

Columbia Heights Civic Association
P.O. Box 41501
Arlington, Virginia 22204



November 19, 2018

To: Arlington School Board
Superintendent of Schools

Re: Fleet Elementary Redistricting

I have had the honor of serving Columbia Heights Civic Association on the South Arlington Working Group, the planning group for the new Fleet Elementary School as well as the Career Center Working Group. Today I am writing to you in support of the parents in my civic association, and other neighborhoods on the south side of Columbia Pike, who wish to remain with the Patrick Henry community that is moving to Fleet.

Throughout this process we were given the understanding that the Patrick Henry community would stay together and move together to the new school at Fleet. This is not imaginary. These assurances were given during the planning of Fleet and were written by APS in subsequent community handouts. More importantly, the children in our neighborhood were given this understanding by their current teachers and administrators at Patrick Henry. Those children have been emotionally devastated by the changing story from APS.

The parents in my neighborhood have also demonstrated with painstaking care the differences in walkability between Fleet and the only other alternatives—Drew and Hoffman-Boston. It is clear to them that Fleet, while farther away than Patrick Henry, is still walkable. Drew is not.

The current plan that is being considered deviates significantly from the goals originally stated by APS. First, it eliminates diversity at Fleet by moving Barcroft kids in and leaving our kids out. The irony is that the entire Patrick Henry community has argued to maintain diversity. Second, moving our students to Drew will NOT relieve the percentage of free and reduced lunch kids at that school.

The process that APS has used to make these decisions has been capricious and unrealistic. The basic problem is that redefining Drew as a neighborhood school, while admirable and beneficial for the children in the surrounding Nauck neighborhood, leaves Drew with a lot of empty seats.

Fortunately, there is a logical solution to this issue, which is to keep Drew as a neighborhood school with a strong STEAM program, but allow other kids in Arlington to

opt in. Drew could become a feeder school into the new tech program at the Career Center, which I continue to believe will be developed as an outstanding high school program.

I urge you not to rush into boundary decisions that will have long-term negative impacts on our neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Sarah McKinley

Sarah McKinley
President