at the Nov. 12 Work Session and the recording can be viewed at this link: www.apsva.us/school-board-meetings/school-board-work-sessions-meetings/. Please note, Key Immersion is not part of the boundary process and instead, will be addressed in the same way that we will address Abingdon as part of the process for managing enrollment at other schools until new boundaries take effect in 2023-24.

As this process was scaled back due to the pandemic, additional adjustments will be required in the 2022 boundary process to bring elementary school enrollment within capacity for the 2023-24 school year; for example, more ASFS planning units could be assigned to Key. We mentioned at the Nov. 12 Work Session that the Sept. 30 enrollment at some schools is down by more than 100 students. We do not have previous experience with estimating enrollment during a pandemic so it is not clear, at this time, how to interpret large drops in enrollment. We continue to work on this with guidance from Dr. Richard Grip, a recognized leader and expert in public school enrollment projections. Again, the narrowed scope of this boundary process will allow time to see if enrollment returns to pre-pandemic levels or ends up being lower going forward.

2. *When you present the Superintendent's Proposed Boundaries on November 5, will you share more detail about how the recommended boundaries will set us up for success in a future boundary process to balance capacity equitably across all schools?*

All presentations made by staff in this process can be found on the APS Engage web site and the Nov. 5 School Board meeting can be viewed at www.apsva.us/school-board-meetings/view-school-board-meetings/. Most of the details the CCPTA is requesting will be revisited ahead of the 2022 process, and will be complemented by work to develop an Equity PIP, CIP decisions, and the continued work to build out the PreK Instructional Program Pathways (IPP). In addition, as mentioned previously, we have taken a cautious approach in this current process in order to allow flexibility for a broader, countywide boundary process in 2022.

3. *How are you ensuring that the enrollment numbers being used to understand capacity needs in our schools will be as accurate as possible so that the changes we make are addressing our future needs?*

I encourage you to watch the Nov. 10 School Board Work Session; the discussion about enrollment and projections begins about 30 minutes into the session. This is available at www.apsva.us/school-board-meetings/school-board-work-sessions-meetings/. The pandemic has changed normal operations and processes at APS, and the scaled-back adjustments being made in the 2020 boundary process will give us another year to understand how the pandemic has impacted APS enrollment. More importantly, projections shape the APS budget and teacher allocations by school. We're working on this with Dr. Grip's guidance to ensure that we have the sufficient number of teachers to support our students in 2021-22.

Questions about Proximity and Walkability:

1. *Why are Walkability and Proximity prioritized in the Initial Proposal as well as in Options A and B for some planning units, but not for others where more low-income children live?*

The initial boundary proposal placed nearly all walkable planning units to their neighborhood school or reassigned students to a school that was in closer proximity to their home. The two exceptions:

- PU 16090 (current Glebe students), which is under consideration for being included in the walk zone at the Reed site
- Planning Units that are walkable to the new elementary school at the Key site that were recommended to remain at their current school, ASFS or Taylor (see below for a discussion of the planning units that surround ASFS and the new elementary school at the Key site)

Given the enrollment growth in the neighborhoods that surround ASFS and the new elementary school at the Key site, not all walkable units were recommended for reassignment to this new school. This allowed for the planning units in Rosslyn, Colonial Village, Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights, that are east of the new school at Key and outside of the walk zone to be reassigned to Key which is most proximate to their home. Several of the planning units in these neighborhoods have a high concentration of students eligible for Free/Reduced lunch, just as some of the planning units in the school at Key's walk zone do.

Adding all walkable planning units to the new school at Key would necessitate reassigning students in the planning units in Rosslyn, Colonial Village, Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights. to a school that is significantly further from their home than the school at Key

In addition, the pandemic resulted in a narrower boundary process that limits the number of students reassigned to other schools and helps preserve flexibility for a broader, countywide boundary process in 2022. The 2022 elementary school boundary process will be guided by the boundary policy considerations as we seek to provide longer-term relief for schools experiencing significant overcapacity. In the next boundary process, any Planning Unit that remains with their current school community in the 2020 process and requires transportation

(living outside of the walk zone) could be considered for reassignment to a different nearby neighborhood school with capacity.

2. *When you present the Superintendent's Proposed Boundaries on November 5, will you please provide more transparency about the demographics of the planning units that will be walkable compared to the planning units that will be assigned to schools outside their walk zones?*

All of this information is available on [the planning unit data table](#); see columns S thru AC for the demographic composition of each planning unit. See Column AG & AH for walk zone information. The table is posted at www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PU-Data-Fields-List_ES-Phases-2-and-3-Update-10.02.2020.xlsx.

