

The following are frequently asked questions that have been posed by various community members and committee members within Union County. This document will continue to be revised based on additional commonly asked questions that are posed.

Question:

Where can we find information about the realignment study?

Answer:

To follow the latest updates, you can go to the UCPS realignment web page located here: <https://www.ucps.k12.nc.us/Page/6139>

There is a link on this page to take you to the resources and documents section of the site. It is located here:

<https://www.ucps.k12.nc.us/Page/6320>

Here you can scroll down to find a folder called 'Map Options A-D'. This contains large PDF maps of the most recent options, which you can zoom in and see when viewing as a PDF document.

Also, you can use the interactive mapping site at: www.croppermap.com/unioncounty

This site has options on the left of the screen to turn on/off the current zones and options. The plus sign next to some of the layers enable more options. You can zoom to your desired location and turn layers on/off for comparison. Let me know if you have any questions about how to access the maps and data.

Question:

What are the criteria that the committee is working with to help determine if boundary lines should be adjusted?

Answer:

The school board has approved a set of criteria for the committee to focus on as they evaluate boundary changes. These are:

- **A Neighborhood School Concept** – Students should be assigned to the school within the closest proximity to their homes where possible.
- **Maximize busing efficiencies in transportation of students** – Make every effort to account for transportation (school bus and car rider), parent commuting patterns, balance busing travel time, and costs.
- **Establish clear feeder patterns and continuity** – Make every effort to establish a clear feeder pattern system (especially from middle school to high school), although it may be necessary to split an elementary school to feed to two or more middle schools. Make every effort to divide a large enough population so students can continue to the next level with familiar faces.
- **Balance school facility utilization** – Make every effort to have equitable utilization (where possible) across the district and in accordance with school capacities and funded allotment ratios in accordance with state law. Make efficient use of available space.
- **Account for future growth** – Allow for increasing attendance in high growth areas.
- **Allow for grandfathering** – Allow for a “no questions asked” grandfathering option for parents who do not feel it is in the best interest of their children to endure another move.
- **Minimize impact on students** – Attempt to minimize the amount of students impacted when making boundary adjustments.
- **Make every effort to establish contiguous zones** – Avoid creating zones that are not connected to the primary attendance zone, where possible.
- **Use major roads and natural boundaries wherever feasible to define attendance zones** – Minimize the amount of students who need to cross major roads and other barriers to maximize the safety and security of students, and optimize transportation efficiency by containing bus routes within natural boundaries wherever possible to avoid traffic delays and late arrivals.

Question:

Will students who are impacted allowed to finish out at the school they currently attend (i.e. grandfathering)?

Answer:

Grandfathering is a policy decision, which the realignment committee and/or consultants do not control. The school board has established a policy that acknowledges grandfathering for this process, although specific details on which students are eligible for grandfathering has not yet been finalized.

Question:

When will the process be completed and are the options on the website the only ones that are being considered?

Answer:

The options that are being considered are all DRAFT, and will continue to be draft through the course of the committee's work. This process is a transparent one, and all information is openly shared with the public so they are aware of the ongoing work of the committee. With this being the case, the public has the ability to follow draft options that are being created and evaluated. The public should understand that any of the options could change through the course of the committee's work. The committee has meetings scheduled up through January 2018, where they will provide their recommendations to the school board. Once the recommendation is provided to the school board, the options will remain DRAFT until something gets approved by the school board. You can view the committee's timeline here:

<https://www.ucps.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/NC01910453/Centricity/Domain/126/UCPS%202017%20Planning%20Timeline%20170608.pdf>

Question:

Proximity to schools and neighborhood concept are criteria that the realignment committee is supposed to focus on. Why are there still some communities/planning blocks that are not assigned to their closest schools?

Answer:

The process of realignment is not an easy one, and the realignment committee is challenged to develop a plan that best meets the needs of students and communities across Union County as a whole. With this said, there are limiting factors that the committee cannot control, such as where schools are located, the number of students each school can hold, the various density of communities throughout the county, and road networks that exist in the areas. As the committee evaluates options, they are working to try and assign communities to their closest school. Some subdivisions could be over 5 miles away from their next closest school, where others may only have a 1 mile difference between 1 or 2 schools. The challenge is to develop scenarios that try to assign students closer to home across the county, and this could mean that one neighborhood may have to travel a farther distance from where they currently go to help resolve another subdivision on the other end of a zone that is travelling much further.

