

# Background resources & tips

Thank you so much for your interest in learning about the Board of Education (BOE) boundary review process (AKA redistricting) and advocating on behalf of the Swansfield community. In this toolkit you'll find:

- Important upcoming dates
- Background resources, if you want to learn more
- Tips on submitting written testimony to the Board
- Tips on testifying for Nov. 6th
- [Talking Points for oral testimony](#) (second tab)
- [Sample written testimony](#) - adapt as needed! (third tab)

#### Important Upcoming Dates:

- **Nov 6th - Board of Ed. Public Hearing - we can testify virtually or in person.**
  - [SIGN UP TO TESTIFY HERE!](#) You must pre-register by 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 5
- **Nov. 13th** - Board of Ed. Virtual Worksession
  - We can attend but cannot participate. The BOE is scheduled to take a straw vote at this session.
- **Nov. 20th** - The Board is scheduled to take final action at this meeting

#### Background Resources:

- Consultant [Report describing the 6 current proposals](#), including the Superintendent's Proposal and the BOE consultants' Concepts I-V.
  - This report includes key data and maps. We recommend skimming through it.
  - As noted in our talking points (next tab), take the data with a large grain of salt because we believe it is based on inaccurate numbers.
  - The map on p.19 shows the current boundaries. The following maps show each of the six different proposals that the BOE is now considering.
- [Boundary Review Process FAQ and Timeline of the Boundary Review Process](#)
  - Section entitled "Boundary Review Report" has the original proposals from the summer with projected capacity numbers and the "SY 2025-26 Enrollment Projections" Excel document which has projection numbers for each polygon through 2035.
  - The full Superintendent's report with additional data from the overview is also linked on this page.
- [Powerpoint from Oct. 23rd work session](#):
  - This provides additional context, for those who really want to dive in.
  - It explains how the consultants came to propose concepts III, IV, and V, and describes each of those concepts (though it doesn't spend much/any time addressing impacts on Swansfield)

#### Submitting written testimony:

- You can submit written testimony, or feedback, as frequently as you want at any time up until November 18th, though ideally you can send something before the November 6th public hearing.
- Submit via email to [redistricting@hcpss.org](mailto:redistricting@hcpss.org)

- Because of public records laws, we recommend that testimony sent via email be submitted as an **attachment** with only the constituent’s name included. Only the attachment will be posted online. If your testimony is submitted in the text of an email, the entire email—including the constituent’s email address—will be posted online.

**Tips on testifying in person or virtually:**

- You are limited to 3 minutes. They *will* cut you off if you go over.
- The board will listen only; there is no opportunity for questions or back and forth.
- The board requests that speakers provide an electronic version of their testimony in advance of the hearing. See above for tips on submitting written testimony.
- **Wear your Swansfield swag!** We can’t use props (including posters) but you can and should absolutely wear your Swansfield shirts to show the BOE that we are here and we care.
- You will testify in the order you registered; if you sign up early, you’ll be towards the beginning. If you sign up the day before, you will be later in the evening. The only exception is for students, who testify before adults.

Here is a visual from a slide that the BOE consultants created. This reflects their views only and we think it gets some things wrong, but we share it here for additional context in case you find it helpful to see the six concepts compared in one place:

