



Mills Park capacity questions

1) Why are the Mills Park schools crowded?

Alston Ridge ES, Mills Park ES and Mills Park MS were built in the last school building program based on growth anticipated in 2005. Both Mill Park schools currently operate between 110 percent and 120 percent of capacity.

The schools have drawn students as Wake County has seen new growth following the national economic downturn of 2007-09. Support for the 2013 school construction program has resulted in recent groundbreaking ceremonies for the first schools to be built. Two of these new schools will open as early as next year. However, it will be 2016 before new schools start to impact the Mills Park schools crowding.

2) What steps can be taken to address crowding?

WCPSS staff shared with the board five options: 1) convert from traditional calendar to multi-track, year-round calendar; 2) add temporary classrooms; 3) redistrict some students into other schools; 4) assign future development attendance areas to under-enrolled schools; and 5) capping.

3) Are these options being considered to address crowding at Mills Parks schools?

Yes. Both schools are already capped. Staff is reviewing additional data regarding future developments and redistricting, as well as reviewing calendar conversion and adding temporary classrooms.

4) What is the impact of capping school enrollment?

When a school's facility utilization exceeds 100 percent, central office staff will work with school staff to determine the maximum number of students that can be served at the school. When a school is capped, school enrollment is closed to all new students until the enrollment falls below the designated enrollment cap number.

5) What is the impact of assigning Future Development Attendance areas?

When a school is overcrowded, the school system can identify newly developing neighborhoods in that school's base and redistrict those students into under-enrolled schools.

6) What is the impact of redistricting?

When a school is overcrowded, the school system can redistrict an area of the school's base into another school that has available seats. Mills Park MS students

could be redistricted to West Cary MS. Mills Park ES students could be redistricted to Carpenter or Turner Creek schools.

7) What is the impact of Adding Temporary Classrooms?

Adding temporary classrooms onto both campuses would cost about \$1.9 million. This would provide nine temporary classrooms at the elementary school and 12 at the middle school. This added capacity would put additional strain on core facilities such as dining, media, parking, etc. Adding the temporary classrooms would require approval from the Town of Cary and obtaining permits can be a lengthy process. The new classrooms would likely compromise existing play fields.

8) What is the impact of converting to a multi track, year round calendar?

Students receive the same number of instructional days on both calendars. With a traditional calendar, students have a long summer with few breaks during the school year. With the multi-track, year round calendar, students generally have 45 days of instruction and then breaks of 15 days. The calendar change can be implemented for as little as the cost of adding one mobile classroom. However, the change can impact family schedules. You can see the different school calendars at www.wcps.net/parents/calendars

9) Why not convert Alston Ridge and Highcroft elementary schools to the multi-track, year-round calendar?

Alston Ridge currently operates as a single-track, year-round school. The school has an enrollment cap and is one of the schools under review by the school system. One of the recommendations to address crowding at Alston Ridge is to convert the school to multi-track, year-round calendar.

Highcroft is a smaller school with only 38 classrooms, which makes tracking in and out difficult for teachers. Additionally, its attendance area will be impacted by the new elementary school, E37, scheduled to open in 2016.

10) If Mills Park converted to the multi-track, year-round calendar, who would receive priority for track assignments?

Keeping siblings together on the same track would be the first priority. If Mills Park ES were to convert in addition to Mills Park MS, the previous track assignments for Mills Park ES students would be considered.

11) If the Mills Park schools convert to multi-track, year-round, what would be the impact to school capacity?

The elementary school would see an increase in school capacity of 278 students, and the middle school would see an increase in school capacity of 312 students, with the potential for more as tracks are filled.

12) Why not make the calendar change at the same time the new school opens in 2016?

The school enrollment is capped now and the crowding needs to be addressed now. The more crowded schools get with projected growth, the fewer choices are available to families.

13) What happens to the enrollment cap if the schools convert to multi-track, year-round?

The cap on enrollment would be removed, and the school would return to an annual review for crowding. If the school became crowded again, enrollment could be capped.

14) If Mills Park goes year-round, what will be the traditional calendar option?

The middle school option will be West Cary Middle. The elementary school option could be Northwoods Elementary.

15) With new modular classrooms, will there be additional teachers?

Yes.

16) Will the addition of temporary modular classrooms be permanent?

The temporary modular classrooms would serve as a long-term solution.

17) If additional temporary modular classrooms are added, will the school core services accommodate the additional students?

There will be compromises. Hallways, lunchrooms and the media center will be more crowded. Lunch may begin earlier and continue later. Some modular facilities may be added to provide needed core services (i.e. computer lab, science lab).

18) Where are the schools in the 2013 CIP being built?

The proposed building program includes 11 new elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools.

19) Why doesn't the school system build multi-story schools?

The school system has approximately 75 multi-story schools. Prototype designs in CIP 2013 will provide three- and four-story school buildings. Guidelines do require that our youngest students be on a ground floor so they can quickly move out of the building in case of an emergency.

20) Why doesn't the county build a school big enough for projected growth?

The prototype designs in CIP 2013 for elementary, middle and high schools provide large schools that exceed state standards. New elementary schools have about 10 more classrooms than those schools built 10 years ago, middle schools about 20 more classrooms and high schools about 30 more classrooms. At the same time, acreage has remained the same.

21) Can the school system statistical modeling be improved to provide better insight?

In 2004, WCPSS contracted with N.C. State University's Operations Research and Education Laboratory (OREd) to create an analytical, data-driven process that incorporates land use and future development data into determining the best locations for new schools. This has been a continuous long-range school and

community planning process involving WCPSS, Wake County government, the 12 municipalities, and the Capital Area Municipal Planning Organization, with OREd coordinating updates.

This collaborative method improved the long-range school planning process by incorporating municipal and county planning data and projections, GIS technology and operations research methodologies to locate optimal school sites beyond a three- or four-year bond cycle. In 2008, and again in 2012, OREd conducted full updates of long-range student population forecasts – now broken down into more than 6,400 geographic planning units across the county – reflecting the municipalities’ most recent data on land use plans and future developments.

These data-driven forecasts were used to construct an optimization model to generate target areas for future school sites. For the 2012 update, OREd provided optimal target areas, or circles, for new school locations, as well as student population growth by geographic planning regions through 2032.

The 2014 agreement with OREd will provide an expanded set of analytic and predictive tools focusing on both long-range planning and short-term needs such as assignment planning. The development of an annual Land Use data collection process will reduce lag time between the collection of residential development data and its impact on membership forecasts. In addition, a student behavior model being developed will allow WCPSS to analyze how parent/student school choices impact future assignment plans.

22) Why not convert all elementary and middle schools to multi-track year-round calendars?

Some existing schools have an insufficient number of classrooms to organize a multi-track calendar. Some schools have instructional programs that would be limited by a multi-track program. Maintaining some schools on a traditional calendar, some schools on a modified calendar, and some schools on a multi-track year-round calendar allows families to have calendar options for school assignment.

23) Will the school building program include additional new year-round schools?

The M8 middle school now named Pine Hollow Middle in the northwest area of Wake County will open on the multi-track, year-round calendar in 2016. It will serve as a middle school feeder for year-round elementary schools in the area. The calendar of a school is determined by growth and crowding in the area, new school construction, school feeder patterns, opportunities for calendar choice and available funding.

September 12, 2014