

# Somerset and Westbrook Elementary Schools Boundary Report

August 2020

## **Scope of Boundary Study**

On November 26, 2019, the Board of Education authorized a boundary study to explore school assignments between Somerset and Westbrook elementary schools. Somerset Elementary School is projected to be over capacity and Westbrook Elementary School will have available capacity during the six-year planning period. Both schools are part of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster and articulate to Westland Middle School, therefore, it was not necessary to include the middle or high schools in this boundary study. (See Attachment A for the current articulation chart of these schools and a map.)

## **Background**

The service areas of Somerset and Westbrook elementary schools are adjacent to each other. By the 2025–2026 school year, enrollment at Somerset Elementary School is projected to be 593 students, 78 seats over their current capacity of 515 students. Enrollment at Westbrook Elementary School is projected to be 325 students in the 2025–2026 school year. The current capacity of Westbrook Elementary School is 547; therefore, based on the projection, 222 seats will be available to accommodate students from Somerset Elementary School.

On May 21, 2020, the Montgomery County Council adopted the Montgomery County Public Schools FY 2021 Capital Budget and the FY 2021–2026 Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Due to fiscal constraints, some of our capital projects were delayed and/or funding was removed from the adopted CIP to address the revenue shortfalls. The Board of Education’s requested CIP included funding for the buildout of a classroom shell for Westbrook Elementary School. This project was not funded as requested by the Board of Education and all expenditures were removed from the adopted CIP. However based on the projected enrollment and available capacity at Westbrook Elementary School, seats will be available to accommodate students from Somerset Elementary to Westbrook Elementary School even without the classroom build-out.

## **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 this boundary study.

### 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 two elementary 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 two elementary schools.

Five electronic mail messages notified parents of upcoming meetings and the availability of an online survey during the boundary process.

### Community Wide Meetings

DCP staff facilitated all the boundary study meetings. Each of the meetings was conducted at Westland Middle School. For all the meetings, staff distributed index cards for attendees to submit written questions that staff responded to during the last part of each meeting. At the first set of meetings, staff presented the following information:

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

Staff answered many questions relating to the history and process. In total, approximately 50 people attended the first set of meetings.

Staff presented three options for stakeholder consideration at the second set of meetings. The presentation included the guiding parameters for option development, as well as a review of the Policy Factors and background. OOC livestreamed one of the meetings and 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 50 people also attended these two meetings. Based on the input received after the second set of meetings and feedback from the first survey, staff determined that additional options needed to be developed for community input. Two additional options were developed, for a total of five options.

The purpose of the third set of meetings was to present the two additional options, review the online survey results and review the Board of Education decision-making process. Staff also indicated that a second online survey would be posted online to include all five options.

### **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 five 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—options advance some or all factors to varying degrees. A description and analysis of the options follow later in this report.

Several zones were defined within the Somerset and Westbrook elementary school attendance areas. To develop the options, DCP staff used the following guiding parameters:

- 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 Somerset Elementary School

**Current State**

The following table displays the racial and ethnic composition for the schools in the boundary study for the 2019–2020 school year, 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**

	<b>2019–2020</b>						
<b>School</b>	<b>% Black or African American</b>	<b>% Asian</b>	<b>% Hispanic/Latino</b>	<b>% White</b>	<b>% Two or More</b>	<b>% FARMS</b>	<b>% ESOL</b>
<b>Elementary Schools</b>							
Somerset ES	7.0	9.5	13.4	61.5	8.4	7.7	20.1
Westbrook ES	2.1	5.3	15.0	69.8	7.0	1.2	3.5

The difference among the elementary schools in the racial/ethnic composition of the student body range from 8.3 percent in the White population between Somerset and Westbrook elementary schools, to 1.4 percent in the Two or More population between Somerset and Westbrook elementary schools. With regard to the FARMS and ESOL population, the difference ranges from 6.5 and 16.6 percent between Somerset and Westbrook elementary schools, respectively.

The data presented for the elementary schools reflects the grandfathering of Grade 5 students for the elementary school students. This boundary study will not be fully implemented until the 2022–2023 school year. Therefore, based on the staff developed options, in the 2021–2022 school year, only Grades K–4 students would be reassigned from Somerset Elementary School.

