

Guiding Change Document
SOMSD Redistricting
Draft for review on 08-22-16

The South Orange-Maplewood School District has experienced continuous increases in elementary enrollment over the last 10 years. As a result, most of the elementary schools are full including the use of portable classrooms, and enrollment at two elementary schools has exceeded 600 students. Student demographics within the current school zones have also shifted resulting in concentrations of economically disadvantaged students in at least one elementary school and one middle school. In order to provide higher quality, cost effective, and inclusive preschool services the District has recently renovated one smaller school building to house its inclusion preschool program.

SOMSD has hired a consultant to analyze current school capacity and projected future needs and to make recommendations for assigning students to schools throughout the district grades K-8, and to advise the District as to whether additional school capacity will be required even if changes in school assignment are made. There are a wide variety of factors that bear on this conversation, including: (1) the District's commitment to both equity and excellence in education for all students (2) the desire of many to go to their neighborhood school, (3) the increasing financial strain on the operating budget coupled with high tax payer burden (4) the desire of many to have choice in the educational program for their children, and (5) the inequities that can prevail when the proportion of economically disadvantaged students is not evenly distributed across schools.

The purpose of this document is to provide goals and parameters for the development of the redistricting proposal for presentation to the Board.

1. Context and Reality, or Why?

- To avoid overcrowding in schools and larger than necessary class sizes
- To eliminate unexpected student to school assignments and to provide for stable instructional programming within each school
- To ensure resources are aligned to provide equity and excellence for all students

2. Results, or What?

- Ample educational space for current and projected enrollment through 2030
- Predictable assignment of students to schools
- School enrollment numbers that are manageable for the grade range, capacity of the building and programmatic needs

3. Unacceptable Means, or Not How?

- No recommendation should violate SOMSD's Access and Equity policy and the district's obligation to offer students with special needs placement in the least restrictive educational environment.
- No pre-determined group of students should be denied educational choice if choice is an option for that grade level.
- No recommendation should be made without input from related action planning teams
- ~~No recommendation should be made~~ **plan should be adopted** without gathering information from the community
- No recommendation should include a disproportionate increase in costs beyond what is reasonable projected in year over year adjustments for inflation, without demonstrated enhancements to student services and programs and/or efficiencies.
- No recommendation should be made without a cost/benefit analysis