

# Forest Knolls, Montgomery Knolls, and Pine Crest Elementary Schools Boundary Report

September 2019

## Scope of Boundary Study

On November 27, 2018, the Board of Education authorized a boundary study to explore school assignments between Forest Knolls, Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools. In order to evaluate the enrollment and articulation patterns, the scope of the boundary study also included Eastern and Silver Spring International middle schools. Currently, Forest Knolls Elementary School articulates to Silver Spring International Middle School, while Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools articulate to Eastern Middle School. (See Attachment A for the current articulation chart of these schools and map.)

## Background

A comprehensive capacity study was conducted during the 2014–2015 school year to address overutilization in the lower portion of the Downcounty Consortium, resulting in a plan to address over-utilization at Forest Knolls Elementary School. As part of the *FY 2019 Capital Budget and the FY 2019–2024 Capital Improvements Program*, the Board of Education approved additions at Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools to relieve the projected overcrowding at Forest Knolls Elementary School.

Additions are under construction at these schools and scheduled for completion September 2020. Student enrollment continues to increase at Forest Knolls Elementary School and projections indicate student enrollment will exceed capacity by approximately 246 students by the end of the six-year planning period. Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools are paired schools, with Montgomery Knolls Elementary School serving Grades Pre-K–2 students and Pine Crest Elementary School serving Grades 3–5 students.

The service area for Forest Knolls Elementary School is adjacent to the Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools' service area. The addition at Montgomery Knolls Elementary School will increase the capacity to 681 students while the addition at Pine Crest Elementary School will increase the capacity to 634 students. The enrollment at Montgomery Knolls Elementary School is projected to be 468 students leaving a surplus of 213 seats available, while the enrollment at Pine Crest Elementary School is projected to be 493 students leaving a surplus of 141 seats available, by the end of the six-year planning period.

## Planning Factors

Board of Education Policy FAA, *Educational Facility Planning*, guides the boundary study process when changing school boundaries and describes four factors to be considered. While these factors were considered as staff developed the options, not all factors were always able to be reconciled in each option. The factors are described below.

### Demographic Characteristics of Student Population

Analyses of options should take into account the impact of various options on the overall populations of affected schools. Options should especially strive to create a diverse student body in each of the affected schools in alignment with Board Policy ACD, *Quality Integrated Education*. Demographic data showing the impact of various options include the following: racial/ethnic composition of the student population, the socioeconomic composition of the student population, the level of English language learners, and other reliable demographic indicators and participation in specific educational programs.

### Geography

In accordance with MCPS' emphasis on community involvement in schools, options should take into account the geographic proximity of communities to schools, as well as articulation, traffic, and transportation patterns, and topography. In addition, options should consider, at a minimum, not only schools within a high school cluster but also other adjacent schools.

### Stability of School Assignment Over Time

Options should result in stable assignments for as long a period as possible. Student reassignments should consider recent boundary or geographic student choice assignment plan changes, and/or school closings and consolidations that may have affected the same students.

The stability of school assignment over time factor only needs to be considered when recent boundary changes occur in the study area. Since no recent boundary studies have occurred in these service areas, the stability factor does not need to be considered as part of the boundary analysis.

### Facility Utilization

School boundary and geographic student choice assignment plans should result in facility utilizations in the 80 percent to 100 percent efficient range over the long term, whenever possible. Shared use of a facility by more than one cluster may be the most feasible facility plan in some cases, taking into consideration the impact of the resulting articulation pattern on the community. Plans should be fiscally responsible to minimize capital and operating costs whenever feasible.

### **Stakeholder Input**

Staff solicited stakeholder input in accordance with Policy ABA, *Community Involvement*. This input will advise the superintendent of schools as he develops his recommendation for Board of Education review and action. Outreach was conducted through a variety of different mechanisms that included the following:

- Connect-ED messages
- Flyers to schools
- Community wide meetings
- Webcast
- Online surveys
- Review of emails and letters

A description of each outreach method follows.

