

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.

Laurel Ridge Elementary School is the school most negatively affected by the redistricting, though we know and understand that it is necessary. As the Laurel Ridge PAC Chair, along with Principal Schrock, we are asking for these one-time concessions to the most recent Druid Hills Redistricting plan for your consideration:

- **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 Medlock Association, along with a group of parents have already submitted two letters with signatures from those families who live North of the creek asking to stay with the neighborhood. The number of students North of the creek is estimated around 18-20.
- **Expand School Choice for 2019 impacted families to Include rising 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Graders and siblings** - The DCSD recommendation allows rising 5<sup>th</sup> graders to remain in their original schools which we support. To minimize any potential negative impact on student learning, Laurel Ridge recommends expanding this School Choice option to all impacted rising 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 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. Laurel Ridge also asks that the siblings of those students grandfathered in also be allowed to stay at Laurel Ridge even if they are currently not in Kindergarten. It is difficult to split families up between two schools.

- **Staffing allotments and/or program support in the event our total enrollment falls below an expected level (sustainability for one or two years as needed)**- By reducing the total number of students attending Laurel Ridge by such a significant amount, inevitably, the total number of staff will also be reduced. Because the district formula for funding is based on FTE, Laurel Ridge requests that this be taken into account and that DCSD continue to provide the support and resources to the school during the first year or two following the redistricting process, regardless of the FTE allotment. The school supports three regional programs that we anticipate will be supported fully through special education funding. However, the general education allotments will be drastically reduced, creating a negative impact on the school's ability to serve students in EIP, ESOL, and gifted programs. As overall enrollment starts to increase, as expected, the true funding formula for staffing allotments will be more feasible. Laurel Ridge is a small school that strives to maintain a low student teacher ratio. Fewer teachers could mean a drastic change to class size and thus, challenge the integrity of the school. We ask this temporary adjustment to staffing be considered for the first two years, as needed.

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. Laurel Ridge Elementary and the DHCA are 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,

Lindsay Wolf  
Chair, Laurel Ridge Elementary Principal Advisory Council  
Vice-Chair, Druid Hills Cluster Alliance

Kari Schrock  
Principal, Laurel Ridge Elementary School

CC: Trenton Arnold, Region 2 Superintendent  
Marshall Orson, Region 2 Board of Education Representative  
Laurel Ridge Elementary School Principal Advisory Council Members  
Druid Hills Cluster Alliance members