

Attendance Areas: Buffer Zone Policy

Lexington Public Schools has historically maintained specific school attendance areas for each of its elementary and middle schools. However, when circumstances related to rapidly increasing student enrollment directly affect the delivery of equitable educational opportunities, alternative attendance area strategies need to be considered. *Buffer zones* and *redistricting* are attendance area tools that can be used to relieve overcrowding, address program needs, promote the balanced and efficient use of school facilities and resources, and ensure educational quality for all students.

A buffer zone is defined as a specific geographic area where students residing at an individual address within that zone are assigned to one of multiple schools designated for that attendance area. All other attendance areas are predetermined and students living within those boundaries are assigned to one specific school based on the student's address. Buffer zones shall be delineated on clearly drawn attendance area maps that are approved by the School Committee following public hearings. Once approved, these attendance area maps shall be made available in the Superintendent's office and on the Lexington Public School website. Any changes to buffer zones require School Committee approval.

It should be noted that in ALL cases, each student must have a fully completed school registration in order to be assigned and enrolled at a school. Newly registered Grade K-12 students residing in a buffer zone shall not have a school assignment until registration is complete and the Superintendent/designee has determined the student's school placement. Once a student is assigned to a school, that school shall be his/her school as long as s/he continues to reside at that address. Subsequent siblings shall be assigned to the same school. Exceptions to school placement or sibling assignment may be made based on a student's individual education plan.

Buffer zones are a necessary strategy to manage student enrollment and programmatic parity. This tool provides the Superintendent/designee greater flexibility to assign students where space and resources afford the most equitable education for all students. While it may be impractical to reconcile each and every student assignment, equity shall be achieved by considering the following factors:

- Available enrollment data
- Disparities in class size between schools and/or a condition of classroom overcrowding
- Once a student is assigned to an elementary school, all siblings will attend the same elementary school
- Functional and operational capacity of school core space (cafeteria, gymnasium, bathrooms, hallway and stairway spaces)
- Safe and reasonable school bus transportation and pedestrian patterns
- Any situation in which the Superintendent/designee deems to be an extenuating circumstance
- Family preference will be considered but it is not guaranteed.

CROSS REF: JC – Attendance Areas

JCA – Assignment of Students to Schools

JCAA – Redistricting

JCAC – Student Transfer Policy

JFAB – Policy on Non-Resident Students

JFABC – Admission of Transfer Students

JFBB – School Choice