



December 2, 2019

Barbara Martinez
PTA President
Campbell Elementary School
737 S. Carlin Springs Rd.
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear Barbara,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Campbell PTA regarding Elementary School Planning. We know this is a difficult process for our elementary school families and appreciate your leadership in helping your community understand and share their input on the proposals to move some schools, including Campbell. Below you will find additional context to the proposals and answers to your questions.

The Planning and Evaluation team (P&E), along with all APS leadership, recognizes and appreciates the patience exhibited by communities across the County as growth impacts are experienced disproportionately at any given time. We recognize that PTAs and families are a vital part of the community support in every school and for that, we are grateful. We want to ensure that our students can continue to learn and thrive in safe, healthy and supportive learning environments.

The planning process is iterative, difficult and unsettling but ultimately, we remain focused on academic excellence as we manage enrollment growth using a strategic, countywide perspective. Most schools are likely to be impacted and all are being looked at with a consistent lens. Countywide changes from the revisions to the Options and Transfers Policy J-5.3.31 and the ongoing work of developing the PreK-12 Instructional Program Pathways (IPP), which you noted in your letter, are further evidence of the need for flexibility and change in a context of growth. These changes have already impacted many, if not most, APS schools. And, it is apparent that our continued enrollment growth means that change will be the norm for the entire system going forward.

This planning process does not propose changing the number of options schools, the type of instruction offered in APS schools, nor recommends opening hybrid neighborhood schools. Instructional leaders will refine the ideas presented in the draft IPP as work continues on this structural framework to ensure multiple pathways for student success.

This letter will outline our thought process, lessons learned from recent experience, and new alignment in long-term planning for APS and the County.

1. Why we need to make changes
2. Recent lessons learned
3. Our guiding principles (in this process)
4. Developments in long-term planning approaches

1. Why we need to make changes

In 2021, when the new elementary school at Reed opens as a neighborhood school, the schools surrounding it – Ashlawn, Glebe, McKinley, Nottingham and Tuckahoe – would be the most impacted during a neighborhood school boundary process. Our planning team developed a representative boundary scenario starting in the northwest corner of the county, the area where there is more school capacity than students, aiming for APS to use all elementary schools to maximum capacity.

Due to the proximity of the schools in the northwest corner, the result was a cascading boundary scenario that would move almost 40 percent of all APS neighborhood elementary students, and would significantly redistribute a majority of their current (2019-20) school communities. For example, the Representative Boundary scenario places Carlin Springs outside of its attendance zone and buses students who can walk to Carlin Springs past Ashlawn to McKinley. The current Carlin Springs attendance zone is potentially being divided between Carlin Springs and Ashlawn, and includes students currently in the Abingdon zone.

The school move proposals explore moving some schools to avoid long, extended boundaries that do not contain their full walk zones. They manage the demands on APS transportation, and keeping more school communities together.

2. Recent Lessons Learned

In planning for the Fall 2020 boundary process, we engaged elementary school instructional leaders as well as the department of Teaching & Learning to ensure that boundary changes begin with a focus on students and instruction.

This year, we learned that the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) aligns accreditation with the students who make up a school. If more than 50% of students move from one school to another site, the new site may take on that school's accreditation. In looking at different ways to develop boundaries as illustrated in the representative map for discussion, it became clear that schools' state accreditations would change. This leads us to consider how a significant change to boundaries may change the student body makeup and instruction within schools.

These recent experiences and the guiding principles developed with instructional leaders help inform our approaches in this process.

3. Guiding Principles

Earlier this year, APS planners formed an internal elementary school planning group with instructional leaders and operational departments. This group debriefed on previous boundary processes and agreed upon the following principles to consider guiding future processes. The principles are:

- Keeping students in each school community together as much as possible.
- Maximizing walking to neighborhood schools.
- Using schools to maximum capacity.
- Using existing facilities to balance neighborhood seats where needed for current and predicted growth.

4. Developments in Long-term Planning Approaches

Good governance in our foreseeable growth environment compels us to take a holistic look at how we will use and grow our facilities over the long term. This will help ensure our resources are focused on providing support for student success and well-being into the future. These planning proposals take a countywide long-term view.

