

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: ABA, ABC, ABC-RA, ACD, DNA, FAA-RA, FKB, JEE, JEE-RA
Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer
Department of Facilities Management

Long-range Educational Facilities Planning

A. PURPOSE

The Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) has a primary responsibility to plan for school facilities that address changing enrollment patterns and sustain high-quality educational programs in accordance with the policies of the Board. The Board fulfills this responsibility through the facilities planning process. Long-range educational facilities planning is essential to identify the infrastructure needed to ensure success for every student.

The *Long-range Educational Facilities Planning* (LREFP) policy guides the planning process. The process is designed to promote public understanding of planning for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for parents, students, staff, community members and organizations, local government agencies, and municipalities to identify and communicate their priorities and concerns to the superintendent of schools and the Board. LREFP will be in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

B. ISSUE

Enrollment in MCPS is constantly changing. The fundamental goal of facilities planning is to provide a sound educational environment for changing enrollment. The number of students, their geographic distribution, and the demographic characteristics of this population all impact facilities planning. Enrollment changes are driven by factors including birth rates and movement within the school system and into the school system from other parts of the United States and the world.

MCPS is among the largest school systems in the country in terms of enrollment and serves a county of approximately 500 square miles. The full range of population density, from rural to urban, is present in the county. Since 1984, enrollment has increased where new communities have formed, as well as in established areas of the county where turnover of houses has occurred.

MCPS is challenged continually to anticipate and plan for facilities in an efficient and fiscally responsible way to meet the varied educational needs of students. The LREFP policy describes how the school system responds to educational and enrollment change; the rate of change; its geographic distribution; and the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversification of enrollment.

School facilities also change. Aging of the physical plant requires a program of maintenance, renovation, and revitalization/expansion, in accordance with Board Policy FKB, *Sustaining and Modernizing Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Facilities*. Acquiring new sites, designing new facilities, and modifying existing facilities to keep current with program needs is essential. This policy provides the framework to coordinate planning for capital improvements.

C. POSITION

The long-range facilities planning process will continue to:

1. Plan for utilization of schools in ways that are consistent with sound educational practice and consider the impact of facility changes on educational program and related operating budget requirements and on the community.
2. Establish processes designed to obtain input by engaging in a discussion among a broad variety of stakeholders and utilizing opportunities for input from the public and relevant staff members, in accordance with Board Policy ABA, *Community Involvement*, for the capital improvements program and the facilities planning activities listed below:
 - a) Selection of school sites
 - b) Facility design
 - c) Boundary changes
 - d) Geographic student choice assignment plans (such as consortia)
 - e) General enrollment, demographic, and facility related issues that are explored through roundtables and other community input processes.
 - f) School closures and consolidations
3. Provide a six-year capital improvements program and educational facilities master plan which include enrollment projections, educational program needs, and available school capacity countywide, and identify—

- a) when new schools and additions will be needed to keep facilities current with enrollment levels and educational program needs;
 - b) funds for systemic maintenance and replacement projects to sustain schools in good condition and extend their useful life;
 - c) a schedule to revitalize/expand older school buildings in order to continue their use on a cost-effective basis, and to keep facilities current with educational program needs;
 - d) when school closures and consolidations are appropriate due to declining enrollment levels; and
 - e) facility utilization levels, capacity calculations, school enrollment size guidelines, and school site size (adopted as part of the Board review of the superintendent of schools' recommended CIP).
4. Provide for the Board to hold public hearings and solicit written testimony on the recommendations of the superintendent of schools.
5. Provide a process for facility design that—
- a) ensures a safe and secure environment;
 - b) is consistent with educational program needs;
 - c) includes community input;
 - d) demonstrates environmental stewardship; and
 - e) anticipates future needs
6. Provide a process for changing school boundaries and establishing geographic student choice assignment plans that—
- a) solicits input at the outset of the process consistent with Board Policy ABA, *Community Involvement*;
 - b) considers four main factors in development of school boundaries, student choice assignment plans, and ways to address other facility issues including—
 - 1) demographic characteristics of student population,

- 2) geographic proximity of communities to schools,
 - 3) stability of school assignments over time,
 - 4) facility utilization;
- c) recognizes that the Board may, by majority vote, identify alternatives to the superintendent of schools' recommendations for school boundaries or geographic student choice assignment plans for review;
 - d) allows time for the Board to hold public hearings and solicit written testimony on the recommendations of the superintendent of schools and Board identified alternatives for school boundaries or geographic student choice assignment plans; and
 - e) recognizes that the Board has the discretion to adopt minor modifications to the superintendent of schools' recommendation or Board identified alternatives if, by a majority vote, the Board has determined that such action will not have a significant impact on an option for school boundaries or geographic student choice assignment plans that has received public review.
7. Provide a process for closing and consolidating schools that meets the requirements of COMAR (Chapter 13A).
8. Provide for articulation in school assignments by:
- a) Traditional Student Assignments

Structure high schools for Grades 9-12 and, where possible, creating straight articulation for clusters composed of one high school, and a sufficient number of elementary and middle schools, each of which sends its students, including special education and ESOL students, to the next higher level school in that cluster.
 - b) Student Choice Assignment Plans

In cases where students participate in a student choice assignment plan (e.g., consortium) to identify the school they wish to attend, articulation patterns may vary from the straight articulation pattern that is desired in traditional student assignment.

9. Provide for a different and/or condensed process and time schedule, developed by the superintendent of schools, for making recommendations to the Board regarding the capital improvements program and the facility planning activities listed above, including but not limited to changing school boundaries and establishing geographic student choice assignment plans in the event that the Board determines that unusual circumstances exist.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. A LREFP process that identifies the infrastructure necessary to deliver high quality educational facilities to all students and incorporates the input of parents, staff, and community and, as appropriate, students.
2. The superintendent of schools will develop regulations with student, staff, community, and parental input to guide implementation of this policy.

E. REVIEW AND REPORTING

1. The annual June publication of the Educational Facilities Master Plan will constitute the official reporting on facility planning. This document will reflect all facilities actions taken during the year by the Board and approved by the County Council. The Master Plan will project the enrollment and utilization of each school, and identify schools and sites that may be involved in future planning activities.
2. This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board policy review process.

Policy History: Adopted by Resolution No. 257-86, April 28, 1986; amended by Resolution No. 271-87, May 12, 1987; amended by Resolution No. 831-93, November 22, 1993; amended by Resolution No. 679-95, October 10, 1995; amended by Resolution No. 581-99 September 14, 1999; updated office titles June 1, 2000; updated November 4, 2003; amended by Resolution No. 268-05, May 23, 2005; amended by Resolution 282-14, June 17, 2014.