

Schiff Elementary School – FAQs on Enrollment for 2016-17

Thank you for your continued support as we work to ensure a positive learning environment at Schiff Elementary. As you are aware, the Sienna community has experienced high growth in recent years, and as a result, construction is beginning on 10 classroom additions. These classroom additions were included in the 2014 Bond program, as well as a new elementary school that will open in Sienna South in 2017.

As enrollment at Schiff recently accelerated and exceeded projections for this year, the decision was made to cap enrollment for the 2016-17 school year. The following FAQ document includes more information about the District's ongoing effort to ensure a safe and quality learning experience, while managing growth.

Why did the District decide to cap enrollment for the 2016-17 school year?

During Fort Bend ISD's annual enrollment review, conducted earlier this year, Schiff Elementary was projected to have high enrollment during the 2016-17 school year, prior to the construction of classroom additions and Elementary School 48.

To prepare for this growth, the District added two portable buildings and increased staffing. However, as enrollment accelerated just prior to the start of the school year, the District determined the capping of enrollment would be necessary. Any newly enrolling students will be redirected to Sienna Crossing Elementary for the 2016-17 school year, with transportation provided by the District.

The District will also recommend a class-size waiver from the Texas Education Agency, allowing for a slight increase in class sizes at all grade levels.

What are the current class size requirements?

The Texas Education Agency requires that Districts request waivers when class sizes exceed 22:1 in grades K-4. The state does not have requirements for grades five and up.

Fort Bend ISD, like many other Districts in the state, routinely requests waivers to increase class sizes by one or two extra students in a class so the capping of enrollment is a last resort. This also prevents the District from having to disrupt instruction during the school year and split classrooms as additional students move into the school's attendance zone.

How many students will be in each Schiff classroom during the 2016-17 school year?

Schiff Elementary class sizes are currently within one to two students of the state's 22:1 ratio at K-4. Although there is no state requirement for grades five and up, Schiff fifth-grade class sizes are also near the District's recommended ratio of 25:1.

Other areas of the District, including the elementary schools near Schiff Elementary, are also experiencing similar ratios. However, it is important to note that as each school year begins, the District closely monitors these class sizes District-wide and makes adjustments during the first month of school in order to balance staffing and use our resources as efficiently as possible. This means that class sizes may continue to fluctuate at the beginning of the year at schools throughout the District.

Will there be additional staff to assist with the increased enrollment in the 2016-17 school year?

The District does provide additional staff for campuses with high enrollment in order to meet the needs of students. For example, additional outclass teachers, administrators and counselors are added to

schools when enrollment reaches certain levels. Schiff Elementary has a full-time nurse aide to assist the nurse, which is typically a part-time position. There is also an additional counselor and a part-time aide who will assist both the counselor and the nurse when needed.

Also, instructional aides are often added to support teachers on grade levels where many of the classes are above the 22:1 ratio. Adding additional support staff takes place both before and after the start of school each year.

Do students have enough time to eat during lunch? Schiff Elementary added extra time to the lunch period, and staff members have been carefully monitoring lunch to ensure that students have enough time to eat.

The Sienna area has seen increased growth for years. Why hasn't the District acted sooner to address this increased growth?

Managing growth is an ongoing, continuous process, and the District has done extensive work with the community to plan for this growth, beginning with a District-wide Facilities Master Plan, which led to the development of the 2014 Bond Program. Because of the growth in the Sienna area, classroom additions were included for Schiff, Scanlan Oaks and Sienna Crossing.

Additional collaboration efforts included the creation of a District-wide Feeder Pattern and Boundary plan, which was adopted in January of 2015. This plan was created to address growth and balance enrollment to use facilities as efficiently as possible.

Why is Schiff Elementary enrollment higher than other nearby schools? If FBISD knew that enrollment was projected to be high, why didn't it act sooner to adjust attendance boundaries near Schiff?

Schiff is located in an area of higher growth and new construction, as compared to the other nearby schools. Schools such as Sienna Crossing are in areas that are built out, and don't have new construction underway – they are projected to decline in enrollment.

As the District has moved forward with plans to address growth and build new schools and classroom additions, during the creation of the District-wide Feeder Pattern and Boundary Plan, it was determined that boundaries would be adjusted closer to the completion of the projects -- and with community input. During the creation of the Feeder Pattern and Boundary Plan, the District hosted four Community Dialogue Meetings to gather feedback on two different feeder pattern and boundary scenarios. It also solicited input through focus groups and online questionnaires. Information from the more than 18,000 completed surveys was considered.

This minimizes the number of times that boundaries would need to be adjusted, and children would have to change schools.

According to the District's Facilities Master Plan that was adopted in 2014, the classroom additions were needed immediately, in the 2015-16 school year. Why haven't they been built?

The FBISD Facilities Master Plan stated the building additions would be needed in the 2015-16 school year. However, following the adoption of the that plan, the District immediately began planning for the 2014 Bond Program. In the bond program communication meetings held prior to the referendum, the District shared that building additions and schools in the bond were needed immediately, but that appropriate planning for construction would mean most would not open until the 2016-17 or 2017-18 school years.

Schematic designs for the classroom additions were approved in October of 2015, and the contractor for the school additions to Schiff was approved at the August 15, 2016 FBISD Board Meeting.

When will the additional classrooms at Schiff be completed?

This construction will add 10 classrooms to the school. We anticipate that the classroom additions will be complete before the end of the current school year, so they would be ready for complete use in the 2017-18 school year.

When will the new elementary school be completed in the Sienna South area?

Elementary School 48 is set to open in the fall of 2017. During the coming weeks, FBISD will begin engaging with the community to establish attendance boundaries for the school, as well as the two other elementary schools that will open in 2017.

We expect that Elementary School 48 will relieve over-utilization at Schiff and other nearby schools.

How does Fort Bend ISD project enrollment?

Fort Bend ISD annually reviews District growth and enrollment projections with the assistance of Population and Survey Analysts, or PASA, a respected and Texas-based demographic firm.

PASA is an independent entity that relies on housing market trends, economic and job indicators, and also conducts extensive interviews to project student growth in planning units that are derived from the U.S. Census.

With the help of PASA, Fort Bend ISD is keeping a close eye on anticipated areas of growth, and will annually review its Facilities Master Plan and the District-wide Feeder Pattern and Boundary plan to determine what kind of construction or attendance boundary modifications may be necessary to address growth.

What about safety? Will students be supervised as they make their way to and from the portable building?

Because students have to walk across the parking lot to portable buildings, the District is working closely with the Fort Bend ISD Police to have a crossing guard on duty to supervise children. This staff member will be present as students walk along the side parking lot between the portables and the main building.

Is there anything else that can be done to address traffic in the parking lot?

The school will use traffic control options such as rolling barricades in order to prevent cars from entering the parking lot during the day. We will also ask the District's facilities department to install additional traffic safety measures, including speed bumps and additional fencing.

Is there easy access to restrooms?

Restrooms are located right outside the portable buildings. Students will not have to go to the main building to use the restroom. Regular restroom breaks will also be scheduled, just as they are in the main building.

What happens if students need to go to the nurse, or the office?

In the event your child is not feeling well and needs to see the nurse, or if your child is called to the office to sign out, a staff member will be notified, and will come to meet your child. Students will also be accompanied back to the portable building by an adult.

What happens when it rains, or when there is severe weather?

Students will walk under a covered walk-way in order to protect them from inclement weather. In the case of a tornado watch or warning, students will be brought inside the main school building. All classrooms that utilize portable buildings have an assigned “buddy” classroom inside the building so students will have a place to go during severe weather.