

## Fairfax Braces for 3,200 New Students

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The [U.S. Army](#) estimates that 3,200 schoolchildren will move to southern [Fairfax County](#) as a result of a plan to expand the [Fort Belvoir](#) workforce, an influx county officials say would overwhelm some schools and require more classrooms.

[Fairfax](#) school officials said two more elementary schools are needed to handle the incoming students. The system also would need more middle school space, which could come from a new building, an addition to an existing school or a change in school boundary lines.

School Superintendent Jack D. Dale and [Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly](#) (D) said they will push for financial help from the federal government. School officials estimate that required new construction would cost about \$77 million.

"Three thousand students -- no one has ever talked about that before, and that's a huge number," Connolly said yesterday. "We're going to have to huddle with our congressional delegation to talk about this impact and make sure it gets addressed. I don't think the taxpayers of Fairfax ought to bear the whole burden of the decision of the [U.S.](#) government to relocate 22,000 employees."

The reorganization of regional military facilities under the Base Realignment and Closure Commission plan has sparked concerns in several communities where jobs are being added over whether schools and roads can handle the increase in residents.

For instance, a recent Army study predicted about 22,000 federal and private-sector jobs, 7,700 schoolchildren and \$61 million in construction projects would come to [Maryland's Fort Meade](#) area.

In Fairfax, officials worry the plan to move 22,000 workers to Fort Belvoir by 2011 would worsen traffic congestion in an area with limited roads. Officials also have expressed concerns about the effect on schools -- the School Board set aside \$2 million in a recent capital budget to plan for new students. But a new Army report offers the first estimate of the number of children likely to move to the area.

Army officials have said they will work with local officials and have sought input from government agencies and community members.

"We realize there is going to be an impact on lots of different parts of the infrastructure, and we are working with leaders locally, the commonwealth and members of Congress to do what we can to be good neighbors," Fort Belvoir spokesman Don Dees said.

In an April 27 letter to Col. Brian W. Lauritzen, Fort Belvoir's commander, Dale said elementary schools in the southern part of the county were expected to be short of seats in 2012, without counting the students likely to move there because of the base restructuring.

Although the county would also need to add space at middle schools, Dale wrote, there are expected to be enough open desks at high schools to accommodate the additional students.

Countywide, there are about 164,000 students in Fairfax public schools, making it the largest system in the Washington region.

Dale noted that the current school construction budget, which lays out building and renovation plans for the next five years, doesn't account for the changes at Fort Belvoir because school officials had not known how many children to expect.

"Now that the Army has provided a projection for potential new school-aged children and the adjusted capacity requirements and costs have been identified, I hope that we can pursue additional discussions regarding the proportional share that the Army would be expected to bear," Dale wrote.

County and Army officials said the increase in students would not be sudden. Many workers who will come to Fort Belvoir already have homes nearby, and others from the Washington region may choose to commute.

But once those workers retire or move on to other jobs, their replacements may choose to live close to the base.

"The long-term impact could be considerable," Connolly said.

[Rep. James P. Moran Jr. \(D-Va.\)](#) said in a statement that he thinks Fairfax should be given funding to ease the transition.

"The impact of 20,000 new employees at Fort Belvoir cannot be overstated," Moran said.

"From greater traffic congestion to an influx of new students in the schools, the local community will be negatively impacted if the [Defense Department](#) ignores the community's funding needs."