



## MPS Boundary Study Q&A

### 1) Who conducted this study for MPS?

With Board approval through a resolution regarding the Comprehensive District Design (CDD), MPS provided data on our current students to Edulog, the confidential company that provides our bus routing software and does boundary consulting for schools across the globe. The study:

- Identified a community school model where the majority of students attend their neighborhood elementary and middle schools through 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Studied the impact of modified school boundaries and transportation attendance areas in a community school model on desegregation and enrollment by site
- Studied enrollment as compared to capacity at current market share values to help identify optimum magnet school placement, with capacity based on number of classrooms and class sizes.
- Calculated the enrollment projection, racial desegregation and concentration of poverty with increased market share and future demographics

### 2) Would the relatively moderate increases in integration really have that much impact on academic achievement? How long would it take to know that?

Studies show a significant relationship between academic achievement as defined by proficiency rates and both race and income. In Minneapolis there is a 96% relationship between school composition and proficiency rates. Concurrently, a strong relationship exists between families of color and students receiving free and reduced-price lunch. Altering the racial and economic integration levels in schools would likely impact achievement. The level of impact would depend on the level of change in integration.

In a community school model, some schools would become more diverse (racially and/or economically) by up to 50% -- and could see corresponding increases in MCA percentage points gains. On the other hand, schools whose populations see increased levels of low-income students could see a reduction in their MCA scores. In general, research shows that integrated learning environments support improvements in academic achievement, social and emotional competencies, and student critical thinking skills.

**3) When would any boundary changes be implemented?**

No recommendation has been made nor actions decided. This is a study of MPS boundaries if all students attended the schools in their neighborhoods. The Board of Education requested this study to see if community schools would provide a more integrated educational experience, and how transportation boundaries impact student placement in schools.

**4) Would schools be closed if we decide to implement these boundary changes?  
When? Which ones are being recommended for closure?**

No recommendation has been made nor actions decided. The boundary study does show several schools with enrollment levels that require subsidies in order to operate. Even within its current structure, MPS has low-enrollment schools that require subsidies. Subsidies are required when the amount of funding received per pupil is not enough to pay for all the positions and programs needed to provide a well-rounded education in that school.

No one wants to close schools that are important to their staff and families, and still MPS must look at the larger goal of improving the educational experience for the 60% of students not now being well served.

**5) How much did this study cost?**

MPS budgeted \$250,000 for this study. The first phase cost \$95,000 and we don't have the final expenses tallied yet for Phase 2.

**6) Is a community school model going to save MPS money?**

The goal of the boundary study was to study whether a community school model would impact integration within MPS , and with that, achievement. A community school model with smaller transportation areas could save some money and those savings would be impacted by other factors, such as placement of magnets, bell times, size of walk zones and other factors.

**7) How would this plan impact high schools?**

High schools are not included in this study because transportation to high schools is provided mostly through Metro Transit versus school bus routing. High schools would be impacted, however, by differing enrollment from their feeder schools, which may or may not impact the school's funding sources. If a community school model successfully increases academic achievement as a result, students would be better prepared when they reach high school.

**8) How would this plan impact distribution of Title I dollars?**

As school populations change, so could their funding sources. Some that now qualify for Title I dollars may not, some would stay the same, some may qualify anew. MPS currently distributes Title I dollars to schools whose student population is 40% or more students receiving free or reduced-price lunches. In this Community Schools study, five schools would no longer qualify for Title I funding.

**9) Are K-8s being eliminated?**

No decision has been made at this time to eliminate K-8 schools. This study did model schools as K-5 or 6-8 to better understand the opportunities and challenges within our district related to integration, transportation and academic achievement.

**When will families learn the configuration of the current split-campus models (Lake Harriet, Lake Nokomis, Hale/Field)?**

The remodeling of these campuses is being conducted now through ongoing work with Edulog to tweak boundaries to account for over- and under-enrolled schools now that magnets have been suggested.

