



PRESS RELEASE

Prince George's County Public Schools • www.pgcps.org
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOARD OF EDUCATION RECEIVES PLAN FOR EXPANSION OF PROGRAM CHOICES AND SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION

Support from Michael & Susan Dell Foundation Brings Healthy Schools Program to PGCPs, One of Three Districts to Fully Launch Program to Combat Obesity

The Prince George's County Board of Education held the second in a series of public meeting presentations on school boundaries yesterday during its January meeting. The public heard and was able to see the school district administration's recommendations for expanding programs of choice and utilizing available space.

"Last summer, the Board of Education initiated the process of reviewing school boundaries to ensure school facilities are used in a cost-effective manner and to take advantage of available space to provide high-quality educational programs to underserved communities," said Board Chair Verjeana M. Jacobs. "The Board's commitment to fiscal responsibility has become even more critical during extraordinarily difficult economic times. We will also continue asking for feedback from parents and communities before making decisions about what programs they want to see in their schools."

The administration's "**Review of School Boundaries, Part II**" presentation is posted as a January 22, 2009 Board meeting discussion item under "Board Docs" on the Board of Education Web page (<http://www1.pgcps.org/board/>). The presentation includes recommendations for consolidation, dedicated schools, and school conversions to accomplish the following:

Twelve (12) schools were proposed for consolidation, including: Berkshire ES, Concord ES, District Heights ES, G. Gardner Shugart MS, John Carroll ES, John Eager 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 Massie ES, and William W. Hall ES will enroll students in pre-k through Grade 8. Henry Ferguson ES and Eugene Burroughs MS would become one pre-k through Grade 8 school.

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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 twelve (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.

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.

The 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.

The administration's recommendations overall were designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase seats in Enrichment and Specialty Program schools;
- Create new neighborhood pre-kindergarten through Grade 8 academies;
- Consolidate and use facilities for charter and/or contract schools of choice; and
- Make more economical use of available space.

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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Healthy Schools

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation – a joint venture between the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association, combating childhood obesity in the United States – and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, announced in December 2008 an expansion of the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program to Maryland's Prince George's County Public Schools. The Healthy Schools Program helps schools develop and implement policies and practices that promote healthy eating and increased physical activity for students and staff.

The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation's four-year, \$1 million grant to the Alliance will enable the Healthy Schools Program to be implemented district-wide in Prince George's County Public Schools.

The Alliance will hire local staff to provide support and resources to every school in the district; build the capacity of the Prince George's County Public Schools to maintain the Healthy Schools Program after the four year grant period; evaluate the program's impact on affecting tangible changes in the school environment (such as increased time for health education or improved quality of school meals); and disseminate lessons learned and best practices for creating healthier school environments locally, and nationally.

The program launched this month (January 2009) in 69 schools, including 49 Title I schools, throughout PGCPSS. Additional schools will be added during the next two years. The Alliance will support school and district level efforts to:

- Encourage the alignment of policies and contracts to Alliance School Beverage & Snack Food Guidelines for foods sold outside the school meals program;
- Facilitate the implementation of more quality physical education and health education;
- Increase the number of healthy food and beverage options offered as a part of the school meals program; and
- Improve opportunities for students to be physically active before, during and after the school day.