The APS FY20 Budget process laid out some difficult choices, and the upcoming FY Budget is on a similar path. APS must find operational efficiencies while continuing to budget for enrollment growth and address the social, emotional and academic needs of our students. Efficiencies include operating costs such as a balance in building capacity utilization and ongoing transportation services that compete for funds which can impact Teaching and Learning.

Necessity has brought the County and APS to better joint planning as both land and capital funding are increasingly squeezed by population growth and aging infrastructure. Last Spring, with input from FAC, a new AFSAP began evolving into a longer-term planning document more like other County master plans, allowing for more productive conversations about budgeting and planning with the County and the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (JFAC). By creating a new AFSAP which is both larger in scope and projection timeline, APS planners and County planners are developing a shared understanding of our school division's long-term needs.

One example of new work because of the improved alignment with County planning, is that APS has evolved its planning tools. Our new corridor zone map, envisioned together with the FAC, aligns elementary zones with Arlington's planning corridors. In working from a broader vision of County growth, APS can better anticipate where there will be more housing development and potentially more student population growth and transit. This will inform one-time school and program moves as well as any focus for new school sites to be developed.

We have identified the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor as the area with most imminent capacity concerns. This is the impetus behind moving the Key Immersion option program from its current site. The need for a 50/50 balance of English/Spanish dominant speakers present somewhat unique challenges. Knowing the concentration of Spanish language speakers at the Western end of Columbia Pike makes it a logical location for the immersion program.

However, the County Corridor view of growth shows that the Western part of Columbia Pike (approximately bounded by Arlington Boulevard, South Glebe and South Walter Reed) will be the next area of concern for elementary capacity. Specifically:

- In this area, we estimate[1] that by 2021 there will be around 2,200 students attending a neighborhood elementary school, but there are only 1,529 permanent seats as of today (Barcroft, Carlin Springs, Randolph).
- One possible reason for the high number of students in this area is its concentration of new housing. Since 2010, 879 units have been built in this area, according to the County.
- Accordingly, we estimate higher density of elementary school level students in this area compared with the rest of the County, as shown in the chart below:

Density of & Capacity for Elementary School Students, and New Housing Units

	Density: Number of neighborhood-attending students per acre by 2021	*Capacity: Number of Permanent Seats Available per student by 2021	New Housing Units Expected by 2035
SW Area of the County (Western half of Columbia Pike, approx. bounded by	1.21	0.70	2,544 additional new units built in the western end of the Columbia Pike vicinity (approximately bounded by

Arlington Blvd., S. Glebe & S. Walter Reed)			Arlington Blvd, S. Glebe, and S. Walter Reed)
NE Area of the County (Rosslyn-Ballston corridor)	0.54	0.89	Approximately 6,457 new units
NW Area of the County (bounded by Arlington Blvd. & Glebe)	0.74	1.5	2,078 new units

* Calculated using the following formula: Permanent Seats / Estimated Neighborhood Attending Students

^[1] These are estimates are based on Planning Unit projections data produced for the Fall 2018 Elementary School Boundary Process

If we move any school or program, APS intends to maintain the integrity not only of the student population, but also the staff and leadership to the extent possible and as desired by the individuals involved. Should staff or faculty decide not to move with their school or program, as employees of APS, we would work with them to find a suitable alternative.

Today's Planning Process

This current planning process is not a boundary process and will not determine new boundaries that are to begin to be developed in Fall 2020. The data used to arrive at the big-picture decisions of school location does not include all the considerations involved in a boundary process. The representative boundary scenario and the school move proposals do not provide any insight about the boundary adjustments that will still be required after a decision is made about school moves. If it is decided to make a school move, then we believe those adjustments will be less of a fundamental divide of school communities and more a matter of adjustments along the borders of attendance zones.