**10) In Phase 2 of the study how did MPS determine which magnets to place where in this model?**

- **Accessibility to greater numbers of students** through placement in buildings already located near the geographic center of the district, reducing long bus commutes across the city.
- **Capacity of the facility and surrounding community schools** to serve the number of students in the area.
- **A reduction in the number of magnets** as another means of reducing transportation complexity and to maximize resources for investment.
- **Placement of the types of magnets our stakeholders have told us are most preferred:** STEM/STEAM, Arts, Spanish immersion/Language and Culture, and Montessori
- **Grade configurations of only K-5 and 6-8** -- no K-8 schools. The rationale for this change is that for a variety of reasons MPS cannot consistently provide a well-rounded middle school experience within the K-8 structure.

**11) How is this study defining magnet schools?**

Magnet schools offer thematic instruction designed to draw students from other parts of the district for purposes of greater student racial and economic integration. Magnet schools may access federal integration dollars, offer transportation more

broadly based to an extended attendance area, and may progress in a pathway through middle school.

**12 ) What’s the difference between a magnet and a specialty school?**

Both offer thematic instruction, but the goals of that instruction are different. Magnets are designed to increase integration by drawing students from a different part of the city. Specialty schools are designed to increase enrollment from within a school’s attendance area by offering a theme that interests the families and students in that area. Because integration is not the primary goal, federal integration dollars are not accessible to fund specialty schools. Transportation from outside the attendance area would not be available. Specialty schools are generally limited to elementary schools and do not progress further. For purposes of this study, it is presumed that a community school would need to apply for specialty designation, which would be allowed or disallowed based on a set of consistent districtwide specifications.

**13) Will MPS still offer specialty schools?**

The timeline for designation and implementation of specialty schools has not yet been determined, but factors in specialty school designation might include:

- They complement but don’t compete with magnets
- They reflect community values and desires so may increase enrollment
- They are not overly represented in the district
- Are sustainable without additional district investment in the school’s budget
- The school has the physical space/capacity
- Expanded transportation is not required
- Approved application process

**14) Why does this information not include the sites for Citywide Special Education Programming?**

The MPS Special Education Department and interested stakeholders will look at where programs can be most equitably placed. While not every school can have every type of citywide programming available, we want to ensure that classrooms are distributed more evenly around the District. As with placing magnets, the following factors will be considered when making citywide Special Ed placements:

- Geographic accessibility
- Student populations
- Cost, facility availability, capacity and readiness

- Magnets in the schools

Every year the Special Education Department makes program adjustments to ensure that we are able to meet the needs outlined in each student's IEP. This will continue to take place for the School Year 2020-21 and beyond.

**15) Why is there only this one model?**

Three other models were offered in April 2019, at which point the Board of Education directed MPS to investigate how to create a model that increases integration. Based on the values set out by the Board, the current model was created. Magnet placement was designed for maximum transportation savings. Changes to this model are absolutely possible. Each change must be weighed against its effects and the value of those effects weighed and prioritized.

**16) If MPS saves money through a community school model, how would it be reinvested?**

While money may be saved in the short-term, the more important factor is to stop spending more than the revenue we generate. Reducing the infrastructure will be a major factor in balancing MPS revenues and expenses in the future. Short-term savings could be reinvested in academic programs related to the Comprehensive District Design.

**17) How would this reduce the district's infrastructure?**

Many elements of our infrastructure now exceed our district need. Our transportation system would be better aligned, requiring fewer buses and routes, for both short- and long-term savings.

If under-enrolled schools are closed, staffing and transportation efficiencies may be captured and carried into years to come. Fewer buildings would result in lower utility and maintenance costs among other things.

While MPS could sell unused schools, this would limit any growth options as there are finite amounts of real estate available.

If legacy programs are discontinued, those dollars could be captured for reinvestment in academic programming to increase the achievement of students currently being underserved.

**18) When will we hear more about this study?**

Phase 2 of the study which includes magnet school placement and philosophy will be presented to the Board for discussion at the December 12 Committee of the Whole Meeting. From now through March there will be time for both internal and public dialogue before final recommendations are developed and a potential vote by the Board in April.

For more background on prior presentations please access the CDD website at:  
<https://mpls.k12.mn.us/>