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Date: January 26, 2020 at 12:21:21 PM EST  
To: School Board <school.board@apsva.us>, Reid Goldstein <reid.goldstein@apsva.us>, "Kanninen, Barbara" <barbara.kanninen@apsva.us>, "Van Doren, Nancy" <nancy.vandoren@apsva.us>, "Talento, Tannia" <tannia.talento@apsva.us>, monique.ogrady@apsva.us  
Subject: Letter on Behalf of Jamestown Elementary Regarding 2021 Elementary Planning

Via Electronic Mail Only:  
Board Members, Arlington Public Schools  
2110 Washington Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22204  
Email: school.board@apsva.us

Dear Arlington Public Schools Board Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Jamestown PTA regarding the 2021 Elementary School Planning process. We respect the challenge of long-range planning in the midst of unprecedented growth with more than 30,000 students expected to enroll in Arlington Public Schools (APS) by 2021.

Our school community is very familiar with boundary changes. In 2015, we lost approximately 20% of our students when Discovery Elementary school opened. At the same time, we welcomed more than 70 students from Taylor Elementary. This letter is informed by that experience, as well as reviewing the materials provided by APS and attending all recent community and PTA leaders meetings.

While we do not specifically advocate for a specific proposal, we are concerned with the Representative Boundary Scenario (RBS) or "No Moves" and its countywide impact. We carefully reviewed the proposals and other materials provided by APS and have multiple concerns with the No Moves proposal.

No Moves appears to needlessly disrupt many school communities with nearly 40% of APS neighborhood school students transferred to new schools  
11 schools, including Abingdon, ASFS, Ashlawn, Barcroft, Carlin Springs, Discovery, Glebe, Long Branch, McKinley, Nottingham, and Taylor would lose more than 25% of their students under the No Moves Scenario. (Only 4-6 schools were similarly impacted in the other proposals.)

An additional 5 schools, including Fleet, Barrett, Hoffman-Boston, Randolph, and Tuckahoe, would lose 10-18% of their students under No Moves

700 current walkers would not longer be able to walk to school and requiring 12 additional buses that APS is likely to be challenged to staff with qualified drivers and to find adequate space for parking.

Jamestown would be the most overcrowded APS school in the No Moves at 118% capacity, while also losing most of our walkers and not accounting for our Special Education or Montessori preschool students. We also are not clear if the No Moves scenario fully accounted for expected growth in our planning units.

Given the highly complex planning required to address significant growth across Arlington and the fact that APS has not conducted a countywide redistricting since 2003, we support the effort to facilitate a two-part elementary school planning process. We support a comprehensive review of school locations, projected growth in student population, and school facility utilization with a decision on school locations by the planned February 2020 board meeting and a review of boundaries in fall 2020. APS is an intricately linked ecosystem. A change in one school can drive a domino effect with cascading changes at adjacent schools and beyond.

With the new school at Reed coming online in 2021, there will be significant change regardless of the proposal selected. School communities need as much advance notice as possible to plan for any changes. Deciding locations by February 2020 will give school communities 18 months to prepare for a successful transition.

When APS completes the school location review and begins the boundary process, we look forward to collaborating with APS staff. Our school community supports the following principals for the Fall 2020 boundary review:

Include all schools in the boundary review.

Ensure a rigorous review of data completeness and accuracy to inform boundary decisions.

Maximize walkability.

Optimize utilization across all school facilities and plan for the expected growth in the southeastern part of the county with the Amazon move and for the planned development in the western Columbia Pike area.

Keep communities together where possible.

If a community must be split, reduce the impact by splitting across two and no more than three schools.

Be pragmatic and avoid needless "swaps" between two schools, i.e., move 100 students from School A to School B and then move 100 other students from School B to School A.

If students must be moved, move students in large enough cohorts so that multiple students in each grade level would be moved together in a group – no small planning unit moves. Every APS student should recognize someone they know from their old school when they start school in Fall 2021.

Immediately after the elementary boundary process, adjust middle school boundaries for Fall 2022. Base elementary-middle school alignments, where possible on the current middle school feeder patterns that were established for the opening Dorothy Hamm Middle School. Note that this timing would be three years after the last middle school boundary process. With grandfathering, the impacts to middle school students could be mitigated in the short-term while supporting better long-term alignment between elementary and middle schools.

We also urge you to consider additional growth factors in the long-term decisions on boundaries. Since Discovery opened in 2015, our school has grown 12% with a net addition of 60 students in Kindergarten through fifth grade. Overall, we are seeing a steady and increasing influx of families with future Arlington students. Many of our long-time neighbors are leaving the area as they retire and new families with young children are moving in from surrounding jurisdictions. We see significant ongoing new home construction in our zoned neighborhoods on existing lots, which we understand are not counted by the county as new home starts and therefore may not be included in county's growth projections. Anecdotally, from walking in our neighborhoods, attending community events, and speaking with local builders, we expect the school-age population in our planning units to continue to grow, not shrink, in the coming years.

We appreciate the ongoing opportunities to engage with you in long-range planning to address school capacity needs across the county.

Respectfully,  
Maurine Fanguy  
Jamestown PTA President

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