Comparing the Concepts <span style="float: right;">CropperGIS</span>						
Category	Superintendent Rec.	Concept I	Concept II	Concept III	Concept IV	Concept V
<b>Utilization Relief</b>	Bryant Woods gets relief and impacted schools are balanced, with an exception to Swansfield ES (102%). Centennial Lane left unimpacted and overutilized.	Bryant Woods & Centennial Lane get relief, and area schools are balanced. Clemens Crossing and Swansfield are at or slightly above 100%.	Bryant Woods & Centennial Lane get relief, and area schools are balanced. Clemens Crossing and Swansfield are at or slightly above 100%.	Bryant Woods gets relief and impacted schools are balanced. Centennial Lane left unimpacted and overutilized.	Bryant Woods gets relief and impacted schools are balanced, with exception to Swansfield ES (over 100%). Centennial Lane left unimpacted and overutilized.	Bryant Woods gets relief and impacted schools are balanced. Centennial Lane left unimpacted and overutilized.
<b>Demographic Balance</b>	Schools draw further away from the study area average for Direct Certification (DC).	DC for the impacted schools is balanced. Most schools move closer to the study area average.	DC for the impacted schools is balanced. Most schools move closer to the study area average.	DC for the impacted schools is relatively maintained.	DC for the impacted schools is balanced. Most schools move closer to the study area average.	DC for the impacted schools is relatively maintained.
<b>Total Student Reassigned</b>	253	633	739	467	122	81
<b>Transportation Efficiency</b>	Adds 2 buses, no walkers reassigned & increases walkers for Swansfield ES.	Adds 3 buses & reassigned walkers from Bryant Woods ES.	Adds 5 buses & reassigns walkers from Bryant Woods ES.	Adds 3 buses, no walkers reassigned & increases walkers for Swansfield ES.	Adds 1 bus & reassigns walkers from Bryant Woods ES.	No buses added or reassignments to walkers.
<b>Contiguity</b>	Maintained	Maintained	Maintained	Maintained	Maintained	BWES non-contiguous
<b>Feed Alignment</b>	Feeders improved. 5 ES feed 100% into one MS.	Feeders splits increase and more imbalanced.	Feeders splits increase and more imbalanced.	Feeders improved. 5 ES feed 100% into one MS. Small split at Atholton HS.	Feeders are maintained. Improvement for Swansfield ES.	Feeders are maintained. Improvement for Swansfield ES.

Next tab - Talking points! →

# Talking Points

*Below are some general talking points to help you craft spoken testimony. We have broken it into a few sections. While written testimony can be as long as you'd like, and you can use the template on the next page as your starting point, **oral testimony is limited to 3 minutes**. For oral testimony, we'd recommend spending less time criticizing the process and **more time pointing out the flaws with the data and offering the two alternative proposals**.*

**The Boundary Review Process has made it very difficult for Swansfield to engage meaningfully:**

- 6 plans on the table now, five of which were just proposed in the last few weeks. Even though the process started in the Spring. Gives our community very little time to wrap our heads around the options, determine impact on Swansfield, and alert community to the potential impacts. This does a disservice to our community and makes it hard for us to advocate for ourselves .
- Proposals that try to alleviate overcrowding at Centennial Lane elementary seem to have been scrapped, even though overcrowding at Centennial was one of the two reasons for doing the boundary review at all. Now it seems that they are likely to remain untouched, despite overutilization, but there will be significant shifts at Swansfield. Optics are troubling.
- There was a listening session held at Swansfield months ago, but that was before any of these plans were on the table and it was not clear from the plans then proposed how big an impact the redistricting could have on the school.
- Our responses and arguments depend on the proposed plans and it feels like the ball keeps moving. It is very difficult to engage our community and present information to them when the proposals keep shifting. On top of this, it feels like Swansfield has been an afterthought in all of the proposals and concepts; we are affected in all of them, but the framing has been about the effect on *other* schools, and not our community
- The consultant's scenarios focus largely on Bryant Woods, and discuss the plans in terms of what the effect will be on Bryant Woods. It is important to relieve their overcrowding, but the plan has to take into account the effects for other students too.

**The BOE data that all of the plans are based on is significantly inaccurate**

- The plans indicate that Swansfield's capacity is 603 students and indicates that, without any changes, Swansfield enrollment in 2026 will be 528 students.
- But Swansfield's *current* enrollment for K-5 is 544 students. *This does not include preschool, pre-K, and Academic Life Skills (ALS) classrooms.*
  - We currently have 63 students in preschool and pre-K alone right now, utilizing six classrooms. This means that our *current* enrollment is already over 100% utilization.
  - Not all elementary schools have preschool and pre-K programs. This affects our capacity to absorb more students
  - Swansfield also currently houses 2 regional ALS classrooms and 1 local ALS classroom. This uses 3 classrooms. Just like with preschool and pre-K, not all elementary schools have ALS classrooms - in fact, fewer than half do. So the

“603” capacity also does not take into account that we have three classrooms being used for ALS (which only has 4 students per classroom).

