Highlights of the Soft Neighborhood Model

Brooke Cowan, Matt Marjanovic

http://www.softneighborhoodmodel.org/

The Soft Neighborhood Model is a method for assigning students to schools in a way that

1. keeps students close to their homes,
2. automatically balances enrollments at each grade across schools, and
3. encourages the mixing of populations.

There are no hard boundaries in the Soft Neighborhood Model. School assignments are made in a way that balances enrollments across all schools in the district.

1 Keeps students close to their homes.

1.1 The Soft Neighborhood Model is a neighborhood model.

Like any traditional neighborhood model, the only input a family has is its home address. The Soft Neighborhood Model does not ask families to rank their preferred schools. It is not a School Choice model.

1.2 Students are assigned to nearby schools.

Each family's address determines which nearby schools their children might attend. The three closest schools are always candidates for assignment. Closer schools are favored over farther ones.

1.3 Living close to a school does not guarantee placement.

Living closer to a certain school makes it more likely that a student will be assigned to that school over another, but it doesn't make any guarantees. Buying a specific house will not guarantee assignment to a specific school.

1.4 Younger co-enrolled siblings are guaranteed placement.

The model *does* guarantee that a family can send younger siblings to the same school that an older sibling attends, if it desires to do so.

2 Automatically balances enrollments across all schools.

2.1 Enrollment balancing happens at each individual grade level.

The Soft Neighborhood Model balances enrollments at the grade and section level. Given enrollment targets for each school, the model tries to keep each grade level filled with the right number of students.

2.2 The model places new students to achieve balance.

Continuing students continue as usual. The Soft Neighborhood Model places new students of all grade levels to best balance each grade at each school. In cases of school openings or closures, the model can be used to fairly place affected students.

2.3 The model aims to provide long-term enrollment stability at all schools.

Long-term enrollment stability means stable class sizes every year in every grade, despite shifts in population. The Soft Neighborhood Model achieves this without boundary changes.

3 Encourages the mixing of populations.

3.1 Schools are communities of families who all live nearby.

Families attend nearby schools, so students will have classmates who live nearby. Not every student who lives nearby will go to the same school.

3.2 The model has no hard boundaries.

In the Soft Neighborhood Model, there are no hard boundaries separating one group of families from another by school. On any given block, families will attend a variety of nearby schools. This helps geographic neighbors be more aware of schools other than their own, fostering a more robust, connected community overseeing our schools.