


Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

October 15, 2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Principals
Cluster Coordinators and Parent Teacher Association Presidents of the
Walter Johnson Cluster

From: Larry A. Bowers, Interim Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: Recommendation for Walter Johnson Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify you of my recommendation for a Walter Johnson Cluster roundtable discussion group regarding Grades K–12 facility planning. The recommendation is contained in the attached “Supplement D” of my *Recommended FY 2017 Capital Budget and the FY 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program*. It also is available on the Montgomery County Public Schools [website](#) by selecting “Supplement D”.

The Board of Education schedule for review and action on the recommended boundary changes is listed below:

November 5, 2015	Board of Education Work Session
November 9 and 12, 2015	Board of Education Public Hearings
November 16, 2015	Board of Education Action

If you have any questions concerning the recommendation or the upcoming Board of Education review and action process, please contact Mr. Bruce Crispell, director, Division of Long-range Planning, Department of Facilities Management, via e-mail at Bruce_Crispell@mcpsmd.org or by telephone at 240-314-4702.

LAB:AMZ:JS:bmr

Attachment

Copy to:

Dr. Navarro	Mr. Crispell
Dr. Statham	Mr. Song
Dr. Zuckerman	Ms. Cope
Dr. Kimball	Ms. Frost
Dr. Williams	Ms. McKenna

Interim Superintendent’s Recommendation For Walter Johnson Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group

October 15, 2015

Executive Summary

The Walter Johnson Cluster has experienced large enrollment increases during the past eight years, primarily driven by the sale of homes to younger families. Also, new development in the cluster has played a role, although by a significantly smaller amount than demographic changes in existing communities. In the future, the cluster will see substantial amounts of new housing associated with the adopted White Flint Sector Plan and the two new sector plans now getting underway, “Rock Springs” and “White Flint II.” In addition, the large WMAL property has been sold and will be redeveloped with new housing.

I recommend a roundtable discussion group (roundtable) process be conducted with representatives of all Walter Johnson Cluster schools. The purpose of the roundtable is to gather input on a range of options to accommodate near-term and long-term enrollment increases. The roundtable would consider facility planning issues at all three school levels and include discussion of how closed elementary schools and the former Woodward High School facility may be utilized in the future. The scope of the roundtable would be the Walter Johnson Cluster and discussion of options would be confined to the current cluster area.

Background

The Walter Johnson Cluster has experienced significant enrollment increases during the past eight years. Since the 2007–2008 school year, cluster elementary enrollment has increased by 1,260 students; middle school enrollment by 481 students; and high school enrollment by 334 students. The table following this supplement provides current and projected enrollment for Walter Johnson Cluster schools. To address the enrollment increases, the capacity of every school in the cluster either has been increased in the past few years or will be increased in the coming years. On the next page is a table that displays a list of school projects that have been completed or that are planned in the future.

School	Old Capacity	New Capacity	Type of Project	Year Added/ Planned
Elementary Schools				
Ashburton ES	652	881	Addition	August 2020
Farmland ES	617	729	Addition	August 2011
Garrett Park ES	478	752	Revitalization Expansion	January 2012
Kensington- Parkwood ES	472	746	Addition	August 2018
Luxmanor ES	429	745	Revitalization Expansion	January 2020
Wyngate ES	421	778	Addition	August 2013
Secondary Schools				
Walter Johnson HS	1,865	2,335	Revitalization Expansion	January 2010
North Bethesda MS	864	1,208	Addition	August 2018
Tilden MS	939	1,200	Revitalization Expansion	August 2020

In addition to the projects listed above, a feasibility study for a classroom addition is under way for Walter Johnson High School. Although options that could increase the capacity of the school up to 3,200 seats are being explored, no plan has been approved. The addition will be included as one of the options in the roundtable process. As part of the Tilden Middle School revitalization/expansion project, the Board of Education approved a plan to collocate Rock Terrace School, a special education school, with Tilden Middle School as part of the project.

Facility Planning Strategy

As in many parts of the county, the facility planning strategy employed for the Walter Johnson Cluster schools has been to increase the capacities of existing schools up to the approximately 740-seat capacity for elementary schools and 1,200-seat capacity for middle schools. No determination has been made on whether to expand Walter Johnson High School.

Increasing school capacities through stand-alone additions and revitalization/expansion projects is a cost effective strategy. When the classroom addition project at Ashburton Elementary School is completed in August 2020, a total of 1,562 more elementary seats will have been added at the six cluster elementary schools. The stand-alone addition project at Bethesda Middle School and the revitalization/expansion project at Tilden Middle School will add 605 middle school seats. The 2010 revitalization/expansion project at Walter Johnson High School increased the capacity by 470 high school seats.

Because most of the elementary schools will have a capacity of approximately 740 seats by the 2021–2022 school year and Ashburton Elementary School will have a capacity of 881 seats, the strategy of adding onto existing elementary schools will have run its course. Updated school enrollment projections illustrate that even with the added capacity described above, most cluster elementary schools will be at or exceed capacity by the 2021–2022 school year. Middle school enrollment also is projected to fill most of the expanded capacities of the two middle schools by the 2021–2022 school year. And of most concern, Walter Johnson High School is projected to exceed capacity by more than 500 students by the 2021–2022 school year.

