

December 8, 2016

To the Alexandria City Public School Board:

I'm speaking tonight to ask the Board and the Redistricting Committee to take action to remedy the devastating 1999 redistricting process, which concentrated many of Alexandria's most disadvantaged children in one school--Jefferson Houston.

Seventeen years later, the effects remain. Today, 73% of K-5 students attending Jefferson Houston are eligible for Free and Reduced Meals, compared to 21% at Lyles-Crouch and 30% at Maury.

Those three schools are located within a one-mile radius. That disparity is unacceptable, and redistricting is the only remedy.

Thus far, not one of the nine maps presented by redistricting committee has proposed any change to Jefferson Houston's attendance zone. That needs to change.

The solution is simple, even if it isn't easy. Some students who are currently zoned for Maury and Lyles-Crouch need to be rezoned into Jefferson-Houston's attendance zone. Doing so would not only reduce the existing socioeconomic disparities among the schools, but would also ease the overcrowding at Maury and Lyles-Crouch, which are currently at 119% and 116% of capacity respectively, and increase enrollment at Jefferson-Houston, which is currently enrolled at only 89% of its capacity.

The community wants to help find a solution by drafting alternate maps so that the data can be run and demographic tables created. To propose useful maps, however, we need two things:

1. Subdivide large planning blocks, some of which contain 100 or more students, into *smaller* planning blocks composed of no more than 50-60 students each. Smaller planning blocks will provide much greater flexibility in creating workable alternative plans.
2. A spreadsheet of the demographic data BY PLANNING BLOCK for each block currently zoned for JH, Maury, LC, and Mt. Vernon.

In closing, I urge the Board to accept no redistricting proposal unless it remedies the longstanding demographic disparities at Jefferson Houston.



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