

# LAUSD'S BOUNDARY PLANNING PROCESS

Changes to attendance boundaries are made through the process of **Boundary Planning**. This document was designed to help explain the Boundary Planning processes, protocols, and decision criteria used in establishing attendance boundaries for new schools and in making boundary changes between existing schools.

Attendance boundaries serve to regulate the number of pupils in a school's area. They are a useful tool in maintaining an equitable balance of enrollment against capacity between schools, and avoiding or reducing the need to bus students to schools in other neighborhoods. Attendance boundaries are geographically based and typically follow streets, railroads, water ways, ridgelines, and other geographic features.

The need for additional school facilities is based on long-range goals for District-wide 2-semester operation in all schools and for all students to be able to attend a neighborhood school or school-of-choice. Analyses of school capacities and projected resident student enrollments have been used to determine where additional school facilities are needed to achieve these goals. In the development of projects to address the need for school facilities, the eventual assignment of students to these new schools requires that existing school attendance areas will be changed.

School attendance boundary changes may also occur when there is an opportunity to assign students from a school that is overcrowded to an adjacent school that has space to accommodate additional students. Boundary studies are conducted to review such opportunities to relieve overcrowding, to plan for enrollment increases anticipated from new housing, and to address safety issues. Boundary studies may also be conducted in order to assess and evaluate the effect of calendar changes, reconfiguration, earthquake caused relocations, and changes in norming on resident area enrollment.

## **Decision Makers and Process Participants**

The approval authority for changes to attendance boundaries and the establishment of boundaries for new schools is held by the Superintendent of Schools. Recommendations for changes to attendance boundaries and new attendance

boundaries are made by the Local District (LD) Superintendent(s) in concurrence with the Chief Operating Officer of LAUSD.

School Management Services (SMS) staff works with the LD's and school principals to facilitate the process of planning for a school's opening. Master Planning and Demographics (MPD) staff conduct the demographic research and analysis associated with the planning for boundary changes and attendance areas for new schools.

### **Boundary Planning for a New School**

The establishment of attendance boundaries for new schools serves to meet the goals of the District's Facilities Master Plan. A key component of the Site Selection Process for new school sites is the proximity of a site to schools to be relieved and the students who would attend the new school. In establishing the attendance boundaries for new schools, the primary objective is to rebalance the resident area enrollments in order to relieve overcrowding and reducing school density. The need for this rebalancing is discussed during the development of the project. Preliminary studies for potential boundaries are often conducted and reviewed by the Project Development Teams as part of the Site Selection Process.

Planning for the actual boundary of a new school typically begins in the school year prior to the school's opening, usually in early summer. The process begins with an initial study which serves to assemble demographic information. This information is used to evaluate a host of factors including the enrollment capacity at the schools to be relieved, their current and future enrollments, ethnic make-up, and the number of traveling children. Maps are created and reviewed to evaluate student density and to understand where the current boundaries are located. Additional factors considered are traffic and safety issues. The tools and considerations used in this evaluation are also listed in the appendix.

A key consideration in the establishment of a boundary for a new school is the capacity of the new school. It is the primary determining factor in how many students can be reassigned from surrounding schools. The ultimate goal is to balance the resident area enrollments at the surrounding schools and allow as many traveling

students the opportunity to return to their neighborhood school. Other new schools planned for the area are also considered in the boundary planning.

The results of this initial study are shared with SMS and the LD Superintendent(s) to confirm the objectives for the study. The discussions in this meeting provide Master Planning and Demographics with the additional information and direction needed to begin the more detailed analysis.

In the more detailed analysis, one or more boundary proposals that meet the objectives of the study are created. Student counts by school, grade level, and ethnicity are compiled as well as enrollment projections for the proposed boundary(s). These scenarios are reviewed by SMS and the LD Superintendent(s), and then presented to the principals of the existing schools to be relieved by the new school, and the principal of the new school (if appointed). Based on discussions at these meetings (and others as needed), a final plan is created.

With an agreement reached by School Management Services, the LD Superintendent(s), and the school principals as to the boundary for the new school, a document called a boundary change letter is drafted by MPD. This document is signed by SMS and the LD Superintendent(s), the principals of the existing schools to be relieved by the new school, and the principal of the new school (if appointed). The completed boundary change letter is sent to the Superintendent of Schools for final approval. Typically, the new boundary goes into effect on July 1, which is considered the beginning of the school year.

Updated attendance maps and boundary descriptions are created for each affected school and are sent to each of the schools as well as to other District offices and outside agencies which need to be notified when school attendance boundaries are changed. The Resident School Identifier system, (previously known as School Finder), and databases maintained by MPD are also updated to reflect the changes.

### **Boundary Planning for a Change Between Existing Schools**

Boundary Studies of this type generally begin with a request from a school principal, a parent, or a community member that has been routed through the LD office for review. If the LD believes that the request has merit, the request is sent to SMS and then forwarded to MPD. In some cases, SMS and MPD will review school

accommodation and enrollment information to identify opportunities to relieve overcrowding through boundary changes.

After receipt of the request, MPD conducts an initial study to determine the feasibility of the boundary change. Included in this study is the assembly and review of demographic data and maps. These items are used to evaluate capacity of the schools in the study, their current and future enrollments, ethnic make-up, calendar, new schools planned for the area, and number of traveling children. The maps are used to evaluate student density, to illustrate where the current boundaries are located and identify potential areas for reassignment. Other factors considered at this time are traffic and safety issues and any new housing which may impact an area.

If additional analysis regarding a possible boundary change is warranted, a more detailed analysis is performed. One or more boundary change scenarios are created in this more detailed analysis. Student counts by school, grade level, and ethnicity are compiled as well as enrollment projections for the proposed change area(s). These scenarios are presented to the LD Superintendent(s) and are followed by a meeting with the principals of the schools included in the study. Based on discussions at the latter meeting, revisions to a preferred scenario may be made and a final plan is created. Follow-up meetings, as necessary, are held with SMS, the LD Superintendent(s), and the principals of the affected schools to finalize the change proposal.

Once an agreement is reached on the revised boundaries, the same steps described in the section for new schools for formalizing, recording, and disseminating the new boundaries are followed. General practice is to implement boundary changes at the beginning of a new school year so that the maximum benefit for relief of overcrowding can be achieved with a minimized disruption to students and staff. Boundary changes that address safety concerns can be implemented upon approval.

Requests for boundary studies are received year round. The initial studies are compiled and reviewed by MPD and the LD Superintendent(s) in response to these requests. If an in depth boundary study analysis is recommended by the LD, the detailed analysis typically begins in late Fall once current year enrollment data is available. Meetings with the LD Superintendents and school principals are held between late September and early January. Plans are typically finalized prior to the start of the

next spring annual enrollment forecast review process to allow schools ample time to inform parents and students and plan for the upcoming school year.

Not all requests for a boundary change result in an actual change of attendance boundaries. Notifications of the conclusions regarding the merits of a boundary change are addressed by the LD.