Given the updated enrollment projections and plans for new housing in the Walter Johnson Cluster, it is necessary to consider options for cluster schools and students.

Interim Superintendent’s Recommendation

In order to address the enrollment issues in the Walter Johnson Cluster, I recommend a roundtable process be conducted with representatives of all Walter Johnson Cluster schools. The purpose of the roundtable is to gather input on a range of options to accommodate near-term and long-term enrollment increases. The roundtable would consider facility planning issues at all three school levels and include discussion of how closed elementary schools and the former Woodward High School facility may be utilized in the future. The scope of the roundtable would be the Walter Johnson Cluster and discussion of options would be confined to the current cluster area.

If the Board of Education supports my recommendation for a roundtable process, I will charge the group with conducting a thorough exploration of options to address facility planning issues at all school levels. Membership on the roundtable would consist of Parent Teacher Association leaders of each school and the Walter Johnson cluster coordinators.

The roundtable would be facilitated by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff from the Division of Long-range Planning, Department of Facilities Management. Consistent with previous roundtables, MCPS staff will facilitate the roundtable members to establish criteria to evaluate options and provide feedback on the pros and cons of these options. In addition to options presented by MCPS staff, members of the roundtable may suggest options. No boundary changes will be considered during the roundtable process.

Among the options that will be considered will be the reopening of closed schools and construction of a new school(s) on a site(s) in the cluster:

Elementary Schools

- There are four closed elementary schools in the cluster, including the former Alta Vista, Arylawn, Kensington, and Montrose elementary schools.
- The former Grosvenor Elementary School is in the cluster and is used as a holding school for elementary schools undergoing revitalization/expansion projects.
- There is one future elementary school site in the Walter Johnson Cluster, located at the southern portion of the current White Flint Mall.

Middle Schools

- There are no closed middle schools or future middle school sites.

High Schools

- The former Woodward High School facility currently houses Tilden Middle School, but it is slated to become a holding center for secondary schools undergoing revitalization/expansion projects when Tilden Middle School is relocated to the Tilden Lane site at the completion of its revitalization/expansion in August 2020.

The roundtable will be supported by MCPS instructional staff who will provide information on program impacts of various options; an architect who will explore facility and site options as needed; and staff from the Montgomery County Planning Department, who provide information on the land use plans in the Walter Johnson Cluster. The roundtable will begin its work in early spring 2016 and provide a report to the interim superintendent of schools and the Board by the end of the 2015–2016 school year. The outcomes of the report will help guide recommendations in fall 2016 as part of the *Superintendent's Recommended Amendments to the FY 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)*.

Parents of students attending Walter Johnson Cluster schools have expressed an understandable level of anxiety as enrollment continues to grow and new communities begin construction and other communities are planned. The roundtable is the appropriate process to engage the school community in an exploration of facility planning options.

Walter Johnson Cluster Enrollment Projections

SCHOOLS	PRELIMINARY ENROLLMENT	PROJECTED ENROLLMENT					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Walter Johnson HS							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	2335	2335	2335	2335	2335	2335	2335
Enrollment	2290	2304	2356	2466	2649	2763	2865
<i>space available</i>	45	31	-21	-131	-314	-428	-530
North Bethesda MS							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	864	864	864	1208	1208	1208	1208
Enrollment	1028	1133	1183	1200	1206	1194	1181
<i>space available</i>	-164	-269	-319	8	2	14	27
Tilden MS							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	939	939	939	939	939	1200	1200
Enrollment	851	939	959	992	1024	1094	1132
<i>space available</i>	88	0	-20	-53	-85	106	68
Ashburton ES							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	652	652	652	652	652	881	881
Enrollment	907	924	926	917	895	890	886
<i>space available</i>	-255	-272	-274	-265	-243	-9	-5
Farmland ES							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	729	729	729	729	729	729	729
Enrollment	688	734	762	755	744	747	745
<i>space available</i>	41	-5	-33	-26	-15	-18	-16
Garrett Park ES							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	752	752	752	752	752	752	752
Enrollment	800	844	874	902	904	902	880
<i>space available</i>	-48	-92	-122	-150	-152	-150	-128
Kensington-Parkwood ES							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	472	472	472	746	746	746	746
Enrollment	644	664	672	685	688	706	715
<i>space available</i>	-172	-192	-200	61	58	40	31
Luxmanor ES							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	429	429	429	429	745	745	745
Enrollment	429	442	457	472	500	512	542
<i>space available</i>	0	-13	-28	-43	245	233	203
Wyangate ES							
<i>Program Capacity</i>	778	778	778	778	778	778	778
Enrollment	755	737	733	740	726	726	745
<i>space available</i>	23	41	45	38	52	52	33

Addition to North Bethesda MS scheduled to open in August 2018. Revitalization/expansion of Tilden MS scheduled to open in August 2020. Addition at Ashburton ES scheduled to open in August 2020. Addition at Kensington-Parkwood ES scheduled to open in August 2018. Revitalization/expansion of Luxmanor ES scheduled to open in January 2020.