



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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STUDENTS, PARENTS, COMMUNITY INVITED TO SPEAK OUT ON PROS, CONS OF MORE CHOICES, CONSOLIDATION PLAN

Board of Education Announces Public Hearings on Proposal to Expand Enrichment and Specialty Programs and Consolidate 12 Schools

The Prince George's County Board of Education has announced a schedule of public hearings as part of its evaluation of a proposal from the Administration that would expand and offer new programs of choice, better utilize available space, and consolidate 12 schools.

"The Board of Education wants parents and community members to understand the Administration's recommendations and our constituents will have opportunities to express what they want for their schools, before the Board makes any decisions regarding this proposal," said Board Chair Verjeana M. Jacobs, Esq.

The Board has scheduled public hearings for the following dates and schools:

Date	School	Time
February 25, 2009	Morningside Elementary School, Suitland	6 p.m.
March 4, 2009	Eugene Burroughs Middle School, Accokeek	6 p.m.
March 11, 2009	Samuel P. Massie Elementary School, Forestville	6 p.m.

Public participation is encouraged. All persons interested in speaking must register with the Office of the Board of Education by 3:30 p.m. the day of the meeting by calling 301-952-6115.

If the plan to consolidate schools were approved, students residing in the attendance area of the 12 schools would be reassigned to nearby schools. Some program relocation would also occur. The parents of students attending the schools affected by the administration's proposal were contacted last month. Meetings were held and well attended at the schools affected. The proposal was explained in detail to those families who attended these meetings.

Last month, the school district's administration presented the Board of Education with recommendations for expanding programs of choice and better utilizing available space in schools where students have been under-served historically. The Administration's "**Review of School Boundaries, Part II**" presentation is posted as a January 22, 2009 Board meeting discussion item under "Board Docs" online at <http://www1.pgcps.org/board/>. The Administration would reduce the number of empty seats in elementary and middle grades from 10,000 to 4,000, by temporarily taking under-enrolled school buildings off-line.

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The 12 schools proposed for consolidation include: Berkshire ES, Concord ES, District Heights ES, G. Gardner Shugart MS, John Carroll ES, John E. Howard ES, Judge Sylvania W. Woods ES, Matthew Henson ES, Middleton Valley ES, Morningside ES, Oakcrest ES, and Owens Road ES.

One school, Benjamin D. Foulois ES in Suitland, would transition to a dedicated pre-k through Grade 8 creative and performing arts school in southern Prince George's County – responding to demand for greater access to creative and performing arts by replicating the successful model at the Thomas G. Pullen School in Landover.

Six (6) schools convert to pre-k-8 programs. Andrew Jackson MS, Bradbury Heights ES, Samuel P. Massie ES, and William W. Hall ES will enroll students in grades pre-k-8. Henry Ferguson ES and Eugene Burroughs MS would become one pre-k-8 school.

Interim Superintendent Dr. William R. Hite, Jr.'s proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 operating budget recommends consolidating six (6) schools, generating a cost savings of \$5.6 million. This proposal to consolidate a dozen (12) schools represents an estimated net savings of \$11.9 million for FY2010, after factoring in additional annual transportation costs and expenses for renovations and provisions for schools.

“Maintaining so many under-utilized school facilities in these fiscally trying times would not be a responsible use of taxpayer dollars, especially when thousands of families try unsuccessfully, year-after-year, to gain access to our Enrichment & Specialty Program schools,” said Interim Superintendent Dr. William R. Hite, Jr. “We must take this opportunity to expand opportunities, and reduce costs. This proposal accomplishes both.”

All teachers would continue to be needed, as the number of students does not change. Principals would apply to fill existing vacancies and new vacancies in accordance with the negotiated agreements, and support staff would follow students where appropriate. Others would be considered for existing and future vacancies in accordance with negotiated agreements.

In June 2008, the Board of Education received a presentation from the administration that showed where schools have enrollments above their state rated capacity and where schools are under enrolled. As a result of data showing that some facilities were extremely under enrolled, the Board directed the administration to conduct a comprehensive review of school boundaries. The administration has defined consolidation as having the attendance area of existing schools incorporated into a nearby school or schools with available capacity, vacating the school targeted for consolidation. This is different from closing schools, considering most will be repurposed and continue to be used.

Primary drivers for recommendations for the 12 schools recommended for consolidation are:

- In every case, excess capacity in the geographic proximity to the schools;
- In most cases, under utilization of the schools;
- In some cases, the school has a pattern of low academic achievement; and
- In a few cases, the school is in high need of replacement or renovation according to the most recent 3D/I facility condition assessment.

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Proposals for expansion of Enrichment and Specialty Programs include: the county's first Chinese immersion school, two Spanish immersion schools, and increased access to existing French immersion and Montessori programs by separating and increasing available seats for Robert Goddard and John Hanson school programs.

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