Questions about Demographics

1. *Why doesn't the Initial Proposal promote demographic diversity?*

The quick shift from a countywide process to a narrow process among eight elementary schools limited the ability to promote demographic diversity to the schools included in this process.

2. *We note that F/RM data for Options A and B were not included in the Data Table presented in the School Board's 10/29 Work Session. Please share any analysis about how demographic diversity is affected in these options.*

The Work Session provided draft concepts. The Superintendent's recommended boundaries were presented to the School Board, which included these details. Please see www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ES-Boundary-Data-Table-11.5.2020-Supt-Proposal.pdf.

3. *We note that the School Board's policy governing boundary changes states: "Staff shall prepare a report of boundary change options, which includes a discussion of how each option addresses, at a minimum, the considerations listed above, and will make the report available to the public as part of the community engagement process as adopted by the School Board." Why is APS not adhering to this policy during this process?*

At the October 29 Work Session and the November 5 School Board meeting, when the Superintendent presented his recommended boundaries, staff provided a table that showed how each option addressed the policy considerations. Please see below:

- October 29 Elementary School Boundary Work Session Presentation – See slide 15 [https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/BUUTE7709E7/\\$file/Elementary%20School%20Boundary%20Process%2010-29-2020.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/BUUTE7709E7/$file/Elementary%20School%20Boundary%20Process%2010-29-2020.pdf)
- November 5 Superintendent's Recommended Boundaries Presentation - See slide 25 [https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/BV42VZ7EFE5C/\\$file/F-1%20Fall%202020%20Elementary%20School%20Boundary%20Process%20Presentation%20110520-%20REV.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/BV42VZ7EFE5C/$file/F-1%20Fall%202020%20Elementary%20School%20Boundary%20Process%20Presentation%20110520-%20REV.pdf)

4. *Reporting the net change per school of students qualifying for F/RM for only one of the scenarios under consideration does not constitute a report of options that explores the pros and cons*

relative to diversity and other factors. Please provide more information about demographic diversity across the option(s) currently under consideration, as well as any others that APS may have previously considered.

Demographics for boundary decisions are limited to data on students receiving Free/Reduced lunch. The data tables are available online for community members who are interested in doing their own analyses. We look forward to defining this more clearly for future boundary processes with Mr. Gregory, APS's Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer.

Questions about program moves for PreK and students with disabilities

- 1. Discussion during recent School Board meetings and consideration of the data suggest that absent another option school move in the near future, APS will need to move programs for income-eligible preschoolers and students with disabilities out of schools that are more crowded, and more likely to be in the center of the County or in low-income areas, to locations in the north where there is space to house them.*

APS has long used the following to manage enrollment:

- Adding relocatable classrooms
- Offering transfers to neighborhood schools that have space for additional students
- Increasing or decreasing the number of students or classes accepted via the lottery at each of the option schools/programs
- Moving PreK or Special Education programs
- Changing how classrooms are used

Learn more about the 2020 steps that are documented in the Annual Update, visit:

<https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-02-12-Annual-Update-FINAL.pdf>

- 2. How is APS going to address concerns about longer bus rides for these students and families' ability to access those programs via public transportation when parents need to participate in conferences, pick up a sick child, or want to attend school events?*

Most of the Planning Units reassigned in this boundary process should improve access for families since distances have been reduced from where a student catches the bus to get to school, with the exception for some McKinley families.

- 3. Although we understand that placement of PreK and special education programs normally doesn't happen until February, we believe it is possible for APS to forecast where it might place programs for income-eligible preschoolers and students with disabilities given what is known about capacity to house these programs under each of the option(s) under consideration. Before a vote is taken on boundaries, will you share with the community and with the School Board an analysis of how many PreK program participants and students with disabilities will be moved under the Superintendent's Proposed Boundaries, how this will affect students' bus ride times, and whether their families will be able to access their schools via public transportation?*

This is an operational process that we will begin to shape once projections are ready in December. This work is conducted cross-departmentally with participation from principal groups and staff from support departments who will help with any necessary transitions. Please stay tuned for more information in January on specific programs and the next Annual Update, which will be published in February 2021.

4. *Will you also share how many of these students have previously been moved from school to school in the last few years and help our families understand why it is acceptable to APS to move these students more often than other students moved by boundary processes?*

We met with ASEAC and SEPTA leaders to review guiding principles for Special Education moves. VPI is for 4 year-olds and their service is not adjusted because they are only in the program for one year. Montessori is sometimes impacted, and we aim to align with the guiding principles that were developed ahead of moving Montessori to its own building from Drew.

