

Guidelines to Relieve Elementary School Overcrowding

The purpose of these guidelines are to reduce overcrowding in elementary schools and to concurrently work toward meeting state requirements to limit enrollment in grades K–4 classrooms to 22 students. We must address five inter-related factors: class-size waivers; capping; attendance zones; temporary buildings; and transfers.

A number of actions are being taken to reduce the causes and impact of overcrowding. These include suggested changes to attendance zones, the strategic addition of temporary classrooms, and the identification and support for specific elementary schools to serve as local and/or regional hubs.

FACILITY CAPACITY – LIMITING DISCRETIONARY TRANSFERS

Schools will first and foremost serve their zoned populations. After that, transfers are prioritized in the following order:

1. legally mandated and special program transfers
2. magnet transfers
3. discretionary transfers

Transfers of any kind will only be considered for approval if student enrollment is below 95% of the school building's capacity and the school does not have a Magnet program wait list. The Office of Student Support maintains a list of schools and building capacities; discretionary transfers will not be approved if doing so would move a school beyond its building capacity. Transfers will be approved upon confirmation from School Offices that all spaces originally designed for instruction are used as classrooms and that priority is given to core-content instruction.

ATTENDANCE ZONES

Where there is evidence that the zoned population of a school will continue to create overcrowding and where a surrounding school or schools have significant excess capacity, recommendations may be made to adjust attendance boundaries or change program offerings.

CAPPING – MANAGING REGISTRATION AND ENROLLMENT

Principals may request an enrollment cap at specific grade levels and programs no earlier than the start of official enrollment on the first day of school. Capping requests should be sent to the campus' School Support Officer. Capping requests are officially granted only upon receipt of an email from the Office of Student Support.

Prior to the first day of school, as students register, if their enrollment is projected to bring class-sizes over 22, principals shall ensure parents/guardians are 1) informed that their child is waitlisted based on the order of the date/time stamp on the student registration packet, 2) advised that official enrollment occurs on the first day of school at which time their child will either be enrolled (if space becomes available) based on their position on the waitlist or they will be redirected to a hub school for enrollment (if space is not available).

HUBS

Schools will be associated with a local hub and a regional hub. The local hub is the first to receive students capped out of their zoned school. In the event that a local hub reaches capacity at a particular grade level/program, regional hubs serve as the next tier of support. Select regional hubs will be staffed and equipped, based on enrollment projections. Prior to the start of school, classrooms will be equipped with adequate furniture and other materials to allow classes to be ready to receive students.

TEMPORARY CLASSROOMS

In most cases, temporary overcrowding will be managed by gradually reducing the number of approved transfers and through limited capping. However, a number of schools are facing long-term, continued over-crowding caused by zoned populations; these rare instances will be the primary candidates for new temporary classrooms.

CLASS-SIZE WAIVERS

Capping and transfers have direct impacts on the number of classrooms for which a school needs waivers. It is important that transfers into a school do not lead to capping students out of the same school. To change a pattern of excessive transfers takes time and schools must start right away to reduce discretionary transfers. The Office of Student Support, with the assistance from the departments of School Choice and Federal & State Compliance, will manage and support transfer decisions affecting class-size waivers. Schools will continue to reduce the number of students in overcrowded classrooms as well reduce the number of class-size waivers.

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