

Allison Riley
Redistricting Public Hearing
12-8-2016

Good evening Chair Graf, Vice-Chair Lewis, Superintendent Crawley and members of the Alexandria School Board. Thank you for welcoming the community to speak tonight.

My name is Allison Riley, and once again, I am here as the President of the George Mason Elementary School PTA to represent our members and our community regarding our concerns about the redistricting initiative.

Based on feedback from the Review Committee Meeting last night, only maps 8 and 9 remain as options, which cuts out planning 72 and 50 members of our Arlandria community, and future changes to the maps are going to include just slight movement. As a community we are feeling a heightened sense of frustration, disenfranchisement, and incredulity at the changes we are seeing to the maps and the clear disregard they have for the countless hours of meetings, letters and phone calls made by the residents in our district, not to mention the disregard for all redistricting criteria except capacity.

I need to remind the board that as they look at the map options that will be coming to you in the near future, there are 10 criteria that the public was told hold equal weight: Instructional Capacity, Enrollment Capacity, Safe Walking Routes to School, Minimizing Bus Transportation, Class Size Adherence, Program Distribution of special ed and pre-k, Minimizing Rezoning Changes in the life of a student, Minimizing School Assignment Changes in the life of a student, Creating Sensible and Fair Boundary Lines with consideration of proximity to school, and Diversity.

The 2 proposed maps disregard 6 of those criteria:

- 1) Safe Walking Routes to School - with much longer walks on busier streets for students in the part of PB 72 that would not qualify for bussing
- 2) Minimizing Bus Transportation - bussing will be required for the students that live more than a mile from their school, which is most of planning block 72
- 3) Class Size Adherence – **This is of particular concern to me.** As of the printing of our current directory, George Mason had 553 students enrolled with the following distribution of class size and students.

Grade	Number of classes	Average # students/class	District CAP
K	4	23	22
1	5	22	24
2	5	20	24
3	4	23	26
4	4	25	26
5	3	21	26
TOTAL	25	22	

If the decision is made to consider current Map 8 or Map 9, a study needs to be done to estimate freed up classroom space. Will taking 83 students (current number from the redistricting maps) from PB 72 and 50 students out of the Arlandria area actually result in a reduced number of classes, and if so, how many?

An informal study completed by PB 72 reflected that in the year that redistricting takes place the number of students in their planning block will only total 62 and the distribution of those students does not equal a full class, with at the most 12 students from a grade and at the least, 7 students from a grade.

Grade	Number of students in PB 72	Number of classes freed up
K	10	0
1	7	0
2	10	0

3	12	0
4	11	0
5	11	0

A similar study has not been conducted in Arlandria, but unless there is an unusually high number of students in one particular grade from Arlandria in the year redistricting begins, it is **unlikely that redistricting will result in even one classroom opening**, despite having less students at George Mason.

So then the George Mason district will have a conundrum - Will the school board pass a classroom cap exception to George Mason to keep the class sizes smaller and keep the school within its prescribed “capacity range” that is set forth in the redistricting materials? Or will cap size be increased in order to make class sizes larger and free up classroom space? Either is a violation of the class size criteria.

If the answer is no to either of those questions, then what is going to happen when those seats are made available? Presumably, new students will be bussed into our school from outside of our district to fill those spaces. Students who are overflow from other schools. Does it make sense to relocate our current neighborhood students so that they can be replaced by non-neighborhood kids?

Even more to the point – is the number being used in the redistricting materials realistic for the school that we have now? The reason our ideal capacity number is low (368) on redistricting documents is because of the size of our classrooms – trying to put 22-26 kids in most of our classrooms (which is the range of current cap sizes) will automatically result in being over capacity in that classroom due to the “physical space requirement per student” best practices.

If we adhere to the current class cap sizes, there is no way George Mason would be within capacity, so just taking students out of the school does not solve the capacity problem. I challenge the redistricting committee to count the number of classrooms at George Mason (not including the classrooms that are converted office or storage space) and multiply it by the average number of students we have per class now (22). I believe that number will be roughly 500, not 368.

Please consider this information as you review the maps that will be presented to you.

4) Previous Rezoning – intended to minimize the need for more than one boundary change in the life of a student. Based on new information, our school will be rebuilt by 2022, if we move our boundaries now, many students will be back in-boundary when the new school is built. That is 2 boundary changes.

5) Program Continuity – intended to minimize school assignment changes. Based on new information, we will be in the swing space by 2021 and in the new school by 2022. This could mean possibly 3 school changes for students that go out of boundary, then back in boundary once the move to the larger swing space occurs, then back to GM for the last years of school.

6) Diversity – Planning block 72 is also a planning block with rich diversity with high density housing and a higher distribution of rental housing, the same with the portion of Arlandria that we lose.

If all of the criteria are equal, then we need to see that they are being treated as such and as the maps start to be fine-tuned, the redistricting committee needs to start thinking ahead to the impact the maps will have on our community and if it the suggested changes make sense in light of the above facts.

Thank you for your consideration.