As previously discussed, the Board of Education’s requested CIP included funding for the build out of a classroom shell for Westbrook Elementary School. However, this project was not funded as requested by the Board of Education and all expenditures were removed from the adopted CIP. However, based on the projected enrollment and available capacity at Westbrook Elementary School, seats will be available to accommodate students from Somerset Elementary School even without the classroom shell build-out. The table below shows the projected enrollment, percent of building occupied, and capacity for Westbrook Elementary School without the classroom shell built out.

<b>Westbrook Elementary School</b>		<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>
<b>Capacity</b>	<b>547</b>						
<b>Number of Students</b>		<b>342</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>325</b>
<i>Percent Building Occupied</i>		<i>62%</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>59%</i>	<i>59%</i>
Available Seats		205	207	210	209	225	222

## Review of Options

The following is an analysis of the five options by school. This analysis is organized by school rather than by the staff developed options because any one option could have different effects on the two 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.

### Somerset Elementary School

- The utilization rate for Somerset Elementary School is projected to be in the range of 111 to 115 percent.

#### *Option 1*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S2 and S3 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides a contiguous service area for the school.
- Utilization rate would range between 83 and 88 percent when fully implemented.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 3 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by 2.1 percent and decrease by 2.9 percent, respectively.

#### *Option 2*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S2 and S4 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides a contiguous service area for the school.
- Reassigns fewer students compared to Option 1.
- Utilization rate would range from 83 to 87 percent.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 4 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by 1.6 percent and decrease by 4.9 percent, respectively.

#### *Option 3*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S4 and S5 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides a contiguous service area for the school.
- Reassigns the least students of the round 1 options.
- Utilization rate would range from 90 to 94 percent.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 6 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would decrease by 3.2 percent and decrease by 2.5 percent, respectively.

#### *Option 4*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S2, S3, S7, and S8 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides a contiguous service area for the school.
- Utilization rate would range from 80 to 85 percent.

- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 3 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by 2.3 percent and decrease by 2.4 percent, respectively.

*Option 5*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S4, S5, and S6 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides a contiguous service area for the school.
- Reassigns the most students of the five staff developed options.
- Utilization rate would range from 76 to 82 percent.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 6 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would decrease by 3.2 percent and decrease by 2.5 percent, respectively.

Westbrook Elementary School

- The last two bullets under each option refer to the utilization rate at Westbrook Elementary School. The second to last bullet is the utilization that was shown during the boundary study process based on the Board of Education’s request to build out the classroom shell. The last bullet is the utilization as a result of the adopted CIP which does not include the classroom shell build-out

*Option 1*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S2 and S3 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides contiguous service areas for both schools.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 4 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by .6 percent and increase by 8 percent, respectively.
- Utilization rate would range from 74 to 78 percent (build-out of classroom shell).
- Utilization rate would range from 84 to 88 percent (no build-out of classroom shell).

*Option 2*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S2 and S4 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides contiguous service areas for both schools.
- Reassigns fewer students compared to Option 1.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 5 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by 1 percent and increase by 9.6 percent, respectively.
- Utilization rate would range from 75 to 79 percent (build-out of classroom shell).
- Utilization rate would range from 85 to 89 percent (no build-out of classroom shell).

### *Option 3*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S4 and S5 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides contiguous service areas for both schools.
- Reassigns the fewest students of the round 1 staff developed options.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 8 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by 5 percent and increase by 6.9 percent, respectively.
- Utilization rate would range from 70 to 73 percent (build-out of classroom shell).
- Utilization rate would range from 79 to 83 percent (no build-out of classroom shell).

### *Option 4*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S2, S3, S7, and S8 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides contiguous service areas for both schools.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 4 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by .6 percent and increase by 8 percent, respectively.
- Utilization rate would range from 77 to 81 percent (build-out of classroom shell).
- Utilization rate would range from 86 to 90 percent (no build-out of classroom shell).