Questions about Grandfathering:

1. *APS has stated that it will not be able to grandfather 5th grade students affected by these boundary changes. We are very concerned about the population of students who have already experienced significant disruption during 3rd and 4th grade years and will now be asked to attend a new elementary school during 5th grade, all before beginning over again in 6th grade for middle school.*

The Superintendent's recommendation does not include grandfathering countywide for the following reasons:

- APS cannot provide transportation for grandfathering
- McKinley at the Reed site may not be able to accommodate grandfathering:
 - Projected enrollment estimates 746 students in a building with capacity for 732 students, and this is manageable
 - The Reed site cannot accommodate relocatables
 - There is uncertainty about future enrollment and how many students might return in 2021
- ASFS and Ashlawn could accommodate grandfathering, but it would require the continued use of relocatables
- Majority of ASFS students are moving to the new school at the Key site; we are not sure if some ASFS families would ask to be grandfathered with peers at Key
- Taylor and Tuckahoe do have room to accommodate grandfathered students

This boundary process has many considerations and, to allow for grandfathering, it is possible that more Planning Units would need to be reassigned

Grandfathering options were discussed by the School Board at their Nov. 12, 2020 School Board Work Session available at <https://www.apsva.us/school-board-meetings/school-board-work-sessions-meetings/>

2. *When the Superintendent presents the Proposed Boundary recommendation next month, will you*

please share data about how many students fall into this category under the proposed recommendation and what the costs would be to grandfather these students, with transportation provided for those who need it?

Kindergarten through Grade 4 enrollment on Sept. 30, 2020, Counts for Grandfathering in 2021-22 by School

Elementary School 2019-20	Superintendent's Recommendation	Gr 4	Gr K-3	Total
ASFS	New ES at Key	51	235	286
Ashlawn	ASFS	19	63	82
McKinley	Ashlawn	7	27	34
Taylor	ASFS	4	47	51
Tuckahoe	McKinley	12	34	46

The number of students who fall into this category was shared on November 5 when the Superintendent presented his boundary recommendation. The transportation cost for grandfathering is not available. We can share that grandfathering with transportation provided requires two bus routes to be provided for students from the same planning unit for at least one year: one for students to the newly assigned school and one for the original school. This does increase the costs of transportation, reduces system efficiency, and makes it harder to get students to school on time: A few other considerations are whether social distancing on buses will continue into SY 2021-22 and the large budget deficit we are anticipating for FY2022. Social distancing has placed significant additional demands on our transportation services.

Questions about Community Engagement:

1. *What data has APS collected about the reach and inclusivity of its community engagement process this year? Above and beyond the data shared with the School Board on October 29 (we note Slide 11 of the staff presentation), what detail can be shared about which community populations were represented (by school or zip code, language, and/or other demographic factors)?*

Community input is published at www.apsva.us/engage/fall2020elementaryboundaries/. We will compile more metrics at the conclusion of this process but can tell you, for example, that two Facebook Live videos in Spanish have each been viewed 800-900 times. While we used various communication channels and methods of outreach to gain input—including simultaneous interpretation in five languages at virtual meetings, handouts in these languages at all APS meal sites, and text messages to all families at the schools involved—we are always looking to make improvements in our outreach. There was strong participation in the Community Questionnaire, which had more than 1200 responses and was also available in five languages; it was interesting to see a high response rate from families who identified as having students in option schools.

2. *What communities are missing?*

We used various platforms to engage families and it is sometimes difficult to determine which planning unit or zip code they live in. In general, the engagement was primarily with families at

the schools involved in this process; one community we had limited input from was Colonial Village. Any insight that the CCPTA can provide to help us identify who is missing based on the information we have posted would be welcome. We are open to developing new and innovative strategies to make sure all voices are represented, in a manner that provides confidence to the CCPTA.

3. *Does the feedback received about the boundary process reflect the diverse demographics and needs of our students?*

To a certain extent. We find that we often receive input from the same members of the community who are most connected and comfortable with engaging on initiatives across multiple APS processes. Staff spends a significant amount of time and effort on the people in our school community who weigh in on nearly every issue within APS. Engaging our diverse community is important to APS, and staff is committed to continuing to enhance outreach efforts to gain the diverse perspectives across our communities.

Thank you,
Lisa Stengle