### Connect-ED and Flyers

Division of Capital Planning (DCP) staff collaborated with the Office of Communications (OOC) to share information about the boundary study with stakeholders. All information relating to the boundary study was posted on the DCP website. Information flyers in English and Spanish languages were sent to the three elementary schools and two middle schools included in the boundary study to notify the school community of all upcoming meetings. In addition, OOC staff sent Connect-ED electronic voice messages and electronic messages to the homes of all students at the three elementary and two middle schools. A total of four electronic mail messages were sent during the boundary process to notify parents of upcoming meetings and the availability of an online survey.

### Community Wide Meetings

DCP staff facilitated all the boundary study meetings. Each of the meetings were conducted twice—once at Forest Knolls Elementary School and once at Montgomery Knolls Elementary School—to ensure that all community members had geographic access to the meetings. The Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools’ PTA recommended meeting at Montgomery Knolls Elementary School to facilitate the best turnout. For all the meetings, staff distributed index cards for attendees to submit written questions that staff responded to during the last part of each set of meetings.

At the first set of meetings, staff presented the following information:

- Background and scope
- Projections and seats available
- Revised Policy FAA and Planning Factors
- Boundary Process
- Schedule of Meetings

Staff answered many questions relating to the history and process. In total, approximately 100 people attended the first set of meetings.

For the second set of meetings, staff presented three options for stakeholder consideration. The presentation included the guiding parameters for option development, as well as a review of the Policy Factors and background. OOC livestreamed the meeting and then the recording was posted on the DCP website to allow stakeholders who could not attend one of the two live meetings to view the information online. Approximately 100 people also attended these two meetings. Based on the input received after the second meeting, staff determined that no additional options needed to be developed for community input. Therefore, the third set of meetings were cancelled.

At the fourth set of meetings, staff provided a general overview of the three options by policy factor, as well as an update on the survey. Staff also provided a presentation on the decision making process by the Board of Education.

### **Option Development**

In accordance with Policy FAA, the superintendent directs staff to develop options when changing school boundaries. Staff developed a range of options to advance each of the factors described above. In total, staff developed three options during the boundary study. As stated in

the Planning Factor section, not all options advance each of the factors considered as part of this boundary study—demographics, geography and utilization. Some options only advance one factor while other options advance some or all three factors to varying degrees. A description and analysis of the options follow later in this report.

Three options were developed for this boundary study. Several zones were defined within the Forest Knolls, Montgomery Knolls, and Pine Crest elementary school attendance areas. The same zones were used for the middle school analysis of Silver Spring International and Eastern middle schools. To develop the options, DCP staff used the following guiding parameters to develop the options:

- Advance three of the four Board of Education policy factors that include:
  - Demographic Characteristics of Student Population
  - Geography
  - Facility Utilization
- Maintain walkers
- Develop options that will grandfather Grade 5 students at Forest Knolls Elementary School

**Current State**

Three elementary school options were developed to reassign students from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools. The same zones that were developed to reassign elementary school students were used to develop the middle school reassignments from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School. The following table displays the racial and ethnic composition for the schools in the boundary study for the 2018–2019 school year, grouped by elementary school and middle school, as well as the percent of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Systems (FARMS) and students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services.

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**

	2018–2019						
School	% Black or African American	% Asian	% Hispanic/Latino	% White	% Two or More Races	% FARMS	% ESOL
<b>Elementary Schools</b>							
Forest Knolls	14.8	5.4	38.7	33.4	7.4	30.1	19.0
Montgomery Knolls	26.6	3.5	46.6	17.2	5.9	59.3	42.1
Pine Crest	24.4	5.7	41.4	24.8	3.7	47.4	31.7
<b>Middle Schools</b>							
Eastern	19.8	9.3	46.7	20.3	3.6	49.8	17.7
Silver Spring International	21.2	5.4	41.5	26.9	4.4	38.3	14.4

