Executive Summary: SchoolCAMP Update

Orange County Schools (OCS) contracted with SchoolCAMP in October 2025 to support comprehensive facilities and operational planning, with a focus on student reassignment considerations associated with the development of a new elementary school. This partnership is part of the district's broader efforts to evaluate school capacity, enrollment trends, and program placement to inform long-term facilities and student assignment decisions.

The Board of Education will consider the placement of the K–5 year-round elementary program in Spring 2027, followed by proposed elementary school boundary adjustments in quarter one of 2028. Aligned with Pillar 4 of the Engage Orange strategic plan and guided by the district's commitments to equity and transparent communication, this planning process supports informed decision-making, equitable student assignment, and efficient use of district facilities.

The SchoolCAMP update will include the following items:

- 2030 OCS Comprehensive Plan
- School Planning Project Pathway
- Board of Education and Community Priorities
- 2026-2027 Enrollment and Program Capacity Updates
- Program Placement Methodology (K-5 Year-Round Elementary School)
- Timeline and Next Steps

2030 OCS Comprehensive Plan

SchoolCAMP connects school district, city, and county leadership to identify root challenges, then collaboratively designs and implements technical services and community engagement strategies to address them. Orange County Schools will collaborate with SchoolCAMP and, by 2030, will:

- Review and integrate updates to student enrollment and program capacity data
- Consider facility operational futures
- Build a new elementary school in western Orange County
- Review and optimize magnet program placements and school boundaries
- Improve transportation consistency and level of service
- Implement a system of successful change for facilities and student assignment for the 2029-2030 school year

School Planning Project Pathway (SPPP)
The SPPP outlines how SchoolCAMP will analyze data alongside Board and public feedback to help the Board of Education set appropriate utilization rates and balance OCS school capacities and transportation resources. The pathway is outlined below:

- **Fall 2026, Phase 1:**
  - Conduct data collection and analysis of Board of Education and community priorities
  - Conduct informative and transparent communication about the planning pathway from Fall 2026 through Spring 2028
- **Spring 2027, Phase 2:**
  - Present K-5 year-round program placement solutions to the Board of Education
- **Fall 2027, Phase 3:**
  - Implement a full community engagement process around OCS elementary school boundary adjustments
  - Present potential boundary adjustments to the Board of Education

Board of Education and Community Priorities
The Board of Education completed an assessment to gather information on specific factors they deemed as priorities (challenges and values) for OCS students, staff, and families. In addition to the Board of Education priorities assessment, a community priorities assessment was distributed to OCS families, county residents, and district stakeholders to gather feedback related to school facilities, operations, academic programming, and redistricting.

The Board of Education and the community were aligned on the following challenges and values listed below:

- Challenges: employee retention, access to specialty programs, and building health and security
- Values: well-balanced student populations, building health and safety, meal service quality, and fiscal responsibility

2026-2027 Enrollment and Program Capacity Updates

In 2026, Orange County Government commissioned Carolina Demography to develop a 10-year student enrollment forecast to support long-term planning. Current Orange County Schools (OCS) enrollment trends generally align with these projections, with most schools experiencing declines of approximately 1–2%. More notable decreases have occurred at Grady Brown and New Hope elementary schools, while Orange Middle and Orange High have experienced enrollment increases.

For the 2026–2027 school year, actual elementary enrollment was 129 students (4.6%) below projections, with 2,693 students enrolled compared to the forecast of 2,822. New Hope and Grady Brown experienced the largest differences from projected enrollment, at 10.2% and 9.7% below forecasts, respectively. Conversely, Orange Middle School exceeded its enrollment projection by 6.9%. These variations highlight the importance of regularly evaluating enrollment trends to inform future facility planning, school capacity, and student assignment decisions. An updated enrollment forecast is anticipated in Spring 2027.

Over the past six months, SchoolCAMP conducted a comprehensive review of Orange County Schools' (OCS) K–12 academic programs to assess instructional space needs, evaluate school capacity, and support long-term facilities planning. The review considered several factors that influence how classroom spaces are utilized and how school capacity is determined, including:

- **Core Instruction:** Classroom space needed to support K–12 academic instruction
- **Specialized Instructional Spaces:** Dedicated classrooms for art, music, world languages, and other specialized instruction
- **Pre-Kindergarten and Exceptional Children Programs:** Classroom requirements and space allocations to accommodate specialized student services
- **Instructional Support:** Additional spaces needed to support student learning and instructional services
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Specialized instructional facilities and classroom requirements for middle and high school CTE programs
- **Mobile Classrooms:** Opportunities to reduce reliance on mobile units through more effective use of existing school facilities

To validate these findings and establish updated school capacity figures, SchoolCAMP and district staff reviewed facility site designs, school floor plans, middle and high school course schedules, and the OCS classroom database. The review also included individual meetings with all K–12 principals to confirm instructional space needs and finalize school capacity calculations.

