

# Walter Johnson Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group

**Meeting #6 Agenda**  
**April 21, 2016, 7:00 – 8:45 p.m.**  
**Walter Johnson High School, Cafeteria**

## Desired Outcomes

**By the end of this meeting, we will have:**

- Reviewed feedback, agenda, outcomes, and process;
- Shared pluses minuses elementary school approaches;
- Determined if additional elementary school approaches are needed;
- Shared pluses and minuses of additional secondary school approaches; and
- Discussed next steps and provided feedback.

Activity	Facilitator(s)	Process	Time
Review feedback; agenda, outcomes, and process.	Debbie Szyfer	Review	7:00-7:10 10'
Share Pluses and Minuses of Elementary School Approaches	Dana Davison/ Debbie Szyfer	Share/Clarify/Summarize Small Groups Review/Discuss Gallery Walk	7:10–7:50 40'
Determine if additional Elementary School Approaches are Needed	Debbie Szyfer	Discuss/Clarify	7:50-8:10 20'
Shared Pluses and Minuses of Additional Secondary School Approaches	Dana Davison/ Debbie Szyfer	Share/Clarify/Summarize	8:10-8:30 20'
Next Steps, Observer Questions, Feedback	Debbie Szyfer	Determine/Share	8:30–8:45 15'

## Ground Rules

1. Share openly
2. Give and receive constructive feedback
3. Appreciate everyone's ideas
4. Suspend judgment
5. Limit discussions to the topic
6. Do homework and be prepared
7. Abide by decisions made by the facilitator
8. Start and end meetings on time



## Walter Johnson Roundtable Discussion Group

### Summary of Meeting #5 — April 6, 2016

The Walter Johnson Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group (Roundtable) met for its fifth meeting on April 6, 2016. The meeting was held in the cafeteria of Walter Johnson High School from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The materials handed out at the meeting follow this summary.

Ms. Deborah S. Szyfer, senior planner, Division of Long-range Planning, Department of Facilities Management, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Ms. Dana Davison, executive director to the Chief Operating Officer facilitated the meeting along with Dr. Sarah Sirgo, Acting Director, Office of School Support and Improvement. Ms. Corinne Blackford and Mrs. Julie Morris, planners, Division of Long-range Planning, assisted at this meeting.

Ms. Szyfer reviewed the agenda and went over feedback from the last meeting. She introduced Dr. Sirgo, who is the director for the Walter Johnson, Winston Churchill, and Col. Zadok Magruder clusters.

Next, Ms. Szyfer reviewed the six elementary school approaches that planning staff developed based on the criteria that were brainstormed at the previous meeting. Dr. Sirgo spoke to the programmatic issues of the approaches presented. As a reminder, Ms. Szyfer reiterated that the Roundtable is not discussing specific new schools. In the approaches where the opening of a new school is proposed, the discussion will be about the concept of opening a new school and the additional capacity it creates in the cluster. Also, long term projections are available at the cluster level but not by individual school. The footnotes of the enrollment projection tables handed out describe development assumptions. The enrollment projection for 2045 does not include the White Flint II and Rock Spring sector plans because housing unit counts for these plans are not known at this time. The 2020–2021 school year enrollment projection for Ashburton Elementary School was typed incorrectly as 980 and it will be corrected to 890.

#### Approach 1: Open a New Elementary School

- For clarification, Ms. Szyfer will rephrase this approach, as it refers to a new school, that the new school could be a reopened closed school or a newly constructed school.
- To justify opening a new school, MCPS must have a large enough cluster-wide elementary seat deficit. Projections show 118 seats available in the sixth year.
- In 2025 and 2030 the cluster-wide deficit is 169 seats, which is still not large enough to justify the opening of a new school.
- The proposed opening of the new school would be in 2035 and relocatables and/or short-term service area reassignments could provide interim capacity relief.
- Dr. Sirgo explained the per pupil allocation formula for staffing of schools. She also described challenges associated with smaller schools that have enrollments below 300 students in terms of master scheduling and providing specialist support staff. She

noted that smaller schools can offer more intimacy and a closer-knit community. She also described the challenges in large schools that have enrollments above 900 students, where large teaching teams can make collaboration more difficult.

- Some roundtable members remarked that three large elementary schools have Assistant School Administrator (ASA) positions although Ashburton Elementary School currently does not have this position.

#### Approach 1a: Open a New Elementary School; Remove Ashburton Elementary School Addition

- The seat deficit would be large enough to justify a new school in 2025.
- Ashburton Elementary School would continue to retain relocatable classrooms.
- Some students could be reassigned to Luxmanor Elementary Schools after the school revitalization/expansion provides additional capacity there.
- Construction of the Kensington-Parkwood Elementary School addition begins this summer.
- The approach maintains the Luxmanor Elementary School revitalization/expansion and increases the school's capacity.

#### Approach 2: Reorganize Schools for Grades K–4 in Conjunction with Secondary School Approach #4

- Dr. Sirgo spoke about middle school expectations developmentally, socially, and emotionally, and how they might impact fifth graders.
- Dr. Sirgo discussed course offerings and curriculum considerations. Grade 5 students may not have to change classes; it would be a principal/community decision. A school can departmentalize grades so that they are distinct even if they share a building. Grade 5 students would not be able to participate on middle school level sports teams but might be able to participate in intramural sports.
- The North Bethesda Middle School addition and a larger Tilden Middle School revitalization/expansion would be needed in this approach.
- The professional learning demands on staff may be greater in schools where schools levels are mixed within the same building.

