

## **PLANNING COMMISSION SCHOOLS COMMITTEE**

### **POLICY RESEARCH**

**Topic:** Long Range Student Population Forecasting

#### **Summary of Planning Commission Schools Committee Discussion**

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) produces two projection sets each school year to forecast student membership. One projection set is produced in the fall for a five year horizon and the fifth year of this set is used for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The second set is a six month projection produced in the spring which is used to determine the enrollment for the upcoming school year. Projections within the five year horizon are accurate; however, the accuracy of student projections diminish beyond the five year horizon.

Methodologies used for student membership projections.

- Total student membership is compared to historical membership patterns.
- Births by elementary school boundary are compared to the kindergarten class five years later.
- Kindergarten class membership is compared to the previous school year's 12<sup>th</sup> grade class.
- Cohort progression – Each grade level cohort of students is compared to the previous year to understand the difference over time.
- Analysis of population and housing forecasts, housing trends and new housing construction.

Factors impacting the predictability of student projections.

- Students attending school within a different boundary from which they reside. This may occur for program access.
- Replacement of existing housing stock with larger homes.
- Lifecycle of existing housing, changing demographics, economic conditions, and multiple occupancy of dwelling units.
- Mixed use development creates uncertainties for projecting student enrollment.
- FCPS estimates of student yields resulting from planned new housing are based on countywide averages. Student membership projections for the CIP utilize a different methodology, based on localized analysis of demographics, housing types and school trends, resulting in more accurate projections.

#### **Planning Commission Recommendation**

- Seek resources to produce long-range forecasts.
- Reconsider Countywide averages used for proffer equation formulas.