Question:

Why don't all communities have various options on where they are going in the options? Some subdivisions have no choice but are reassigned in all options.

Answer:

It is possible that some neighborhoods will not be impacted, and some that could be impacted in all options. The focus is to develop a plan that best meets the needs of all students in the county. As the public continues to provide feedback on where they feel they should attend school, the committee and consultant evaluates this feedback. Adjustments could be made based on feedback if it brings an option closer to adhering to the overall goals and considerations as a whole.

Question:

Is future development and changes to road infrastructure being taken into account as the committee evaluates options?

Answer:

Part of the process before the committee's work began was to develop a 10-year population and enrollment forecast. This forecast involved a detailed study of the county's demographic dynamics and factors that will affect population/enrollment change. Future and ongoing residential development have been incorporated into the forecast. In addition to future residential development, existing home turnover and aging of established communities have been factored in as well.

Planned road developments are also being incorporated into the planning process, and the committee is aware of where there are planned road extensions, bypasses, and other construction projects. As more information becomes available, it will be shared with the committee. The forecast data is available at the following link:

https://www.ucps.k12.nc.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=5170&dataid=25288&FileName=Forecast_080117.pdf

Question:

How are enrollments estimated for the options, and what does 'live-in' mean?

Answer:

Options are being evaluated based on the number of UCPS students who live within the boundaries. There are some students attending a non-boundary school such as Benton Heights or CATA, and these are filtered out of the 'live-in' counts in order to provide a more accurate depiction of how many students live in the boundary and are likely to attend their zoned school. The most recent data that is available as of now is 2016-17, but 2017-18 data will be incorporated into the committee's work when it is ready (should be late October). Enrolled statistics are also provided in materials, just so the committee can have an understanding on how the enrolled counts differ from 'live-in' counts, but live-in is the basis for how option enrollment is estimated.

Question:

How are the school capacities calculated, and what do/don't they include?

Answer:

The capacity figures that the committee is working on is based on classroom capacity. Also, the NCDPI class size guidelines are being used for maximum classroom class sizes. North Carolina is also in the process of reducing class sizes for elementary grades, which have been factored into the capacity data. Portable buildings (i.e. trailers) are not factored into the capacity, nor are lab spaces, gymnasiums, and core spaces such as media centers and cafeterias. The capacity figures represent a number if all regular classrooms are used to the fullest according to NCDPI classroom guidelines.

Question:

In the options, some utilizations for schools are at/over 100% where some of them are lower. Why is this, and is the committee trying to establish a target utilization for the schools?

Answer:

A school that is at 100% of capacity will feel very full as it is assuming that every standard classroom is being used to the full capacity. The challenge for the committee is not only to try and account for students as of today (2016-17), but also to be mindful of forecasted changes that are anticipated to occur. For instance, middle and high schools on the west end of the county are forecasted to decline in enrollment over the next 10 years. The committee has considered having these building operate on a 'fuller' basis at the start, with the expectation that enrollment will decline over time and the building's utilization will evolve into a more comfortable capacity. In terms of a 'target' utilization, the committee has been looking at the district-wide utilization rate for various levels as a preliminary target. This allows schools to have an equitable number of available seats available across the district. Although this is the case, school boundaries have been modified to fill others more full because there is forecasted decline anticipated which will reduce the utilization over time. With this said, the options are still in the works and the committee is continuing to evaluate school boundary options that best meet the objectives and criteria, which includes trying to make building utilization as equitable as possible.

Question:

Why aren't emails being replied to?

Answer:

All emails are being studied as they come in, and are shared with the committee in their entirety. Please understand that there are about 100 emails coming in per week, and we cannot reply to each and every email. Emails are replied to if there are questions about how to interpret the maps and a public member is unsure on how they are impacted in a various option. Your input is very important and is being carefully studied to ensure that all input is taken into consideration and shared with the committee.

Question:

How would students participating in special programs (i.e. SPLASH) be affected as a result of this process?

Answer:

The committee is focus on boundary adjustments, which are intended to establish a foundation for the school. Most students attend schools based on where they live, but it is expected that students will continue to attend from out of zone for special programs. Certain cases that require students to attend a school from outside of their neighborhood, such as for special programs, are expected to continue.