### *Option 5*

- Proposes to reassign Zones S4, S5, and S6 from Somerset Elementary School to Westbrook Elementary School.
- Provides contiguous service areas for both schools.
- Reassigns the most students of the five staff developed options.
- Race/Ethnic changes would be within 7 percent for all categories.
- Students receiving FARMS and ESOL services would increase by 4.7 percent, an increase by 6.7 percent, respectively.
- Utilization rate would range from 80 to 85 percent (build-out of classroom shell).
- Utilization rate would range from 90 to 96 percent (no build-out of classroom shell).

## **Review of Survey Results**

### **Round 1**

An online survey was posted in seven languages (English, Amharic, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese, and French). A total of 276 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, 68.5 percent indicated that geography was the most important factor when considering boundary reassignments, while 44.8 percent indicated demographic characteristics of student populations, and 39.9 percent indicated facility utilization was most important. When disaggregated by school, the survey results show the following:

**Most Important Factor When Considering Boundary Assignments**

School	Demographic Characteristic of Schools %	Facility Utilization %	Geography %
Somerset Elementary School	11.6	23.7	63.8
Westbrook Elementary School	6.5	9.7	83.9
Other Schools/No Children in Schools	6.8	12.2	81.1

Respondents were asked to indicate their top three preferred options (most, next, and least). Of the total number of respondents, 38.4 percent selected Option 2 as the “most preferred” option. Respondents chose Options 1 and 3 as “most preferred” by approximately 30 percent each, with Option 1 slightly higher (30.4 vs 29.7 percent). Option 2 also was selected by the most respondents for the “next preferred” option at 44.9 percent. In other words, more respondents chose Option 2 for their first preferred option or their next preferred option, than options 1 or 3. Option 1 was selected by 51 percent of the respondents as “least preferred”, followed by Option 3 at 32.6 percent. When disaggregated by school, the survey results show the following:

**Preferred Options by Percent of Respondents by School**

School	#1		#2		#3	
	Option	%	Option	%	Option	%
Somerset ES	Option 2	36.2%	Option 2	46.4%	Option 1	50.7%
Westbrook ES	Option 1	48.4%	Option 2	45.2%	Option 3	58.1%
Other Schools/No Children in Schools	Option 2	44.6%	Option 2	44.6%	Option 1	64.9%

\*Respondents were able to choose the same option more than once.

**Round 2**

A second online survey was posted after two additional options were developed. It was posted in seven languages (English, Amharic, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese, and French). A total of 267 people responded to the survey.

The following is a summary of the results of the second 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.

Geography was selected as the most important factor when considering boundary reassignments by 60.3 percent of all respondents, while 30.7 percent indicated demographic characteristics of student populations, and 8.6 percent indicated facility utilization was most important. When disaggregated by school the survey results show the following:

### Most Important Factor When Considering Boundary Assignments

School	Demographic Characteristic of School %	Facility Utilization %	Geography %
Somerset Elementary School	33.1	5.8	61.2
Westbrook Elementary School	21.8	17.2	60.1
Other Schools/No Children in Schools	35.2	1.4	62.0

The following two tables illustrate responses when asked to indicate the top three preferred options. The first table shows the percent of total respondents choosing an option for their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> preferred option. The second table shows the same information, but is divided by Somerset Elementary School, Westbrook Elementary School, and Other Schools/No Children in Schools.

	#1		#2		#3	
Total Respondents	Option 2	44.9%	Option 3	37.6%	Option 5	32.2.4%

When disaggregated by school, the survey results show the following:

### Preferred Options by Percent of Respondents by School

School	#1		#2		#3	
Somerset Elementary School	Option 2	41.7%	Option 2	43.2%	Option 5	37.4%
Westbrook Elementary School	Option 2	40.2%	Option 1	33.3%	Option 3	35.6%
Other Schools/No Children in Schools	Option 2	60.6%	Option 2	62.0%	Option 5	50.7%

\*Respondents were able to choose the same option more than once.

### Next Steps

The information provided in this report reflects the boundary study process that was held January–February 2020. This report, along with online surveys, and community feedback on the staff developed options, will help to inform the superintendent’s recommendation and ultimately the Board of Education’s deliberations.