



Henry W. Grady High School
Individually we are different...together we are Grady

Grady High School Local School Council

March 17, 2015

Atlanta Public Schools Board of Education

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Dr. Meria Carstarphen, Superintendent, mjcarstarphen@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Re: Proposed Solutions for Inman Overcrowding and the Impact on Grady High School

Dear Members of the Board and Superintendent Carstarphen:

We are writing to express our concerns over the potential solutions outlined at the Inman overcrowding meeting on February 19, 2015. Our primary concerns are two-fold.

First, we would request that any long-term solution address overcrowding for the entire cluster, including at Grady High School. We need a holistic solution, so that the solution for one particular school does not just create another problem at a different school. We are concerned that the first two options presented at the February meeting build middle school seats while doing nothing to address future growth and the potential need for additional seats at the high school. While demographic projections can be unreliable, the continued growth at our feeder elementary schools and at Inman Middle School point to the likelihood of future growth at Grady. It is important for the long-term stability of the cluster that the number of high school seats be proportional to the number of middle (and elementary) school seats.

Second, we would request that any long-term solution maintain Grady as a 9-12 high school, in alignment with other high schools in the district and across the state. We are opposed to any solution which removes one or more grade levels from Grady. The idea of a 9th grade academy for North Atlanta High School was proposed and rejected during the redistricting process in 2012, for many valid reasons which apply to our cluster as well. In particular we wish to express our concerns regarding the third solution (for an 8/9 Academy) proposed at the February meeting and the potential impact of this solution on our high school. Although we recognize that this proposal could help to alleviate capacity issues at Grady, we feel the problems and challenges it would create are numerous and detrimental to students:

1. **Alignment.** Grady would follow a different model than any other high school in the district.
2. **Impact on academics.** Separating the 9th grade from Grady would impact 9th graders who take advanced coursework and 10th graders who need remediation (there were more than 60 retained 9th graders at Grady this fall).
3. **Impact on electives.** Removing a grade from Grady would limit the ability of those students to take full advantage of Grady's many elective and pathway offerings.

4. **Impact on extra-curricular activities.** 9th graders across the district and state interact and compete with 10th - 12th graders (in a combined 9-12 grade setting) in athletic and academic activities. We believe there would be serious logistical challenges (communication, bell schedules, transportation, etc.) to the successful incorporation of offsite 9th graders into high school extra-curricular activities. And we are concerned that having students at different sites could ultimately have a negative impact on participation in these activities.

5. **Impact on CCRPI, testing, and accountability.** The administration team for a combined 8/9 academy would be challenged to follow two different accountability models – middle school for 8th grade and high school for 9th grade. This could also create challenges with testing and accountability at Grady.

6. **Not aligned with K-8 charter schools.** We have two K-8 charter school feeders (Centennial Academy and Kindezi) plus students who attend other APS charter schools and return to Grady for high school. These students would attend the 8/9 academy for just one year and then transition again to Grady.

7. **More transitions for students.**

8. **Impact on parental involvement.** Each additional freestanding school requires more parent resources to support a PTA/PTO and a governance council and further taxes both parents' volunteer time and our local community resources. The removal of a grade effectively reduces the volunteer and community resources at Grady by 25%. Our extracurricular activities, in particular, rely heavily upon parent involvement and community resources.

Finally, as the Inman LSC has recently requested, we would also like to have a "seat at the table" and an active representation in the evaluation process for solutions to capacity and enrollment issues in the Grady cluster where appropriate, particularly as they affect our high school.

The Grady community remains committed to advocating for the best facilities possible for our students in support of their academic and extra-curricular performance. We respectfully ask that APS provide the necessary resources and proper facilities to house the number of students within our cluster, both now and in the long-term, rather than create new educational models simply to solve a demographic problem. We appreciate your attention and response to our concerns and requests, and look forward to partnering toward a true long-term facilities solution which best meets the educational needs of all our cluster's students.

Sincerely,

The Grady Local School Council



Sharon Bray, chair (and parent representative)

Timothy Guiney, principal
Mario Herrera, teacher representative
Harry Bowden, teacher representative
Carolyn Wood, parent representative
Paige Cucchi, parent representative
Renee Steckl, parent-business representative
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