

Mr. Dan Drake
Interim Chief Operations Officer
DeKalb County School District
1701 Mountain Industrial Blvd.
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

December 11, 2018

Dear Dan,

Thank you and the DCSD Planning Team for allowing the opportunity to provide feedback to the Druid Hills Redistricting Recommendation shared at the Nov. 28 public input session. Taking the time to hear directly from those most impacted by these changes in our Druid Hills Cluster will help provide an optimal solution that is in the best long term interest of our students and families.

The Druid Hills Cluster Alliance (DHCA) includes parent leaders and Principals from each school in our Cluster. Together, we agreed on the following recommendations and enhancements to the Druid Hills Redistricting plan for your consideration:

- **Re-classify the official Fernbank Elementary School Capacity at 900 students** – We strongly feel the 950 seat student capacity number at Fernbank ES is overinflated. This impacts Fernbank’s key utilization benchmark by 5 percentage points and could set up a situation where Fernbank may be at full or overcapacity in the near future, defeating the purpose of 2019 redistricting:
 - DCSD recommended option Fall 19 enrollment at Fernbank = 815 students
 - 950 seat capacity = **85.79%** vs. 900 seat capacity = **90.56%** utilization

Official DCSD documents and presentations from 2014 – 2015 when the new Fernbank building was proposed and constructed clearly state the capacity of the new school at 900 students. Members of the DHCA were a part of the Fernbank building committee and have verified the 900 student capacity figure DCSD consistently used throughout the building process. The current 950 capacity data overstates the need to redistrict 50 students to Fernbank. Please use the correct **900 seat student Fernbank capacity** figure that can leave at least 50 more students and families in their original schools.

- **Keep the Medlock Park neighborhood together** – We strongly support keeping neighborhoods together for the overall good of our Cluster. Medlock Park contains a close-knit community with a natural boundary of N. Druid Hills Road to the North, N. Decatur Rd to the South, Hwy 78/Scott Blvd. to the east and Willivee Drive to the West. DCSD recommendation proposes a dividing line of Peachtree Creek splitting the neighborhood. Moving this entire neighborhood as a whole from Laurel Ridge ES to Fernbank ES provides a solution that will alleviate overcrowding at Laurel Ridge, enable an efficient bus route down Scott Blvd. to Fernbank ES and most importantly, keep this thriving community together as a strong, vibrant neighborhood attending public elementary schools together. The Nov. 15 letter sent to Dr. Green on behalf of parents

within the Medlock Park neighborhood outlines the case to support this recommendation. We estimate the number of students living north of Peachtree Creek is only 15 – 20 students who could join their neighborhood in moving to Fernbank ES.

- **Expand School Choice for 2019 impacted families to Include rising 3rd, 4th and 5th Graders** - The DCSD recommendation allows rising 5th graders to remain in their original schools which we support. To minimize any potential negative impact on student learning, we recommend expanding this School Choice option to all impacted rising 3rd, 4th and 5th graders, so parents and guardians can decide if keeping their child in the original school would be best for their child's learning development. Each child is unique, with many adapting easily to change, but others may be more vulnerable to disruption in these pivotal learning years and would benefit from remaining in their original school. This would still allow DCSD to achieve the balance needed to alleviate overcrowding at Laurel Ridge in 1 – 2 years, but provides more flexibility for families and students who need continuity for an optimal learning experience. This option would require parents to make a decision on School Choice shortly after the final DCSD Superintendent recommendation is announced, so schools can adequately plan resources for 2019 Fall.
- **Expand Montessori at Briar Vista Elementary School** – We recommend expanding Briar Vista Elementary School Choice to include one additional class, or approximately 25 students. This would allow more Dekalb County families and students to benefit from the unique opportunity that the Montessori learning environment provides.

We would like to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss these recommendations and enhancements in more detail before the final DCSD plan is announced.

Thank you again for your efforts to solicit feedback from our school communities. The DHCA is here to partner with you and the DCSD team to create the best educational experience possible for the students and families of our Druid Hills Cluster.

Sincerely,

Ken Schroeder
Chair, Druid Hills Cluster Alliance

Lindsay Wolf
Vice-Chair, Druid Hills Cluster Alliance

Steve Langdon
Secretary, Druid Hills Cluster Alliance

CC: Trenton Arnold, Region 2 Superintendent
Marshall Orson, Region 2 Board of Education Representative
Druid Hills Cluster Alliance members