

DCSD Redistricting Process Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What criteria are used when redistricting?

The criteria for redistricting are established by Board Policy AD:

The Board, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, may alter school attendance areas. The Superintendent's recommendations for alterations in school attendance areas shall be based on the following primary criteria:

- 1. Geographic proximity;*
- 2. Instructional capacity; and*
- 3. Projected enrollment.*

When the primary criteria indicate more than one option for action, the options shall be evaluated on basis of one or more of the following:

- 1. Safety and traffic patterns;*
- 2. Previous redistricting;*
- 3. Intact neighborhoods;*
- 4. Special programs, i.e., programs serving special needs students that require additional classroom space;*
- 5. Condition of facility; (note: this criterion is only used when closing schools*
- 7. Efficient and economical operations; or*
- 8. Other criteria, to be publicly disclosed at or prior to a final decision by the Board.*

2. Who can stay in their school the following year after redistricting? If a student can remain in their school after being redistricted, will transportation be provided? Can students in a special education program request to stay at their schools after being redistricted?

According to Board Policy AD:

When attendance lines are altered, all students must attend the school serving their new attendance area, except that students rising into the highest grade available in an elementary school or middle school or rising into grades 11 or 12 in a high school will have the option of either continuing in their former school with no transportation provided by the District or attending the new home school with transportation provided under Policy ED. Students who choose the Board Policy AD: School Attendance option of remaining in their former school may later transfer to their new home school. Once the student has transferred to the new home school, the student cannot transfer back to the former school.

Students attending a regional or District-wide special education program can remain with that program regardless of their home school. Other special education students do not have the option to remain unless they qualify under Board Policy AD (see above).

3. How is geographic proximity considered? Why not district every home to the closest school?

Assigning students to the closest school to their residences is ideal, however the capacity of the school and the enrollment projection for the area must also be considered, so students are not always able to be assigned to their closest school.

For example, because the density of housing and student enrollment varies from area to area, one school may have only a few students who are closer to it than any other school, while another school may have hundreds or thousands of students who are closer to it than any other school.

4. How is a school's instructional capacity determined? Why does the capacity change over time when no additional classrooms have been added to the school? Why is the new elementary being presented as having 950 seats when the design was presented at having 900 seats?

The capacity of a school can be determined a variety of ways. The Georgia Department of Education has standardized tables which assign an "FTE Mid-Range" capacity for a school based on the number of "instructional units" (which include classrooms, gyms, and media centers). The FTE Mid-Range capacity is factored into state funding for capital projects and remains the same year-to-year unless a classroom addition is built. New schools and classroom additions are typically presented as having the FTE Mid-Range capacity.

However, a standardized capacity does not account for the specific programming, staffing, or space needs of a given school, which may require more or less space than the tables indicate. The District has developed a capacity model which assigns each classroom a capacity based on the current use. The total of classroom capacity is then reduced by a percentage to account for classrooms being unused for one or more periods during the day. The DCSD capacity model is used to update the capacity of each school based on reported use of each room. For redistricting, the DCSD capacity model is used as the target capacity for each school. The DCSD capacity will be reviewed with the principal of each school included the redistricting scope and revised data presented in Round 2 and on the redistricting webpage.

The capacity for schools has changed over time based on the reported room usage. Major changes include the relocation of regional special education classes and the implementation of reduced class size models for gifted and early intervention program (EIP) instruction. For example, the Building S.P.A.C.E.S capacity report assigned all the homerooms at Vanderlyn ES as "General Classrooms...". The more recent capacity reports indicate the implementation of 100% advanced-content gifted instruction, which lowers the class sizes for most grades.

The elementary prototype schools have 59 IUs plus seven "flex" spaces that are incorporated into the design. These are intended to be smaller spaces that can be used as study space or any other small space use the school might need. Of the seven flex spaces (1011, 1214, 2006, 2106, 2207, 3003, 3204, *see floor plan in the Prototype ES Report*), five are around 400 to 500 square feet; small enough to not meet the state's minimum standard of a classroom, and small enough to not be commonly used as a

home room or pull-out instruction resource space. Two of these rooms (Rooms 1011, and 1204) are about 630 square feet; over the state's 600 sf. minimum classroom standard (i.e., greater than the 10% reduction allowed from the 4-5 grade 660 sf minimum), and large enough that they are regularly used for instruction such as as a special-ed home room or pull-out instruction resource space. While these spaces were not originally counted as instructional units, they are both considered such by the State. Because of this, they are factored into the Ga DOE capacity of the school for 61 IU's, or 950 seats.