The difference among the elementary schools in the racial/ethnic composition of the student body range from 16.2 percent in the White population between Forest Knolls and Montgomery Knolls elementary schools, to 2.2 percent in the Asian population between Montgomery Knolls and Pine

Crest elementary schools. With regard to the FARMS and ESOL population, the difference ranges from 29.2 and 23.1 percent between Forest Knolls and Montgomery Knolls elementary schools, respectively. The differences between the two middle schools are not as great as the elementary school. For the racial/ethnic composition, the differences range from 1.4 percent in the Black or African American population to 3.9 percent in the Asian population. The FARMS difference is 11.5 percent while the ESOL population differs by 3.3 percent.

The data presented for the elementary schools reflects the grandfathering of Grade 5 students for the elementary students and Grade 8 students for the middle school students. The boundary study will not be fully implemented until the 2021–2022 school year. Therefore, based on the staff developed options, in the 2020–2021 school year, only Grades K–4 students would be reassigned from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools and Grades 6–7 students would be reassigned from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School.

### **Review of Options**

The following is an analysis of the three options by school, beginning with the elementary schools followed by the middle schools. This analysis was organized by school rather than by the staff developed options because any one option could have different effects on different schools. The descriptions below describe the effect of each option on the identified school. Attachment B includes the options that were presented during the boundary study.

#### Forest Knolls Elementary School

- The utilization rate for Forest Knolls Elementary School is projected to be in the range of 136 to 147 percent.

#### *Option 1*

- Proposes to reassign Zones F3 and F4 from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools.
- Provides for a contiguous service area for the school.
- Utilization rate would range from 101 to 106 percent when fully implemented.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 4.3 percent in the White population to an increase of 4.0 percent in the FARMS population.

#### *Option 2*

- Proposes to reassign Zones F2, F3, and F5 from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools.
- Provides for a noncontiguous service area for the school.
- Reassigns more students compared to Option 1.
- Utilization rate would range from 97 to 102 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 2.1 percent in the ESOL population to an increase of 1.8 percent in the FARMS population.

#### *Option 3*

- Proposes to reassigns F2 and F4 from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools.

- Provides for a contiguous service area.
- Reassigns the most students of the three options.
- Utilization rate would range from 87 to 93 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 2.8 in the White population to an increase of 2.4 percent in the FARMS population.

#### Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest Elementary Schools

- With the additions opening at these schools in the 2020–2021 school year, the utilization rate for Montgomery Knolls Elementary School is projected to be approximately 69 percent through the six-year period and at Pine Crest Elementary School, it will range from 72 to 78 percent for the planning period.

#### *Option 1*

- Proposes to reassign Zones F3 and F4 from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools.
- Provides for a contiguous service area for both of these schools.
- Utilization rate would range from 81 to 84 percent for Montgomery Knolls Elementary School and a range of 83 to 97 percent for Pine Crest Elementary School.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 6.0 percent and a decrease of 4.7 percent in the FARMS population to an increase of 6.1 percent and an increase of 2.2 percent in the White population for Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools, respectively.

#### *Option 2*

- Proposes to reassign Zones F2, F3 and F5 from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools.
- Provides for a non-contiguous service area for both schools.
- Reassigns more students compared to Option 1.
- Utilization rate would range from 84 to 86 percent for Montgomery Knolls Elementary School and a range of 89 to 99 percent at Pine Crest Elementary School.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 6.3 percent and a decrease of 2.8 percent in the FARMS population to an increase of 3.7 percent and an increase of 0.9 percent in the White population for Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools, respectively.

#### *Option 3*

- Proposes to reassign F2 and F4 from Forest Knolls Elementary School to Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools.
- Provides for a contiguous service area for both schools.
- Reassigns the most students of the three options.
- Utilization rate would range from 84 to 86 percent at Montgomery Knolls Elementary School and a range of 93 to 102 percent at Pine Crest Elementary School.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 7.0 percent and a decrease of 4.2 percent in the FARMS population to an increase of 5.7 percent and an increase of 1.9 percent in the White population for Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary

schools, respectively.