- The enrollment and utilization data anticipates Swansfield enrollment dropping meaningfully over the next 10 years, but we have no idea how this is possible:
  - You can consult your data and see that our enrollment numbers have been pretty steady over the last few years
  - A new apartment complex on Cedar lane, across from the school, is being built. The data does not take this building into account.
  - Unfortunately, we’re aware that the Office of School Planning (OSP) has woefully underestimated in the past the projected number of new students who will result from new buildings. We understand that a few years ago, for example, a new development in the Bryant Woods zone was projected to add 10 students; it ended up adding 60.
  - If the same happens for the development across the street from Swansfield, we will end up well over our utilization rate and facing yet another round of redistricting sooner than *anyone* wants - including the BOE!

### **Splitting the Hawthorn neighborhood**

- Two out of six concepts divide the neighborhood of Hawthorn into two sections. Polygon 133 (Misty Arch up Sunny Spring to Hickory Ridge Road) would stay at Swansfield and polygons 5133 and 1133 (from the pool down Sunny Spring to Owen Brown Road) would go to Clemens Crossing and four out of six move the neighborhood for the third time in 7 years
- This creates an extremely small feed by leaving polygon 133 as the only polygon that goes from Swansfield to Wilde Lake MS to Atholton HS
- For polygons 5133 and 1133, this would be the third school in only 7 years (previously Bryant Woods, moved to Swansfield in 2020, then to Clemens in 2026)
- Very hard to establish and maintain a sense of community with constant movement between schools and dividing Sunny Spring in half

### **Our Proposal:**

- *We do not support any of the six concepts currently on the table.*
- **Proposal 1: Take More time/do it next year**
  - All of the proposals on the table put Swansfield at well over 100% utilization, when you use accurate numbers, without the same impact on other schools.
    - Even if you use the BOE data, 4 out of the 6 plans put us at over 100% utilization.
  - We are concerned that the data is not accurate and that to meaningfully consider “facility utilization,” as required by Policy 6010, the BOE must consider preschool, pre-K, and ALS enrollment at schools.
  - Postponing the decision until next year will allow time to see the real impacts of the new complexes since they are slated to open in 2026

- We are really concerned that the data does not adequately take into account new apartment complexes being built in our community and the number of students we will get from these units in the coming years.
    - Waiting till next year could at least allow us to have a better idea of the number of students coming from this and other new apartment complexes in Columbia.
  - If the Board postpones the redistricting, they would also be able to include additional schools within the scope of possible affected schools to relieve Centennial Lane by shifting further into Ellicott City rather than into Columbia (this is a point that has been brought up by a ton of Centennial parents).
  - We want to avoid having to do another redistricting in a few years and shifting families around *again*. It is destabilizing and is not in the spirit of Policy 6010.
- **Proposal 2: In the alternative, we propose that the board use Concept IV *but* move polygon 2268 from Swansfield to Longfellow.**
  - Concept IV in current form adds over 100 students to Swansfield. This would give us over 700 students in a school that the BOE indicates has a capacity for 603. That would be over 110% capacity and already require a new redistricting process. We know the BOE does not want to do that.
  - Concepts I and II already propose to move polygon 2268 to Longfellow. This polygon is anticipated to have 45 students. We believe these students could be walkers to Longfellow.
  - This solution also keeps Longfellow at the same or lower utilization rate than Swansfield, versus putting Swansfield above 100% utilization (which it would be in Concept IV and almost every other proposed plan).
  - This proposal also does not take any Swansfield students away from Swansfield, which is net positive for community stability, per Policy 6010.
  - This proposal keeps contiguous boundaries for all schools.
  - Less expensive than almost all other plans - maybe one additional bus, plus won't overutilize Swansfield such that we may require portables (we understand the cost for one portable is close to \$400k for the portable + installation)
  - This solution also creates much less disruption for the community, shifting fewer students than other plans.
  - It also helps address one of the main intended purposes of the boundary review: alleviate overutilization at Bryant Woods.
  - We understand that Bryant Woods families have testified that they are concerned about moving their families in the Owen Brown Rd, single family home polygon. This plan keeps that polygon at Bryant Woods.

