

## **Minutes from December 13, 2016 Meeting of the Fernbank Elementary School Council**

Prepared by School Council Secretary Brad Strawn

The Fernbank Elementary School Council met on December 13, 2016, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., in the administration conference room at the school. All scheduled Council meetings are open to the public. Attendees at the meeting were: Kortni Boyd; Principal Joan Ray; Charlie Rogers, Odette Diaz Schuler, Cindy Spalding and Brad Strawn. Council members John Blackmon, Amy Howell and Carol Reed were unable to attend due to work conflicts.

The meeting began by addressing the Cross Keys cluster redistricting initiative and the on-going effort to bring a more permanent solution to the overcrowding challenges in the cluster. The DeKalb County is moving forward with a plan to build two new elementary schools, one in Brookhaven and one in Doraville, with the goal of completing at least one of them – likely a new John Robert Lewis Elementary School at the former Skyland Park cite in Brookhaven - by January 2018. We anticipate that a more likely timeframe for the school to come online is approximately August 2018. The addition of the new school likely will result in the redistricting of some current Fernbank students from the Cross Keys cluster back to schools in that geographic area.

In addition, the Terraces at Brookhaven on Buford Highway where many current Fernbank students live is significantly raising its rental rates. We anticipate that many current families will choose to move out of that complex as a result. If that occurs, we anticipate the number of students attending Fernbank from that complex will meaningfully drop. That presents two primary challenges. First, current students may leave Fernbank during the middle of this school year or not return for the beginning of the next school year in August 2017. Second, Fernbank needs to keep its student population above 800 in order to avoid having the County seek to re-assign staff.

It is unlikely that current students of Briar Vista and Laurel Ridge elementary schools would be redistricted into Fernbank to fill the vacancies in the next year or two because both of those schools currently are under-populated. Thus, we need to consider and develop possible plans and strategies to keep Fernbank’s student population above 800 next year and the following years. One possibility is to increase the number of special education students that we educate and seek to obtain a special education hub center designation. Obtaining the designation would enable us to receive more special needs students and assist in maintaining high College and Career Ready Performance Index (“CCRPI”) performance scores. We should explore this possibility with the County. Our CCRP overall score for the 2015-2016 school year was 80.1. We also can continue to promote the use of our International Baccalaureate (“IB”) program through which we can receive students through choice. Additionally, we should monitor, anticipate and think strategically about other County redistricting initiatives and possibilities to be aware of opportunities to increase Fernbank’s student population with students from our Druid Hills High School cluster and reasonably close geographic areas.

Our physical plant issues are being appropriately addressed. The first-year warranty punch list items were successfully completed. Trenton Arnold at the County is helping to have certain tile buffers on the floor replaced.

The County is offering focus group training in various areas for School Council members throughout the County, which several Council Members will attend.

In early 2017, we will begin planning for elections to next year's School Council. Of the five parent positions, three are up for election to be selected from voting by parents of the student population. The two teacher School Council positions will be selected from voting by the teacher population.

Upon a vote of those present, the meeting was then adjourned.