

Alpharetta Milton Cluster Advisory Council
Wednesday, May 16, 2007
Minutes

Attendance: P. Reed, C. Waylock (Alpharetta ES); B. Greene (Alpharetta HS); J. Anderson, G. Power-O'Neil (Cogburn Woods ES); S. Terry, K. Dickinson (Crabapple Crossing ES); T. Trussell, S. Payne-Bland, S. Andes (Creek View ES); F. Boyd, T. D'Aversa Williams (Hopewell MS); M. Messina, L. Gonzalez (Lake Windward ES); S. Reinig, J. Conway (Manning Oaks ES); R. Tesch, S. Campbell (Milton HS); C. Faulkner, L. Pinkerton (New Prospect ES); B. Fraser, K. Blanda (Northwestern MS); N. Murphy, P. Kipniss (Summit Hill ES); E. Fogartie (Webb Bridge MS); Robin Suter, guest; Dr. Denmark, Area Superintendent; Sue Derene and Sally Hildebrant, Milton Cluster Co-Chairs; and, Carolyn Carson, Alpharetta Cluster Chair.

Welcome and Introductions

Sue Derene opened the meeting at 9:05am by introducing our guest speaker, Mr. Patrick Burke, Director of Planning for the Fulton County School system, and thanked him for joining us this morning.

Presentation

Mr. Burke opened the meeting with a PowerPoint presentation and handout, shared with the Board of Education at a recent meeting. He described the methodology and tools used in forecasting growth and enrollment projections in our schools, with a special emphasis on North Fulton and the Milton/Alpharetta clusters. School Site Forecasting model is used, which is a Georgia information-based product, which attaches of the data down to neighborhoods, subdivisions, and streets. The model tracks patterns of growth and change in neighborhoods.

Mr. Burke described forecasting factors, including residential development, which involves land use, residential rezoning, final plats, market data, and student numbers. The system contracts with Metro Study to see how quickly units of real estate are selling. In all, eleven methodologies are employed in determining enrollment forecasts. For the past two years, the enrollment trends have been variable. Mr. Burke reviewed the trends as described on the PowerPoint presentation, which is available on the Fulton County schools' website. The forecast for 2007-08 is "middle of the road" growth. The forecasting has been impacted by the slow housing market, but it appears that the market will be returning to equilibrium. In forecasting the county is divided along these geographic boundaries: North, Sandy Springs, and South. State capacity numbers drive the State capital outlay dollars for building new schools. In planning for new schools, the numbers first demonstrated a need to go East of GA-400 to Johns Creek for a new high school, and the second new high school in North Fulton will be located west of GA-400 at the Freemanville Road site. Additional new construction was discussed for Sandy Springs and South county.

Questions were asked about a new elementary school possibility east of GA-400. The answer is that there is a possibility for a new elementary school, but construction funding is not included in SPLOST 3. A question arose about the even distribution of enrollment among schools to avoid overcrowding, but Mr. Burke replied that this would be impossible to achieve without moving students annually in and out of our schools. Schools are not evenly distributed with the number of residential neighborhoods, so overcrowding will occur at which point new schools are planned to alleviate the overcrowding. It would be difficult to develop a ten-year plan for attendance zones, because of the transient nature of many of our communities. A question was asked about the correlation of test scores and attendance zones, i.e., the higher the test scores for a particular school, the higher the density of residents to attend that successful school. Does planning take into consideration that people will migrate to school zones where test scores are higher among the schools? No provision is made for this specifically, but the redistricting process is very detailed and thorough with specific guidelines for the redistricting process.

Cluster Update

Dr. Denmark expressed her appreciation to this year's Cluster Chairs, Sue Derene, Sally Hildebrant, and Carolyn Carson, for their hard work and dedication to the implementation of Learning Matters (early release days pilot program) and to the SPLOST 3 campaign. She presented them with a card and gift of appreciation from Cluster principals. Carolyn will fulfill the balance of her two year term through 2008, and Sue and Sally were re-elected to a two-year term to expire in 2009.

The graduation policy, voted upon at the Board of Education's April meeting, was left "as is", namely, students who do not complete requirements for graduation will still be allowed to walk during the graduation ceremony at their high schools. The policy had been revised at the request of principals to disallow these students the opportunity to participate in graduation. The Board, however, voted against the policy revision submitted by the FCSS. Discussion ensued at the Cluster meeting about whether this policy could be revisited earlier than the cycle of Board policy review allows. A system is in place to allow students who are having difficulty passing the Georgia High School Graduation Tests to re-take the test, to undergo remediation, and to apply for waivers and variances to meet graduation requirements. Deadlines are in place, with the last deadline in April for the May 8 BOE meeting. This timetable allows a decision to be made prior to May graduation exercises. General consensus among members of the Alpharetta Milton Cluster is to revisit this policy sooner rather than later, and uphold the academic integrity that graduation from high school signifies.

