

**JOHN J. SULLIVAN, TASK ASSIGNED
CHIEF PORTFOLIO SERVICES OFFICER**

Signatures on file

DATE: February 24, 2021

TO: School Board Members

FROM: John J. Sullivan, Task Assigned
Chief Portfolio Services Officer

VIA: Robert W. Runcie
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL FIVE-YEAR STUDENT ENROLLMENT
PROJECTIONS FOR 2021/22 THROUGH 2025/26 SCHOOL YEARS**

This memorandum is provided as an addendum to the Five-Year Enrollment Projections memorandum and report released January 24, 2021 and is intended to provide further clarification on the methodology used for producing the projections.

- In Broward County, enrollment dropped by 8,405 students in District-managed prekindergarten through twelfth grade schools.
- The enrollment decline BCPS is experiencing during this pandemic is reflective of national trends in school districts.
- The State of Florida is reporting an 88,000 student enrollment decline statewide. Broward represents approximately 10% of the Florida's student enrollment, so the 8,405 drop in Broward is consistent with what is happening statewide.
- The vast majority of the enrollment loss occurred in the youngest grade levels, especially in kindergarten and first grade.
- Whether or not students will remain outside the BCPS system once pandemic conditions subside is not clear at this time.
- In the years preceding 2020/21, Broward County Public Schools had been experiencing a slow but consistent decline in enrollment. The majority of this decline can be attributed to the continued proliferation of charter schools, which as a whole increase by around 800 students per year.
- It is anticipated enrollment in District-managed facilities will rebound somewhat to near pre-pandemic levels within the next year, and then continue the previous years' trend of gradual decline, whereas charter schools will continue to increase at the pre-pandemic rate.
- Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES), a state voucher program, began in the 2019/20 school year and showed a sharp uptick in participation in 2020/21. This program allows parents meeting certain criteria to apply their FTE toward private school tuition. The strong enrollment increase in the FES program, from

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approximately 1,800 students in 2019/20 to over 3,400 students in 2020/21, may stem in part from the ability of many of these smaller schools to start the school year with face-to-face instruction. Whether students will remain in these schools once normal operations resume in traditional public schools remains to be seen.

With these forecasting challenges in mind, the following considerations were employed in drafting 2021/22 through 2025/26 student enrollment projections:

- A trend based on 2016/17 through 2019/20 benchmark enrollment from TERMS was projected out for the upcoming five years.
- The 2020/21 benchmark enrollment was not incorporated into this trend for any schools experiencing a decline in enrollment from 2019/20 to 2020/21, unless that decline was consistent with the trend of the previous four years. The rationale for this is that the dramatic enrollment declines seen in Broward County and nationally are strongly linked to conditions imposed by the pandemic and are not expected to persist once normal life resumes.
- It is not expected that there will be a significant migration of families away from South Florida; an analysis of first semester withdrawal codes for school years 2016/17 through 2020/21 does not show any increase in the number of students leaving BCPS to attend school in other counties or states.
- 2020/21 enrollment was considered in projections for elementary and middle schools that maintained 2019/20 enrollment levels, and for schools of all levels where enrollment increased.
- Significant enrollment increases at the high school level may have been augmented by pandemic conditions, such as the availability of virtual learning and the moratorium on transfers between schools, and may or may not be sustained in future years. For this reason, these increases were not built into a trend, as they may represent a pandemic anomaly.
- For schools where choice seats make up a significant proportion of school enrollment, projections were adjusted to remain within capacity limits specified in School Board policy, as the allocation of these seats is discretionary.
- School grades will continue to be a factor for review-conscious parents in selecting schools for their children, despite evidence that they do not reflect on the overall quality of education a school offers. As a result, a school's enrollment trajectory may be impacted by its letter grade.

This memorandum and the previously released reports can be accessed on the Demographics & Enrollment Planning Department website located at: <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/34040>. If you need additional information, please contact **Jill Young, Director, Demographics & Enrollment Planning Department at (754) 321-2565**.

RWR/JJS/JY:cr

c: Cabinet
Directors of School Performance and Accountability
Principals