

Coppermine and School Performance

Overview

Fairfax County Public Schools is constructing a new elementary school in western Fairfax County. This issue examines school performance and its impact on the Coppermine boundary study.

The attendance area for the new school will be drawn wholly or largely from the McNair and Floris elementary school attendance areas. Floris is one of the top performing elementary schools in Fairfax County. McNair is ranked near the bottom in elementary school performance.

In addition, three other elementary schools have been included in the boundary study—Herndon, Hutchison, and Oak Hill.

Summary of Scores

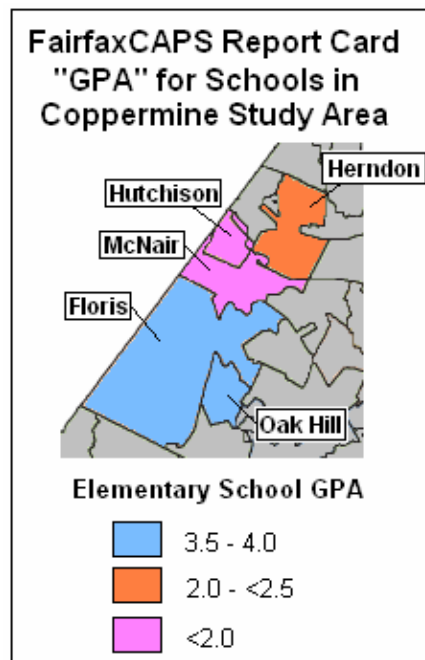
The elementary schools in the southern portion of the Coppermine study—Floris and Oak Hill—are consistently high performing in the “A” grade range for the average number of children passing Standards of Learning (SOL) exams taken by third through sixth graders.

Herndon made great improvements in English scores, moving from an average pass rate of 80.6 percent in 2007 to 86.9 percent in 2008. However, Herndon’s average pass rate for children in Science and Social Studies fell slightly, leaving Herndon with an overall “C” grade.

Hutchison also made great improvements in English scores, moving up from 70.1 percent in 2007 to 79.4 percent in 2008. Yet, math scores fell dramatically. Hutchison’s average math pass rate of 83.8 percent in 2007 fell to 76.0 percent in 2008. Science and Social Studies scores fell with Social Studies

falling below passing rates. The Social Studies pass rate dropped from 59.6 percent to 54.5 percent over the past year. Overall, in 2008, Hutchison had an average pass rate of 71.8 percent up slightly from 2007. Also of note, Hutchison did not pass adequate yearly progress (AYP) two years in a row.

McNair’s English scores improved greatly. In 2007, McNair had a failing grade in English with an average pass rate of only 54.7 percent. That score was greatly improved to a “C” with an average pass rate of 77.2 percent in 2008. Math scores slightly fell from 75.6 percent to 73.5 percent. Science and Social Studies remained consistently low scores in the “D” range. Science scores dropped slightly from 70.3 percent to 68.7 percent. Social Studies scores dropped slightly from 71.6



percent to 70.9 percent. With the low math, science and social studies pass rates, McNair failed to meet AYP for the 5th year in a row and remains in

Highlights

- Floris and Oak Hill are ranked in the top 20 FCPS elementary schools.
- McNair Elementary School moved up six spots in the FairfaxCAPS report card rankings in 2008, the most of any school in the study area.
- It costs approximately \$200,000 per year to send children to other schools in the western part of the county for school choice.

corrective action with school choice and sanctions.

The Role of Title I

Hutchison and McNair are the two Title I schools in this study. Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), FCPS currently defines Title I as a school with a population of at least 40 percent free/reduced lunch.

Both Hutchison and McNair failed to meet AYP two or more years in a row. As a result, students in these schools are eligible for school choice and transportation as well as tutoring. Any families newly redistricted into the McNair or Hutchison attendance areas will be able to apply for school choice.

2008 Elementary School Performance Report Cards Coppermine Study Elementary Schools

School (Rank)	Math	Science	English	Social Studies	GPA Based on all SOLs	Average SOL Score
Floris (15)						
Grade	A	A	A	A	3.71	95.4
Aver. % Pass	97.4	94.3	94.5	95.1		
Herndon (99)						
Grade	C+	C	B	C	2.36	82.3
Aver. % Pass	82.4	76.7	86.9	78.3		
Hutchison (132)						
Grade	C	D+	C	F	1.50	71.8
Aver. % Pass	76.0	70.7	79.4	54.5		
McNair (129)						
Grade	C	D	C	D+	1.57	73.6
Aver. % Pass	73.5	68.7	77.2	70.9		
Oak Hill (18)						
Grade	A	A	A	B+	3.71	94.8
Aver. % Pass	93.6	95.2	97.2	92.1		

Conversely, those who are moved from McNair or Hutchison to non-Title I elementary schools will lose their school choice options. Coppermine, which in all of the boundary options presented, is expected to be a Title I elementary school. Yet, because it is a new school, students will not be able to request placement under school choice. The impact of boundary changes on school choice options is a concern for many families in the study area.

Impact on School Choice

School choice under NCLB has a significant impact on the FCPS budget and is an expense to all tax payers. It costs approximately \$200,000 per year to send children to other schools in the western part of the county for school choice. This is money that could be

used in the schools for improving education.

Community Impact

Coppermine will be populated with children from McNair and Floris. Students redistricted from McNair to the Coppermine attendance area will lose their choice option even though Coppermine is anticipated to be a Title I elementary school. However, they will be in a new school, with a new administration, and new opportunities. They will have the opportunity to attend a school with their neighbors and

students who will be in their current school pyramid which includes Carson Middle School and Westfield High School.

Students in the area redistricted from Floris to Coppermine will trade the assurance of attending a consistently high performing school for an unknown, which creates anxiety for many families. It is hoped by all that Coppermine will also be high performing.

Students moved from Floris to McNair have much to lose. They currently attend a consistently high performing school with SOL pass rates in the 94% range. If redistricted to McNair, these students would be placed into a school that has consistently failed AYP.

Conclusion

School performance is a high priority for many families in Fairfax County. It is not uncommon for school performance to influence home buying decisions.

When School Board decisions override decisions by families on the schools they want their children to attend, those decisions raise concerns in affected homes and communities.

FCPS should look to improve each and every one of its schools. While population growth and demographic shifts may occasionally necessitate boundary changes, these changes would likely be less divisive if there was less disparity in school performance.

2008 Adequate Yearly Progress Report Coppermine Study Elementary Schools

School	Title I	2008	English Improvement	Math Improvement	English Sanction	Math Sanction	AYP Elements Passed
Floris	Not Title I	Made AYP	Not in Improvement	Not in Improvement	No Sanction	No Sanction	29
Herndon	Not Title I	Made AYP	Not in Improvement	Not in Improvement	No Sanction	No Sanction	29
Hutchison	Title I - School Wide Program	Did Not Make AYP	Not in Improvement	Not in Improvement	No Sanction	No Sanction	25
McNair	Title I - School Wide Program	Did Not Make AYP	Year 3	Year 3	Corrective Action (in addition to Public School Choice and SES)	Corrective Action (in addition to Public School Choice and SES)	26
Oak Hill	Not Title I	Made AYP	Not in Improvement	Not in Improvement	No Sanction	No Sanction	29