### Eastern Middle School

#### *Option 1*

- Proposes to reassign F3 and F4 from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School.
- Provides for a contiguous service area.
- Utilization rate would range from 100 to 108 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 2.2 percent in the FARMS population to an increase of 1.5 percent in the White population.

#### *Option 2*

- Proposes to reassign F2, F3, and F5 from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School.
- Provides for a non-contiguous service area.
- Utilization rate would range from 100 to 110 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 1.6 percent in the FARMS population to an increase of .9 percent in the White population.

#### *Option 3*

- Proposes to reassign F2 and F4 from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School.
- Provides for a contiguous service area.
- Utilization rate would range from 100 to 109 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from a decrease of 2.4 percent in the FARMS population to an increase of 1.2 percent in the White population.

### Silver Spring International Middle School

#### *Option 1*

- Proposes to reassign F3 and F4 from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School.
- Provides for a contiguous service area.
- Utilization rate would range from 80 to 86 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from an increase of 1.7 percent in the FARMS population and an increase of .8 percent in the White population.

#### *Option 2*

- Proposes to reassign F2, F3, and F5 from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School.
- Provides for a non-contiguous service area.
- Utilization rate would range from 79 to 85 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from an increase of 1.0 percent in the FARMS

population to a decrease of 0.1 percent in the White population.

*Option 3*

- Proposes to reassign F2 and F4 from Silver Spring International Middle School to Eastern Middle School.
- Provides for a contiguous service area.
- Utilization rate would range from 80 to 87 percent.
- The demographic changes would range from an increase of 1.7 percent in the FARMS population to a decrease of 0.3 percent in the White population.

**Review of Survey Results**

An online survey was posted in seven languages (English, Amharic, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese, and French). A total of 278 people responded to the survey. Questions in the survey included, for example, how important each of the three policy factors would be when considering boundary assignments and for respondents to indicate their top three preferred options. Tables and more detail about each survey are included in Attachment C. The survey data is included in Attachment D.

The following is a summary of the results of the survey. It is important to note that the following data may not always add up to 100 percent, since not all of the respondents may have answered all of the questions.

Of the total number of respondents in the survey, 57.6 percent indicated that geography was the most important factor when considering boundary reassignments, while 21.9 percent said demographic characteristics of schools and 19.4 percent said facility utilization was most important. When disaggregated by cluster the survey results show the following:

**Most Important Factor When Considering Boundary Assignments**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Demographic Characteristic of Schools %</b>	<b>Facility Utilization %</b>	<b>Geography %</b>
Montgomery Blair (includes Montgomery Knolls ES/Pine Crest ES and Eastern MS)	27.6	17.2	55.2
Northwood (includes Forest Knolls ES and Silver Spring International MS)	23.8	19.6	56.6
Other Schools/No Children in Schools	14.0	21.1	64.9

Respondents were asked to indicate their top three preferred options. Of the total number of respondents, the first preferred option was Option 3 with 42.7 percent, followed by Option 1 with 37.8 percent and Option 2 with 44.6 percent. When disaggregated by cluster, the survey results show the following:



**Preferred Options by Percent of Respondents by Cluster**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>#1</b>		<b>#2</b>		<b>#3</b>	
Montgomery Blair (includes Montgomery Knolls/Pine Crest ES and Eastern MS)	Option 1	71.4%	Option 3	51.9%	Option 2	59.3%
Northwood (includes Forest Knolls ES and Silver Spring International MS)	Option 3	45.5%	Option 1	41.3%	Option 2	45.5%
Other Schools/No Children in Schools	Option 3	47.5%	Option 2	48.7%	Option 1	38.5%

**Next Steps**

The information provided in this report reflects the boundary study process that was held between March – June 2019. This report, along with the online survey and community feedback on the staff developed options, will help to inform the superintendent’s recommendation and ultimately the Board of Education’s deliberations.