**Additional Requests:**

- We would like an additional public meeting in order to respond to the final proposal(s) after the BOE conducts its straw vote on November 13th.

Next tab - Sample written testimony! →

# Sample Written testimony

**SAMPLE written testimony** - cut and paste into your own letter, adapt if you want, replace the highlighted fields, and send it as an [email attachment](mailto:redistricting@hcpss.org) to [redistricting@hcpss.org](mailto:redistricting@hcpss.org)

Dear Board Members,

Thank you for the time and effort you and staff have devoted to the boundary review process. I appreciate the complexity of balancing facility utilization, community stability, geography, and demographics across the county. I am writing as a Swansfield Elementary School parent who has tried to follow this process and is deeply concerned about how it will impact our school community. Given my concerns, highlighted below, I ask that you postpone redistricting till next year, in order to gather more accurate data and avoid having to redistrict again in the immediate future. In the alternative, I ask that you use Concept IV but shift polygon 2268 from Swansfield to Longfellow.

### **The Process Has Been Challenging for Swansfield Families**

The [Boundary Review Report](#) presented on July 17, 2025, outlined three attendance area adjustment scenarios following the [scope directed by the Board of Education](#) in February. As you know, the goal of this whole process has been to bring Bryant Woods and Centennial Lane Elementary School enrollments within the target range of 90-100% utilization, with the acknowledgement that doing this would necessarily impact other schools,

All of these three scenarios had minimal impact on Swansfield as a whole. The Superintendent's September 25th proposal then put an entirely new map on the table. Following that, at the October 9th Redistricting Board Work Session, two new concepts were proposed, and then at the October 23rd session, three new concepts were proposed. All six of these proposals would significantly impact the Swansfield community.

As a community member who wants to be involved in my [\[child's/children's\]](#) education, I find the process here challenging. The fact that new proposals keep coming out, while the November deadline stays the same, makes it hard to stay on top of what new concepts are being proposed and how they will or won't affect our community. Further, other communities who were more clearly impacted by the first three proposals had ample time over the Spring and Summer to submit their comments and testimony. Now, many of those families have had their concerns heard and are no longer being affected. The same is not true for those of us whose boundaries are now being shifted in response to those changes.

We now have **six** plans on the table, five of which were only introduced in the past few weeks, even though the process began in the Spring. This timeline has given our community little opportunity to understand the new options, assess the impact on Swansfield, or alert families to potential changes. Each time new plans emerge, the information changes. Our community is doing its best to keep up, but the frequent revisions have made it difficult to inform and involve parents.

## Concerns About Inaccurate Data

I am particularly concerned about the accuracy of the data underlying the proposed plans. The Board's data lists Swansfield's capacity at 603 students and projects 528 students by 2026. In reality, Swansfield currently has **544 K–5 students, not including 63 PreKindergarten students who occupy six classrooms**. This means our true enrollment *already* exceeds 100% utilization.

In addition, Swansfield houses **three Academic Life Skills (ALS) classrooms**—two regional and one local—which use three more classrooms and serve only four students each. Not all elementary schools have preschool, pre-K, or ALS classrooms, so these specialized programs reduce our available capacity in ways the official figures do not reflect.

We are not advocating for the removal or relocation of these programs as they add to the diversity of the Swansfield community, only asking that these students be included in the capacity consideration for our school.

The Board's data also shows Swansfield's enrollment declining over the next decade, but it is not clear how that could occur. Our numbers have remained steady for several years, and a new, large apartment complex is under construction on Cedar Lane directly across from the school. The projections do not appear to account for this development. The Office of School Planning has previously underestimated student yields from new housing—for example, just a few years ago, a development in the Bryant Woods zone was expected to produce 10 students but resulted in 60. Now, we're engaged in this redistricting process because Bryant Woods is well over capacity. If the same underestimation occurs here, based on bad data, Swansfield will quickly if not immediately exceed capacity, forcing yet another round of redistricting sooner than anyone wants - the Board included!

