

Supplement to the Clarksburg, Northwest, and Seneca Valley Clusters Boundary Study Report

October 2019

The Board of Education authorized a boundary study to explore secondary school reassignments in the Clarksburg, Northwest and Seneca Valley high school clusters. In addition to the three high schools—Clarksburg, Northwest, and Seneca Valley—the middle schools that articulate to these schools were included in the scope of the boundary study to evaluate enrollment patterns and utilization rates for the schools.

Throughout the process, staff solicited stakeholder input in accordance with Policy ABA, *Community Involvement*. Over the course of the spring, twelve community meetings were held at the three high schools to share information and solicit input. Two online surveys were available for stakeholders to provide input on the options and the process.

In addition to the widespread community outreach across all affected clusters, staff worked with advocacy groups and stakeholders to ensure that information was shared and received in all areas of the impacted clusters. Through this additional outreach, targeted focus groups and community meetings were held with stakeholder communities during the summer to gain further feedback on the developed options. The following is a summary of this community engagement.

Community Engagement — June–August 2019

On June 19 and 26, 2019, two community meetings were held, one at the Plum Gar Community Center and the other at the Gilchrist Center. The purpose of these meetings was to share information regarding the boundary study process; the developed options; opportunities for continued feedback; and the next steps in the process including the superintendent's recommendation, public hearing opportunities, and Board of Education deliberations. A question and answer period followed the presentation to clarify and answer stakeholder questions and to gain further feedback on the boundary process and staff developed options.

Throughout the boundary study process, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff met with the PTA leadership from Seneca Valley High School to provide answers to questions, understand the leadership's priorities in the boundary process, and gain feedback regarding the staff developed options. This dialogue continued through the summer.

One outcome of the summer dialogue was that the Seneca Valley High School PTA leadership submitted a reassignment proposal for the Clarksburg, Northwest, and Seneca Valley Clusters Boundary Study. The Seneca Valley High School PTA leadership's reassignment proposal is outlined below:

- At the high school level:
 - Reassign Lake Seneca Elementary School from Seneca Valley High School to Northwest High School
 - Reassign the William B. Gibbs Jr. Elementary School from Clarksburg High School to Seneca Valley High School
 - Reassign the southern portion of the Clarksburg Elementary School service area from Clarksburg High School to Seneca Valley High School
 - Reassign the Clopper Mill and Spark M. Matsunaga elementary school islands from Northwest High School to Seneca Valley High School
 - Reassign Ronald McNair Elementary School from Northwest High School to Seneca Valley High School

- At the middle school level:
 - Reassign William B. Gibbs Jr. Elementary School to Neelsville Middle School
 - Reassign Capt. James E. Daly Elementary School to Rocky Hill Middle School
 - Reassign Lake Seneca Elementary School to Kingsview Middle School
 - Reassign Ronald McNair Elementary School to Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School
 - Reassign a portion of Great Seneca Creek Elementary School to Kingsview Middle School

MCPS staff analyzed the impact that the proposed reassignment from the Seneca Valley High School PTA leadership would create in terms of the three factors in Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning*: demographic characteristics of student population; geography; and, facility utilization. The staff analysis is summarized below in each of these policy areas.

- Demographics of Student Population
 - Clarksburg High School’s Hispanic population would increase by 2.5 percent and the FARMS participation would increase by 1.2 percent.
 - Northwest High School’s Asian population would decrease by 2.7 percent and the FARMS participation would increase by 2.5 percent.
 - Seneca Valley High School’s White population would increase by 5.1 percent and the FARMS participation would decrease by 9.5 percent.

- Geography
 - Creates noncontiguous boundaries including Lake Seneca and Ronald McNair elementary schools.
 - Reassigns walkers at the middle school and high school level.
 - Approximately 96 percent of the Lake Seneca Elementary School students are walkers to Seneca Valley High School and would be bussed to Northwest High School in this proposal.
 - Approximately 87 percent of the Lake Seneca Elementary School service area walks to Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School and would be bussed to Kingsview Middle School in this proposal.

- Future walkers at William B. Gibbs Elementary School would be bussed to Seneca Valley High School in this proposal.
- Utilization
 - As stated during the boundary process, the capacity at Seneca Valley High School cannot accommodate all of the students from Clarksburg and Northwest high schools, therefore, the two schools would remain overutilized.
 - Clarksburg High School would be approximately 200 students over capacity by the end of the six-year period.
 - Northwest High School would be approximately 280 students over capacity by the end of the six-year period.
 - Seneca Valley High School would be approximately 240 students over capacity by the end of the six-year period. The new Seneca Valley High School configuration will not have room for future expansion for this building and will have very little room on-site for relocatable classrooms.

Community Engagement — September 2019

On September 19, 2019, a focus group meeting was held, sponsored by Identity, Inc. and the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Parents' Council. The purpose of the focus group meeting was to provide information regarding the boundary study process, the timeline moving forward through the Capital Improvements Program process, and to listen and gain feedback on important issues and concerns of the participants related to all aspects of the boundary study process.

Participants shared their views regarding demographics, geography, utilization, and existing and new program offerings.

With respect to demographics, participants shared the following:

- Hopes that the new school would be diverse.
- Concerns about the diversity of students who would participate in the Career and Technology Education (CTE) program.
- Concerns that schools with large numbers of students who are ethnic and racial minorities do not get the same amount of quality resources as other schools.
- Concerned that many of the re-zoning options and programs being offered threatens the diversity.
- Having equal proportions of demographic characteristics in the student body populations.

With respect to geography, participants shared the following:

- Concerns that reassigning students based on demographic characteristics could lead to separating communities.
- That students who live close to Seneca Valley High School should be allowed to attend that school.
- Seneca Valley High School students should have priority to maintain their existing boundaries.

- Concerns that students who are residents of the Clarksburg area should be able to remain in Clarksburg High School; similarly, students who reside in Germantown should be able to remain in Seneca Valley High School.
- Concerns about the impact of increased busing on travel times and bus overcrowding.

With respect to facility utilization, participants shared the following:

- Concerns that Seneca Valley High School will have a high number of students in a short period of time and become overcrowded quickly, as has occurred with Northwest and Clarksburg high schools.
- Concerns about future overcrowding and large class sizes.
- Concerns about supervision of a large student body and the need to ensure school safety and security.
- Concerns that large class sizes will not allow for teacher/student connections.

With respect to existing and new programs, participants shared the following:

- Excitement about all the new opportunities for learning.
- Excitement about Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses.
- Concerns that an overemphasis on the CTE programming will lead to insufficient advanced academic programming at Seneca Valley High School.
- Importance of Seneca Valley High School having a full International Baccalaureate (IB) program.
- Importance of informing parents and students of the full range of CTE and other programming available at Seneca Valley High School in order to remove possible stigma about the career programs.

At the conclusion of the focus group meeting, participants were asked to provide feedback on the meeting. Overall the feedback was positive. Participants stated that it was positive to have the opportunity to hear and share opinions and concerns with other parents. Participants also suggested that it would have been beneficial to spend more time in the groups.

Next Steps

All feedback and community input gathered throughout the boundary study process over the course of the spring, summer, and early fall, will inform the superintendent's recommendation and ultimately the Board of Education's deliberations. The superintendent is scheduled to release his recommendation by mid-October. The Board of Education will hold worksessions and public hearings during the month of November, with final action on the boundary reassignment scheduled for November 26, 2019.