

School Board of Brevard County

FY 2014-2015 Student Accommodation Plan

Options to Balance Enrollment to Capacity



Options for Balancing Enrollment to Capacity

The options available to the School Board to balance a school's student enrollment to its capacity vary in cost and disruption. The options, in increasing order of potential student disruption, are:

1. Construct new capacity.
2. Add relocatable classroom buildings.
3. "Freeze" schools to out-of-area students.
4. Cap, modify, transfer or eliminate Choice / Special programs.
5. Cap enrollment at permanent capacity and bus new students to schools that have available capacity. (Cap and Bus)
6. Change school attendance boundaries. (Redistricting)
7. Multi-track, year-round school operations.
8. Split sessions (one group of students using a facility in the morning and another group using the same facility in the afternoon/early evening).
9. Close under-capacity schools to better utilize facilities and resources.

1. Construct New Capacity

Adding new capacity is typically the most expensive but least disruptive option. All other options can be implemented solely at the discretion of the School Board, but constructing new capacity requires approval of the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) if state funds are to be used. Because Brevard County has more existing capacity than projected enrollment for the next five years, FDOE approval of additional capacity will be denied or, at best, limited to small additions in special situations (e.g., isolated geographic areas). Construction of new capacity with locally generated funds (impact fees, sales tax, etc.) does not require FDOE approval.

2. Add Relocatable Classrooms

The District owns over 300 relocatable buildings suitable for classroom use that can be used to mitigate temporary capacity issues and to provide the additional capacity that some special programs require.

3. "Freeze" Schools to Out-Of-Area Students

Policy 7120 freezes schools that are over 90% of their permanent capacity to incoming students and under 75% of their permanent capacity to outgoing students. Additionally, schools are frozen when it is in the best interests of the School District due to unusual circumstances.

4. Cap, Modify, Transfer or Eliminate Choice / Special Programs

Policy 7120 caps enrollment in choice and special programs to the permanent capacity of the school. The programs can be capped or modified to fit within the capacity of the school, or they may be transferred to a school with capacity or eliminated, subject to federal or state guidelines.

5. Cap Enrollment at Permanent Capacity and Bus New Students to Schools That Have Available Capacity ("Cap and Bus")

This option is sometimes used when an over-capacity situation is believed to be temporary in nature (a new school is under construction, projected declining enrollment at an over capacity school, etc.) or when none of the less disruptive options are feasible.

School Board of Brevard County

FY 2014-2015 Student Accommodation Plan

Options to Balance Enrollment to Capacity

6. Change School Attendance Boundaries - Redistricting

Redistricting is the process of changing the attendance boundary of a school to move students from an over-crowded school to adjacent schools that have fewer students than capacity. It is typically one of the most challenging responsibilities of a School Board.

Standard "Hard" Redistricting

Traditionally, the School District has used "hard" redistricting to establish an attendance boundary for a new school or to change an attendance boundary for a school that is over-capacity. Students within the redistricted area must attend a different school the following year. Typically, rising sixth, eighth, eleventh and twelfth graders are "grandfathered", allowing them to complete their education at their current school.

"Soft" Redistricting

Under "soft" redistricting, all current students living within the redistricted area are "grandfathered" at their current school until graduation. Siblings of current students attending the school are also allowed to attend that school. New students entering the school or moving into the redistricted area are required to attend the new school. While this process is less disruptive than hard redistricting, it lengthens the redistricting process by up to six years and increases transportation costs.

7. Multi-Track Year-Round School Operations

When multi-track year-round school scheduling is implemented, it increases the effective capacity of a school by 33% because the school will be in use during the summer months. Because of difficulties coordinating family activities like vacations, this option has not been popular.

8. Split Sessions

This option involves splitting the student body into two groups. One group attends school from early in the morning to about noon. The other group attends from noon to late in the afternoon. While this option effectively doubles a school's capacity, there is less time for each group than there would be otherwise. This measure is considered to be the most disruptive means of solving over-capacity issues when space is limited and is used only when no other option is feasible.

9. School Closing

If a group of schools are under-utilized in an area of projected stable or declining enrollment, the School Board may choose to close one or more of those schools if the adjacent schools have sufficient capacity to serve the students from the closed school(s). The more efficient utilization of the remaining schools saves resources that can be better spent on the students' education rather than on keeping several partly-used schools open. The additional enrollment in the remaining schools can provide more programs and other educational opportunities for students than existed in the existing schools with smaller enrollments.