



Principal Advisory Council

December 6, 2019

Ms. Ramona Tyson
Interim District Superintendent
DeKalb County School District (DCSD)
1701 Mountain Industrial Boulevard
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

RE: Austin Elementary Redistricting Plan

Dear Superintendent Tyson,

Thank you for your time and efforts with the Austin Elementary Redistricting Plan. This letter is sent on behalf of the parent representatives of the Principal Advisory Council ("PAC") of Vanderlyn Elementary School ("VES") in response to the November 20, 2019 Staff Recommended Plan ("Staff Plan"). We join the VES PTO in opposing the Staff Recommended Plan and voice our support of the PTO letter sent to the DCSD.

Our position has always been one of unity for our school community. The new Staff Plan would detrimentally affect our community and children's lives and education (for the reasons stated below). As the VES PAC, it is our duty to speak up at this time about the November 20th Staff Plan that inexplicably differs so substantially from any of the previously presented plans.

As a general matter, the Staff Plan proposes to relocate a total of 533 students (more than any of the other proposed plans), representing 13% of all students in the Dunwoody cluster. This severe disruption to our student's lives and education is not in the best interest of VES or the Dunwoody cluster as a whole. The net impact to VES, after the disruption to 191 students, is a loss of 7 children. We are currently the most over-utilized school with the second highest number of trailers/modulars. The Staff Plan does not address our overcrowding, nor does it change the number of trailers/modulars. We are not asking for you to decrease our overall utilization or take away any of our trailers/modulars, but to please keep our school community intact and not increase our potential risk of growth. This can be accomplished by retaining SECTION C & D at VES and moving SECTION B to Austin Elementary School ("AES").

The following outlines the VES PAC's main objections to the November 20, 2019 Staff Recommended Plan by how it pertains to the board-approved criteria:

1. Geographic Proximity – SECTION B is significantly closer to AES (less than 2 miles) than it is to VES (2.5 miles). Areas of SECTION C are closer to VES (1 mile) than they are to Austin at over 1.5 miles away. Areas of SECTION D are closer to Vanderlyn (0.7 miles) than they are to Kingsley (1.1 miles).

2. Projected Future Enrollment / Instructional Capacity - VES is one of the least equipped within the Dunwoody cluster to accommodate additional growth. Our school is over 50 years old, at 134% capacity, and situated on 9.2 acres with 11 trailers/modulars. There is no physical space to accommodate more. By including SECTION B, the potential for unpredictable growth will put VES at risk for severe overcrowding. SECTIONS C & D inherently represent a lower potential future enrollment than SECTION B. It benefits the entire Dunwoody cluster to evenly distribute high-density housing, as it helps spread the risk of overcrowding across the entire cluster. As pointed out in the chart below, the current distribution of high-density housing is clearly disproportionate across the Dunwoody cluster.

Percentage of High-Density Housing *

	Current	Staff Recommended	Moving SECTION B to AES, C&D stay in VES
AES	24%	27%	35%
DES	53%	40%	40%
KES	49%	51%	51%
VES	43%	56%	43%

* Based on DCSD data and data gathered directly from schools & excluding townhomes

* We have not included HES or CES from the Dunwoody cluster in this comparison because they are unaffected by the options affecting VES

3. Traffic Patterns and Safety Concerns – The neighborhoods that make up SECTION D will be adding to the existing traffic congestion on Tilly Mill Road and Mount Vernon Road during school rush hours. The students from SECTION C will have to travel through the Wyntercreek subdivision, which is in walkable proximity to the new Austin Elementary school. This will dramatically increase the number of cars on residential streets while students are walking to and from school. Many of these streets do not have sidewalks, resulting in unsafe walking conditions. The neighborhoods in SECTION C will also be adding to the existing traffic congestion on Roberts Drive. To date, DCSD has yet to provide any basic due diligence, such as independent impact studies, evaluating how any of the proposed plans will affect traffic and safety concerns.
4. Efficient and Economical Operations - The families in SECTION C & D represent 14% of the VES population, but account for 25-30% of VES’s current volunteer participation, PTO leadership and financial resources. Volunteer hours and financial support from VES parents directly impact the resources available to our teachers and ultimately our children.

During the cluster-wide PAC meeting with District 1 BoE member, Stan Jester, the week prior to November 20, specific lines were discussed that would be affected by the redistricting. Neither lines from SECTION B or SECTION C were discussed in this meeting. However, the latest map in the Staff Plan presented at the November 20th meeting as “agreed upon by the PACs in the cluster” misrepresented our community’s views as the lines for SECTION B or C were never discussed. It is our hope that DCSD will continue to approach the final stages of this process in an impartial manner that benefits the Dunwoody cluster as a whole.

For the aforementioned reasons, the VES PAC respectfully requests that the DCSD Redistricting Committee amend the Staff Plan in the following two ways:

- 1. to retain SECTIONS C & D at VES**
- 2. move SECTION B to AES to minimize overcrowding risks at VES and DES**

Our PAC recommendations will result in 19% (99) fewer children being disrupted and helps the overall cluster achieve the goals outlined by the DCSD (Proximity, Projected Growth, Instructional Capacity, and Safety are all improved vs. the current plan with this change). We have been asked what we are willing to sacrifice to help relieve the Dunwoody cluster overcrowding. We implore the board to consider that VES is the most overcrowded school at 134%, we have 11 trailers/modulars with zero space for more. The Staff Plan does nothing to relieve our overcrowding. We are only asking to keep our community intact, by keeping SECTIONS C & D. In closing, we would like to reiterate that our position is, and always has been, one of unity within our school community.

We look forward to the opportunity to engage in further discussions to develop a plan that best serves the needs of the entire cluster. On behalf of the parent representatives of the Principal Advisory Council of Vanderlyn Elementary School, we thank you for your time and immediate attention.

Respectfully,
Principal Advisory Council of Vanderlyn Elementary School
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Mr. Stan Jester, BoE District 1
Ms. Allyson Gevertz, BoE District 4
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