To consider broad impacts of school moves, we use various perspectives. For example, we count students from McKinley as moving if they are moving away from the majority of today's McKinley students. If--as proposed in the move to Reed--let's say that 75% of McKinley students move together to the new facility, then the school at Reed will not be considered a new school by the State of Virginia, though the students will be in a different building. So, we haven't counted these students as "moving." If under a representative boundary scenario Carlin Springs were to stay a neighborhood school with all the elementary boundary changes required to open Reed, then we would see significant Carlin Springs cohorts "moving" to McKinley and Ashlawn fundamentally dividing the current community.

As we prepare for 2021, we are confident with our overall projections for current students, and know there tends to be variability in the projections by school, particularly for kindergarten students. Even though we used some preliminary thinking on increasing students' ability to walk to neighborhood schools in developing the proposed scenarios, ultimate boundaries will be adjusted with the most updated projections and planning unit insight from the community. We wish to be as transparent as possible, and in this case, that means holding these planning discussions without the final determinations for boundaries.

It is still early in the process. We considered many maps with the internal planning group. But until we have the broad outlines in place, it is impractical to produce and examine detailed plans. You have asked about impacts on specific groups/programs including Interlude and VPI. Those decisions would be made in conjunction with the boundary process as would any recommended changes to bell times.

Once any school moves have been decided in February 2020:

1. APS finance and facilities teams will be able to produce the plans for the 2021-30 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in time for a School Board vote and the approval of funding next Fall. Waiting for more final boundaries would not allow sufficient time for these processes.
2. On the instructional side, transition planning and visioning, and the hiring of a new neighborhood school principal with input from the school community (Reed or Key) can proceed.
3. Refined boundary proposals will be informed by updated projections and community input in the Fall of 2020. The boundary process in Fall 2020 will ensure that there are no negative impacts or relative overcrowding in the excellent existing neighborhood schools.

For your reference, the cost of recent school/program moves are estimated at approximately \$60,000. In addition, APS facilities used the opportunity to give the buildings a refresh costing as much as \$1 million. In the cases of McKinley and Reed, little expenditure would be anticipated for such a refresh as the facilities are newer.

You mention a concern about possible changes to bell times. While this is in a queue for the elementary planning group to be addressed after the current pre-planning. We hope you will help us understand what your underlying concerns are which prompted the question. You also ask about impacts to the instructional programs following a move. All APS school buildings are designed to be adaptable and able to accommodate programmatic changes over time. We do understand that in Campbell's case, an integral part of the instructional program happens *outside* of the building and this is a factor for consideration in any move.

In response to other questions you raised, Campbell does not have an attendance zone but does have a walk zone. There are 440 resident students who live in Campbell's walk zone. As of 2018, 92 students in the Campbell walk zone attended Campbell and 274 attended Carlin Springs.

We hope that this information addresses your questions about the process decisions including the role of the draft IPP, school move proposals, the 2020 boundary process and Capital planning.

To date, we have analyzed all school sites in a variety of ways. To see the range and types of data we referenced please visit the APS engage website page on elementary planning. Links to much of this data are provided in the addendum to this letter.

Sincerely,



Lisa Stengle
Executive Director
APS Planning and Evaluation

ADDENDUM

- Report developed with the help of the FAC Future Facilities Need Report <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/New-Appendix-F-Future-Facilities-Needs-Report-and-Cover-Letter.pdf> . This report examines capacity and uses broad projections and school size practices to understand the magnitude of future needs.
- We will look at revised enrollment projections to update the data we have used to date.
- Application and waitlist figures for option programs <https://www.apsva.us/school-options/school-transfer-data-2/pre-k-elementary-options-transfers-application-data-school-year-2019-20/>
- Planning Unit data available with last Fall's data here: <https://www.apsva.us/engage/middle-school-boundary-change/boundary-change-data/> and an analysis of walk zones by school is available here: https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Analysis-of-Walk-Zones_Final_Oct_31-1.pdf
- You can see maps with walk zones by school as developed in the walk zone study <https://www.apsva.us/transportation-services/bus-eligibility-zones/>.
- Transportation data including the number of bus routes serving each school today https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SY2019-2020-Bus_Counts_Per_Facility.pdf
- Anticipated growth in County planning corridors.