5. How is enrollment forecasted? How are enrollment forecasts used in making decisions?

The enrollment forecast uses a method of population forecasting called “cohort-survival analysis”. In this method, future enrollment is forecasted based on historic matriculation patterns from grade to grade, birth rates, future housing development, and historic patterns of participation in school choice programs. The forecasted enrollment is based on enrollment counts taken in early October each year and projects enrollment for early October for each future year.

Even though the District uses robust methods to forecast future enrollment based on available data, future enrollment can have unexpected trends that differ from the historic trends. District staff improve upon the forecast methods each year and work hard to give the best forecast possible. When developing redistricting plans, the latest forecasted enrollment is considered in the areas of change and the forecast is updated again after a redistricting plan is approved by the Board. Planning for capital projects is done through the E-SPLOST process and happens on a five-year cycle. Alongside extensive public engagement for planning for new schools and school additions, a new enrollment forecast is built to inform the need for additional capacity and shape the size and locations of capital projects. Enrollment forecast information is published annually at www.dekalbschoolsga.org/planning.

The DCSD Planning Department works with DeKalb County and the municipalities to track housing development and purchases third-party data to track the progress of active and future development. The DCSD Planning Department also studies the effects of new development on student enrollment, including the number of students generated by previous developments, to forecast the number of students who will be generated by future development.

6. What is the public engagement process for redistricting? How is input used in redistricting plans? Why are no plans presented in Round 1 of the public engagement process? Why is the discussion limited to certain questions?

The public engages in the redistricting planning process through a series of three public meetings and online surveys. Each public meeting includes a presentation by staff and small-group breakout sessions with a facilitator. The small-group discussions focus on a series of questions to ensure staff receives feedback relevant to the redistricting criteria (see question 1).

The first meeting introduces the criteria, scope, and reasons for redistricting and is the start of the redistricting planning process. The first draft plans for redistricting are based on information from the community after the first meeting. The second meeting presents 2-4 alternative options for discussion. The third meeting presents a staff recommended plan, which is based on received feedback and can look different than the options presented in the second meeting. The staff recommendation and public comments from all three rounds are given to the superintendent. The superintendent then forms a recommendation to the Board of Education, which may be different than the staff recommended plan based on a review of the process, data, and public comments.

7. Will teachers be moved after redistricting? Will schools be able to provide services such as ESOL/ELL/Gifted/Special Education?

Teachers and resources generally follow students. If students are moved from one school to another, the sending school may need fewer teachers while the receiving school may need more teachers. With the increase in students will come an associated increase resources and staff.

8. How do redistricting plans consider potential effects on neighborhoods?

Intact neighborhoods, being one of the criteria for redistricting (see question 1), are considered by keeping neighborhoods together when redistricting, if practical. The definitions and delineations of neighborhoods can be fuzzy, so staff rely on community input and other available data in applying the intact neighborhood criterion. As with all the criteria, intact neighborhoods must be weighted with the other criteria.

9. How do redistricting plans consider potential effects on student transportation? Are student bus ride times considered? Walk times? How is traffic, road infrastructure considered in redistricting?

As part of secondary criteria “Safety and Traffic patterns” (see question 1), walking distance, walkability, bus-ride durations, and other forms of student transportation to and from school are considered when preparing redistricting options and recommendations. The district is interested in the safe and efficient transportation of students to and from school and considers all information that could influence that.

10. Where can I learn about long-term plans for facilities (new schools, school additions, renovations)? What is planned for my school?

Planning for capital projects is done through the E-SPLOST process and happens on a five-year cycle. E-SPLOST V was planned in 2015-2016 and involved extensive public engagement. The next E-SPLOST planning cycle will begin in 2020 and will also involve extensive public engagement. The next E-SPLOST cycle will be E-SPLOST VI, July 2022 – June 2027. Information about the E-SPLOST program and information about specific projects can be found at www.dekalbschoolsga.org/e-splost

11. How is previous redistricting considered? Does the current redistricting consider future need for redistricting?

The intent of the *previous redistricting* criteria is to be sure areas that have recently been redistricted are specially considered in the redistricting process. The redistricting options and recommendations may also consider soon-to-be completed projects which will require redistricting in the future, if deemed appropriate.