Dr. Denmark gave an update on the progress of Charter school applications and existing charter schools in our community. Amana Academy will be moving from their location in Roswell to the King's Ridge school site on Highway 9 (King's Ridge is moving to a new facility for Fall 2007). The BOE will be considering a

charter application for the Fulton Sunshine Academy, which is the elementary component of the Fulton Science Academy, which along with TEACH charter, provides a complete K-12 science academy curriculum. As a result of these developments, the Alpharetta Milton Cluster will include Amana, Connected Academy, Fulton Science Academy, TEACH, and the Fulton Sunshine Academy (if approved). Discussion ensued about the overwhelming number of charters located in this area, and what makes each one a unique educational experience. Charters must meet or exceed achievement gains in our public schools in order to define their existence. Charter schools must meet federal guidelines, but local and state guidelines are not stringently applied to charters. The Cluster leadership will continue to monitor these developments in our area.

Additional Cluster news: The Affidavit of Residency will go into effect this fall, and a notarized affidavit will need to be submitted to each student's school to prove residency and attendance zone for that particular school. Alpharetta High School will begin construction of a new music building, approved at the May 8th BOE meeting. The cost is \$3.2 million, and construction will be complete in summer 2008. White boards were approved by the BOE, and the vendor is Dell. Details will follow on ordering, allocations, etc. Milton High School was congratulated on its "three-peat" State championship in Women's lacrosse, defeating Northview 9-7. It was the first time two public high schools met in the women's lacrosse state finals. Milton also took second place in the State gymnastics championship. The 5th grade writing assessment scores for our area were outstanding. The GHSGT results for our area were excellent. Following our board member's meeting of May 15th, when a parent raised the question of the need for a self-addressed stamped envelope to send report cards home, an informal survey of our elementary schools showed the following: 5 of 8 schools ask for self-addressed, stamped envelopes, 2 schools send home report cards on the last day, and 1 school incurs the cost of mailing. Frances Boyd gave an update on the Vertical Teaming program, which will continue on early release days in 2007-08. Elementary schools will send 2 participants, middle schools will send 3-4 participants, and high schools will send 3 participants. Costs are significantly less than at first projected, so no solicitation of businesses will be required to fund.

New Business

At this time Sally distributed several handouts from the "Foundations for the Future" BOE update, prepared by the Superintendent's office. These handouts included information on SAP, SAMS, Math standards, Georgia Performance Standards, Connected Academy and Distance Learning. In addition Sally distributed a handout to update School Council membership information. Once the law is signed by the governor, the composition of local school councils will change to include a majority of parents (4 members, 2 of whom must be businesspersons). If you have already conducted elections, then you have until 2008-09 to implement the law. If you are holding elections in August/September,

then implement the standards of the new law. Andy Ross, Fulton Education Foundation, will conduct training and update the website.

Regarding the budget process for the 2007-08, we reviewed where the budget stands as of May 16th. With additional funds coming in from the tax digest as well as funds recovered from the Fulton Industrial business sector, some cuts have already been added back into the budget. Regarding rollback, at this time the BOE is taking the position that no rollback will be offered, and the funds earned will be put in escrow for debt reduction, or to handle anything catastrophic that impacts the system, such as the Katrina displacement of students last year. A lengthy discussion ensued that suggested that the impact of the rollbacks over the years has taken its toll. Some schools are receiving less per pupil than two years ago, even when \$20 per pupil is factored back into the equation this year. Deep budget cuts from the past two-three years have not been restored, and rollback dollars should be considered to offset these cuts before going into escrow for debt reduction. Additionally, personnel decisions have impacted the overcrowding in classrooms at the high school level, where three fewer teachers means fifteen fewer year-long sections available to students. So, as our schools grow, and the number of sections of classes is fewer, the classrooms become overcrowded.

We discussed the plan to eliminate the warehouse program, and determined from our discussion, that eliminating the warehouse altogether will cause severe hardship on our schools to locate vendors, shop for best prices, sort orders, pay for shipping and handling, and diminish the personal service to our schools. If the warehouse services are to be eliminated, could it be done in phases that would allow the system to address some of the issues and burdens placed upon local school staff to do the work of the warehouse personnel and for the system to shop the best prices/vendors, rather than individual schools? Susan Campbell suggested that we develop letters that address the specific hardships that elementary, middle, and high schools face in the budget process. Additionally, we decided that next year we will add an April meeting to the Cluster calendar, specific to the budget process. Continue to watch the budget process closely for new developments.

Candy Waylock gave a brief legislative update on Special Needs vouchers, and included an impact analysis handout on what these vouchers will mean to local schools. Additionally two math GPS handouts were distributed, and we determined that a community meeting in the fall will be helpful to understand the GPS rollout of math in our schools along with the mathematics textbooks in FCSS aligned to the new curriculum. Mr. Trussell mentioned that he would like for us to pass along our thanks to Mr. Wilson, Superintendent, for meeting with the elementary school principals twice this year to address matters particular to the elementary schools setting. The Cluster Chairs will be happy to do so.

The Cluster meeting adjourned at 11:40am.