#### Approach 3: Expand Some of the Elementary Schools for a Capacity of 850-890 Students

- Luxmanor Elementary School would be revitalized/expanded to a capacity of 877 students.
- There would be a possibility of opening a new school in the “out years” if needed.
- All school addition projects would require feasibility studies.

#### Approach 4: Open an Early Childhood Center

- The early childhood center would have a capacity for 350 students, but not more, because staff believed managing a larger school of young children would not be manageable.
- Future boundary changes would need to be considered for Grades 1–5 if a new school opened in the “out years.”
- There is no early childhood center in MCPS currently, however, this approach is comparable to the paired primary school arrangement (Bel Pre/Strathmore, Montgomery Knolls/Pine Crest, etc.).
- There may be less community cohesion where pre-K and Kindergarten students are separated from elementary students.
- Creating an early childhood center would create an added transition for students.
- Teachers at the new early childhood center may have fewer opportunities to explore working with elementary-aged students.
- The Ashburton Elementary School addition would need to be kept large in this approach.
- New transportation costs would be associated with this approach.

#### Approach 5: Open a New Elementary School and Pair it with Ashburton Elementary School

- There are not enough Kindergarten sized rooms at Ashburton Elementary School to make Ashburton Elementary School the Grades pre-K–2 school, therefore Ashburton Elementary School would become the Grades 3–5 school and the new school would be the primary school (Grades pre-K–2).
- Splitting Ashburton Elementary School itself does not provide enough capacity to justify opening a new school, so this option would reassign some students from Garrett Park Elementary School to the paired schools.
- In the past, school pairings have been done for demographic reasons.
- The paired schools would collaborate in terms of PTAs and instructional programs.
- This approach creates an additional transition for students.
- Paired schools might or might not be located in close proximity.
- Current paired schools have the same start and dismissal times.

Following the presentation of elementary school approaches, participants asked questions and made comments about the approaches.

- There was discussion about the tipping points in enrollment, and when assistant principal positions are funded for schools. Dr. Sirgo referred to the chart in the back of the *Staffing Complement* document.

- The preferred range of enrollment was increased in the *Long-range Educational Facilities Planning Regulation* (FAA-RA), because schools with two or fewer classes per grade limits teaching team functions and building individual school buildings for fewer than 450 students is inefficient in terms of construction costs.
- Ms. Szyfer explained that the current lack of land availability also justifies building schools larger than in the past.
- The methods for addressing over enrollment at Ashburton Elementary School will be different in the future, if the school is built to a capacity of 881 students but in the enrollment is projected to exceed the new capacity. Ms. Szyfer reassured the Ashburton Elementary School representatives that the school will not be allowed to be perpetually over enrolled in the future.
- Student reassignments are likely necessary in all of the approaches.
- Ms. Szyfer clarified that boundary studies are conducted 15 to 18 months before a new school opens. Boundary decisions are made about 9 months prior to the opening of a new school.
- Removing prekindergarten students from elementary schools alone would not sufficiently address over enrollment at a school.
- The programmatic considerations of placing sixth grade at elementary schools were discussed. Furthermore, moving sixth grade out of middle school does not improve capacity.
- Paraeducator staffing for schools is tied strictly to enrollment.

Next, Ms. Szyfer presented two additional secondary school approaches.

#### Approach 9: Collocate a New High School and Middle School on the Woodward Site

- Both schools would need to be in the same, compact building.
- This approach would require a feasibility study.
- Staff is not able to comment on shared space or other design issues at this point. These items would need to be identified as part of the feasibility study.
- Ms. Szyfer referenced the adjacent Cedarwood Park on an aerial photograph, as the park could provide additional field space for the new schools.

#### Approach 10: Reassign Grade 9 Students to Middle School and Reopen Woodward as a Grades 6–9 School

- This would create three Grades 6–9 middle schools.
- 9th grade would be split among three buildings, which would pose challenges related to course offerings and electives for 9<sup>th</sup> graders housed in a middle school building.
- There would not be a true freshman class but Grade 9 students would still be considered a high school grade, with the same courses and credit requirements.

- Because Grade 9 students must receive high school credit but Grade 8 students do not have the same requirements, there may be scheduling difficulties.
- The Woodward building might not need as extensive of renovations if used for a portion of the ninth grade, as opposed to for a high school.
- There may be issues for students applying to magnet and other special programs.
- Dr. Sirgo remarked that a team departmental model for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade might be advantageous if this approach were to be implemented.

Ms. Szyfer concluded the meeting by addressing observer comments. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m. Feedback forms were collected. The next meeting will be held on April 21, 2016 at Walter Johnson High School, 6400 Rock Spring Drive, Bethesda, Maryland, in the cafeteria. On April 21, 2016, roundtable members will share pros and cons of the elementary school approaches and the two new secondary approaches. They will then determine if additional elementary school approaches are needed.