12. Will special programs--such as IB, magnet, Montessori, etc. – be affected by redistricting?

The impact of redistricting on all special programs is considered as part of the redistricting process. When presenting options or recommendations, the impact on special programs, if any, will be addressed.

13. Will regional special needs classes be moved as part of redistricting?

The location of regional and district special needs classes is outside the scope of the redistricting process.

14. Are potential annexations by Atlanta Public Schools and City Schools of Decatur considered?

The District tracks annexations by all cities, including the City of Atlanta and the City of Decatur. Changes to the District boundary due to annexation are included in all maps presented during the redistricting process.

15. How are school feeder patterns considered?

Based on past community engagement, an elementary attendance area feeding into one middle school and one high school is considered ideal. The scope of each redistricting process is presented in Round 1, including whether middle and high schools may be affected. If more than one school level will be affected by redistricting, the redistricting options and recommendations will include the impact to each level.

16. How is the impact of moving students considered? Is limiting the total number of student moves a goal of redistricting?

Community feedback regarding the potential impact on students is considered. Limiting the number of student moves is only considered as it relates to the redistricting criteria, such as intact neighborhoods. Some options presented may have a larger number of student moves and the benefits of these moves relative to the other benefits will be weighed by the stakeholders.

17. Is reducing the number of portable classrooms at schools considered?

Yes. As part of fulfilling the *instructional capacity* criterion, reducing portable classrooms in redistricting is a primary consideration.

18. Is renting space considered to relieve over-capacity schools rather than installing portable classrooms?

The option to purchase or rent space has been considered. However, locating and preparing a space that is either not designed for educational use or has not been used for educational use in many years can be very difficult. The redistricting process gives an opportunity to explore other options for capacity relief.

19. Does redistricting affect class sizes? Do over-capacity schools have larger class sizes?

No. Class sizes are determined by the Board of Education and are not affected by the number of students in a school. All schools, large and small, follow the same rules for class sizes.

20. How often does redistricting occur? What “triggers” a redistricting process?

Redistricting occurs as needed per Board Policy AD: “*School attendance areas may need to be altered for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, population changes, capacity or operating efficiency concerns, change in the use of a school, closure of a school, and the opening of a new school*”.

21. Is a school's performance, diversity, mobility rates, housing types, property values, or fiscal impacts criteria for redistricting?

No. The criteria for redistricting is determined by Board Policy AD which does not include performance, diversity, mobility, housing types, property values, or fiscal impacts on District operations as criteria.

22. Why is Area [X] proposed to be moved? Why propose moving only a small number of students?

The options presented in Round 2 are intended to give the community concrete ideas and possibilities to respond to in order to provide more focused and specific feedback. The Staff Recommended Plan presented in Round 3 may look nothing like the options presented in Round 2, as District staff will be breaking options apart and reassembling them into a staff recommended plan based on community feedback from both Round 1 and Round 2. The areas moved in each option represent a number of students that would decrease the enrollment at one school and increase enrollment at another in pursuit of balancing enrollment. Although the redistricting of an area may not completely relieve an over-capacity school, marginal relief may still be desirable over a do-nothing option and public comments help to make that determination.

23. What is the "New School Bump"?

The 100 "new school bump" is based on previous new school facility openings, both re-builds of existing facilities and brand-new schools There are three main factors to the "new school bump" that we have identified:

1. More DCSD students living in the attendance area - more students/families may choose to move to a new school's attendance area over another attendance area when a new school opens. Additionally, more students may attend the new school instead of private school or home school.
2. More resident attendees - more DCSD students already living in the attendance area may choose to attend the new school over a school-choice program than before the new school opened
3. More non-resident attendees - a new school has a larger faculty, staff, and student body than before opening. The larger staff brings more child-of-employee students, and a larger student body brings more chances for hardship transfers and other special circumstances allowing a non-resident (of attendance area) to attend the school. Additionally, a larger percentage of faculty and staff may choose to enroll their children in a new school.

Each new school has been different and impacted by one or more of these three factors in different ways. However, every school has had a new school effect on enrollment.