

The four boundary proposals with maps and opportunities for public input are posted at <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/staff/Elmboundarycomm.htm>

Why are new elementary school boundaries needed?

Whenever a new school is built and before it opens, existing attendance boundaries must be revised to create the new school's student body. With two new elementary schools opening in the next two years, an Elementary Boundary Advisory Task Force of parents/guardians, community members and staff met this school year to review and propose changes to the district's current elementary attendance boundaries. The task force presented four proposals for new elementary school boundaries to the School Board for public input.

Opening two state-of-the-art elementary schools is an exciting opportunity for students and staff. This will ease overcrowding in elementary schools where we currently have several portable classrooms and help address challenges for classroom space and space during lunch, gym/recess, assemblies, pick-up and drop-off of students, and meetings with families. Bellingham is a fast-growing community and opening the new schools will help address growth in student enrollment. The proposals help balance current elementary enrollment and projected growth with the facility size at each school. Each proposal takes socioeconomic diversity into account, but it is not possible to entirely equalize these demographics and maintain neighborhood schools without bussing students from one end of the district to another. While opening new schools and easing overcrowding is necessary, we recognize it is challenging for some families who live in certain areas. The task force strongly considered this in developing the four proposals.

When will new elementary attendance areas go into effect?

New elementary boundaries would go into effect for Carl Cozier, Geneva, Happy Valley, Larrabee, Lowell and Silver Beach in fall 2008 when the Yew Street Road school opens and fall 2009 for Alderwood, Birchwood, Northern Heights, and Sunnyland when the Aldrich Road school opens. Attendance boundaries for Columbia, Parkview and Roosevelt, and possibly Larrabee (depending on the proposal), would remain unchanged. All proposals take into account that Lowell Elementary will need to temporarily close while earthquake safety retrofitting is completed during the 2008-09 school year. The timing associated with adjustments to Lowell's boundaries help to minimize the number of students who would need to relocate before, during and after the seismic work. We will work with the Lowell school community in making these decisions after the Board adopts a boundary proposal. One modification is being recommended to middle school attendance boundaries to coincide with the proposed elementary revisions. High school attendance areas would not be affected.

What is the process?

The task force developed and considered more than 25 possible configurations for new elementary school boundaries and presented four proposals to the School Board on April 5 for additional consideration and public input before a final decision is made by the Board in May. These proposals were selected because they most closely match the criteria for minimizing disruption of students' established learning programs; maintaining, whenever possible, established neighborhoods; maintaining existing relationships with a middle school and high school attendance area; coordinating efficient transportation routes with attendance areas; and providing overall balance of student enrollment related to facility size and future growth.

How can I give input?

View maps for each proposal and provide written input to the School Board at <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/staff/Elmboundarycomm.htm> Submit input to the Board from this Web site by May 1 or attend a public input session. Dates for the input sessions will be posted on this site. Input will be read or heard and considered by the School Board prior to the Board's decision in May.