



PRESS RELEASE

Prince George's County Public Schools • www.pgcps.org
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES SCHOOL BOUNDARIES

Attendance Zones Set to Expand Choice, Better Utilize Space Next School Year

In a vote of 8-1, the Prince George's County Board of Education approved Phase One of a comprehensive review of school boundaries last night to be effective when Prince George's County public schools open in the fall.

School boundaries were adjusted to accommodate a Board-approved plan to offer more programs of choice, while consolidating eight under-enrolled schools. The approved boundaries will allow Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) to achieve the following benefits:

- Offer more program choices to historically under-served communities
- Create four kindergarten-through-Grade 8 schools
- Increase the number of students attending schools in their neighborhoods
- Reduce by half the number of empty seats in county public schools, and
- Take 21 temporary classrooms out of use.

"When we took our oath of office in December of 2006, we vowed to provide an equitable education for all students of Prince George's County – not just a chosen few," said Verjeana M. Jacobs, Esq., Board Chair. "We heard parents say they wanted more programs for the children. They wanted more neighborhood schools where children could learn together and grow as a community. This plan does that. It answers the call of our parents and community members."

The Board heard from more than 2,500 parents, students and community members via the meetings, email, Web site survey, and telephone calls. The approved plan for boundary changes is outlined in a way to provide more equitable educational programs and opportunities for all children, while making more economical use of school facilities.

"Having an excessive amount of unused seats available in current schools jeopardizes funding for new schools, building additions and upgrades," said Dr. Ron Watson, Board Vice Chair. "We must show that we are making proper use of our current buildings in order to grow. You can't have 10,000 empty seats and ask the state to pay for an additional school before you fill the empty seats. It just doesn't work that way. We also heard parents clearly telling Board members that they did not want children learning in temporary classrooms.

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"We know this will be a difficult transition for some students, parents, and communities, and we remain committed to supporting all students," Dr. Watson added.

In June 2008 the Board requested a county-wide review of enrollment and school boundaries to provide a plan to fill 10,000 available seats that existed in county schools. Maryland law authorizes county school boards to determine the geographical attendance areas for each school established in a county and also authorizes county school boards to consolidate schools. The law further requires that a county Board of Education must provide its decision regarding closing a school no later than April 30 of any school year.

In accordance with the law, the Board of Education has established administrative procedures to change school boundaries and followed those procedures accordingly. The procedures require the Superintendent to submit proposed boundary changes for certain schools to the Board of Education for consideration. In making such recommendations, the Superintendent and his staff review the following data and issues:

1. Building capacity and current utilization of space in a school building;
2. Condition of the school building;
3. Student enrollment at the school before and after proposed boundary changes;
4. Educational programs offered at the school before and after proposed boundary changes;
5. Transportation;
6. Community impact; and
7. Other financial considerations.

After the Superintendent provided the Board with the proposed boundary changes, affected households in the county were provided with written notice of the proposals and informed that public hearings would be conducted to provide members of the community with input to the Board and Superintendent regarding the boundary proposals.

Public hearings were held at various locations throughout the county on February 25, March 4, March 11, March 19, March 31, April 2, April 14, and April 18. As a result of the input of the public, the Superintendent modified the proposed boundary changes, which were presented yesterday evening for final action by the Board.

"Change is always difficult. However, this Board has a responsibility to provide equitable education to all students of this county," said Jacobs. "Inequity in our schools is staring us right in the face. We are asking all of our parents to turn their head from inequity and focus on the opportunity that is available for this county."

Next steps for the new boundaries include:

- The final Boundary plan for Phase 1 is posted to the school system Web site
- Program offices, such as special education, will begin notifying families of the boundary changes immediately.
- Final street listings for boundaries will be made available to all impacted schools and Zone offices by Friday, April 24.

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- New boundary maps will be available for posting at each school by April 27, and
- Individual letters will be generated and mailed to impacted families of the approved boundary changes by April 30. Copies will also be made available to each school.

The Board will continue its review of all schools in two additional phases with possible boundary changes to follow.

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