## Splitting the Hawthorn Neighborhood

Another concern is the proposed division of the Hawthorn neighborhood in two of the six concepts. Under these scenarios, polygons 5133 and 1133 would move to Clemens Crossing, while polygon 133 would remain at Swansfield. This split would create a very small feeder pattern and divide a long-established community. For some families, this would be the third school reassignment in only seven years—Bryant Woods to Swansfield in 2020, and now potentially to Clemens Crossing in 2026. These constant changes make it difficult to build community and continuity for the families in those polygons.

## Proposal 1: Postpone the Boundary Review

Given the pace of changes in the past few weeks alone and the data concerns outlined above, I urge the Board to **pause the boundary review and revisit it next year**. The current data does not fully or accurately capture Swansfield's true utilization or the impact of new housing. To meaningfully consider "facility utilization," as required by Policy 6010, the Board must consider

preschool, pre-K, and ALS enrollment at schools. Proceeding now risks creating overcrowding that would immediately require another round of redistricting. Taking additional time would allow for updated enrollment data, better projections for new developments, and a more stable long-term outcome that aligns with Policy 6010's focus on minimizing future boundary changes. Furthermore, postponing the review would allow the Board to better address Centennial Lane overutilization. The Board could add additional schools within the scope of possibly affected schools to relieve Centennial Lane by shifting further into Ellicott City rather than into Columbia

## **Proposal 2: In the Alternative, Adopt Concept IV but Move Polygon 2268 from Swansfield to Longfellow**

If the Board chooses to proceed with redistricting this year, I urge adoption of **Concept IV** with one modification: **move polygon 2268 to Longfellow Elementary**.

In its current form, Concept IV would add more than 100 students to Swansfield, bringing enrollment to over **700 students in a building the Board indicates has a 603 capacity**—that's more than **110% utilization**, even using the Board's data, and even higher when PreKindergarten and ALS classrooms are correctly factored in. This would immediately place Swansfield back in an overcrowded position and could require yet another redistricting cycle sooner than anyone wants. I know the Board does not want to repeat that scenario.

Polygon 2268 contains approximately 45 students, and Concepts I and II already propose moving this same polygon to Longfellow. Those students would likely be able to walk to Longfellow, and making this adjustment in Concept IV would reduce Swansfield's utilization to a more reasonable level. Longfellow's utilization would remain the same or lower than Swansfield's, ensuring a fair balance between the two schools.

This adjustment also meets the goals of Policy 6010 in several important ways:

- It **avoids extreme overutilization at Swansfield** without displacing any current Swansfield students, supporting community stability.
- It **maintains contiguous boundaries** for all affected schools.
- It is **cost-effective**—likely requiring at most one additional bus—and avoids the potential need for portables at Swansfield, which can cost just under **\$400,000 each** to purchase and install.
- It **creates far less disruption** for families than other plans, moving fewer students overall while still addressing one of the core purposes of the boundary review: to relieve overcrowding at Bryant Woods.

Finally, this proposal respects concerns voiced by Bryant Woods families about concentrating its FARMS population, keeping the single-family home polygon along Owen Brown Road at Bryant Woods while still achieving the intended balance.

## **Request for Additional Public Input**

Finally, if the Board decides not to postpone the redistricting to next year, I respectfully request that the Board hold **an additional public meeting after the November 13 straw vote** to allow communities to respond to the final set of proposals. With so many changes occurring late in the process, families deserve a fair opportunity to at least review and respond to the final recommendations.

In closing, I want to reiterate my appreciation for the Board's time, service, and commitment to our students and their families. I share your goal of ensuring that every child in our county attends a well-resourced, stable, and balanced school. I believe that either postponing this process or adopting Concept IV with the proposed adjustment will help achieve those goals in a fair and data-driven way.

Thank you for your attention and for considering the concerns of Swansfield families.

Respectfully,

[Your Name]

Parent, Swansfield Elementary School