Program Capacity and School Utilization

The table below outlines current (2026–2027) and projected (2029–2030) program capacities, student enrollment, and facility utilization rates across all K–12 schools (excluding Partnership Academy), alongside five-year Facility Condition Index (FCI) scores and original construction years.

School	Program Capacity 2026-27	ADM 2026-27	Utilization 2026	Program Capacity 2029-30	Forecast ADM 2029-30	Utilization 2029	FCI (5 Yr)	Built
Central	432	225	52.1%	432	186	43.1%	35%	1952
Efland-Cheeks	473	445	94.1%	473	427	90.3%	17%	1952
Grady Brown	475	349	73.5%	475	373	78.5%	17%	1974
Hillsborough	458	429	93.7%	458	442	96.5%	28%	1952
New Hope	540	489	90.6%	540	576	106.7%	32%	1991
Pathways	407	313	76.9%	407	354	87.0%	19%	2000
River Park	510	443	86.9%	510	390	76.5%	38%	1956
New Elementary	–	–	–	600	0	0%	0%	(2029)
Elementary Totals	**3,295**	**2,693**	**81.7%**	**3,895**	**2,748**	**70.6%**		
A.L. Stanback	830	592	71.3%	830	604	72.8%	37%	1995
Gravelly Hill	658	445	67.6%	658	413	62.8%	27%	2006
Orange Middle	658	562	85.4%	658	490	74.5%	30%	1968
Middle Totals	**2,146**	**1,599**	**74.5%**	**2,146**	**1,507**	**70.2%**		
Cedar Ridge	1,543	1,146	74.3%	1,543	1,189	77.1%	8%	2002
Orange High	1,384	1,056	76.3%	1,384	1,047	75.7%	27%	1962
High Totals	**2,927**	**2,202**	**75.2%**	**2,927**	**2,236**	**76.4%**		
OCS District Totals	**8,368**	**6,494**	**77.6%**	**8,968**	**6,491**	**72.4%**		

*Source: SchoolCAMP Board Update, November 16, 2026. *2029-30 forecast is updating.*

The table below defines the four distinct capacity classifications used by Orange County Schools across operational, construction, and regulatory planning:

Capacity Type	What It Counts	Use It For
Program (managed by OCS)	Core classrooms in use for the academic program, at NC and OCS class sizes	Utilization, student assignment, facility & comprehensive planning
Design (at time of build)	Every suitable teaching station at DPI class-size standards	Aligning new school design & construction with the academic program
Schools Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (SAPFO) (legal maximum)	Capacity certified to Orange County annually (NCDPI formulas)	County development review
Campus	Program capacity with mobiles (instructional use)	Temporary relief only

Program Placement Methodology (K-5 Year-Round Elementary School)
SchoolCAMP will assist the Board of Education to evaluate potential program placement options for the K-5 year-round program and provide recommendations based on district operations, school capacity, projected student enrollment, and future attendance boundary considerations.

The study will not establish or recommend changes to school attendance boundaries. Unlike a traditional boundary study, which uses students' geographic locations to determine school assignments, this evaluation focuses on identifying feasible locations for an application-based program. Because family interest and participation may vary depending on where the program is located, geographic enrollment data alone cannot determine the most appropriate placement.

Timeline and Next Steps
The table below outlines the Planning Project Pathway:

Stakeholder Group	Activity	Timeline
PHASE 1: Priorities and Planning Data Build		
PIO / District Leadership	Share phasing/planning approach with the public	Sept. 2026 – Jan. 2028
Broader Community	Community priorities assessment	Complete
SchoolCAMP	Land use, 10-year enrollment forecast, academic program confirmation, capacities, out-of-capacity table	Complete
Board of Education	Board Priorities Assessment; 2x2s to confirm program placement goals/priorities/requirements; K-5 year-round placement methodology presentation	Complete
PHASE 2: K-5 Year-Round Program Placement		
SchoolCAMP	Develop placement scenarios from priorities assessment	Jan. – Mar. 2027
Board of Education	SchoolCAMP presents two to three K-5 year-round placement scenarios	Mar./Apr. 2027
Board of Education	Final K- 5 year-round program placement presentation	Apr./May 2027
PHASE 3: OCS Elementary School Boundary Adjustments		
Community Advisory Committee (CAC)	OCS and SchoolCAMP coalesce CAC leadership; first CAC meeting	Aug./Sept. 2027
Board / Community / School Leadership	Boundary work plan reset; two community priority sessions; principals change-leadership training	Sept. 2027
SchoolCAMP / All Groups	Draft boundary scenarios and transportation modeling (Oct.); feedback presentations to the Board of Education, CAC, school leadership and the community (Nov.); scenario refinement (Nov./Dec.)	Oct. – Dec. 2027
Board of Education	Final boundary presentation	Dec. 2027/Jan. 2028