

November 1, 2019

Dr. R. Stephen Green, District Superintendent; Mr. Daniel Drake, Interim Chief Operations Officer  
Hans Williams, Director of Planning & E-SPLOST Programming;  
Dr. Sherry Johnson, Regional Superintendent, Region I  
Dr. Michael Erwin, District 3 (Board Chair)  
Mr. Marshall Orson, District 2 (Vice Chair)  
Mr. Stan Jester, District 1  
Ms. Allyson Gevertz, District 4  
Mrs. Vickie Turner, District 5  
Mr. Dijon DaCosta, District 6  
Dr. Joyce Morley, District 7  
DeKalb County School District  
1701 Mountain Industrial Boulevard  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

Dear Dr. Green, Mr. Drake, Mr. Williams, Dr. Johnson and Board Members:

Thank you for inviting community feedback on the Austin Elementary Redistricting process. We write today to clarify Chesnut Elementary PAC's position, based on stakeholder feedback, and thank you for considering our community's needs.

Unfortunately, we cannot approve any of the three redistricting options provided on Oct. 23rd, because none of them benefit our school. They all propose an overall reduction in our student enrollment and they all divide the DNCA neighborhood along the Tilly Mill corridor.

**A. Splitting the DNCA Violates Redistricting Criteria and Hurts Chesnut**

- Sending DNCA families east of Tilly Mill Road (area D of Option 2) to Kingsley does not comply with the first criterion (Geographic Proximity) of the Board Policy on Alteration of School Attendance Areas — by increasing their distance to school by 33 to 62 percent.
- At Chesnut, 40% of PAC Council parent seats and PAC Action Team parent volunteers are filled by

<b>DNCA Street</b>	<b>to Chesnut</b>	<b>to Kingsley</b>
Cherry Hill Lane	1.2 miles	1.6 miles
Stonehenge Drive	1.5 miles	2.2 miles
Claridge Court	1.6 miles	2.6 miles

parents in the DNCA area east of Tilly Mill Road. Withdrawing these families would significantly diminish parent leadership at Chesnut, to the detriment of the efficient running of Chesnut's robust academic and community initiatives.

**B. Chesnut Willing To Share in Cluster Overcrowding**

- Rather than lose students, we welcome a slight increase in enrollment.
- We are open to discussing scenarios, such as the addition of Dunwoody Elementary's Area E on Option 2, that may slightly increase Chesnut's enrollment, in an effort to equitably distribute the number of portables across the six Dunwoody cluster schools.

## **Chesnut's Reality: Not Severely Overcrowded**

- With a current student enrollment of 473, Chesnut is actually 110% utilized.
- Chesnut's stated School Capacity on Oct. 23 was misreported as 358, inflating Chesnut's utilization rate to 135%, making Chesnut appear to be as overcrowded as Vanderlyn and more overcrowded than DES.
- Our school building's actual Instructional Capacity is 428 students, as reported on the corrected Oct. 28th Facility Capacity Report.
  - We challenge the 15% reduction applied to our 428 Instructional Capacity, termed the Scheduling Factor [a "reduction of total [student capacity] to account for the number of periods the room is not used and allow for teacher allotments"].
  - While a Scheduling Factor of 85% may help determine classroom funding, when assessing our building's Instructional Capacity, it is an unrealistic manipulation of the data, because homerooms are static. No homeroom class can be accommodated by utilizing a combination of classrooms during the 15% of the day each of the other rooms is not in use.
- Chesnut's lower field is able to accommodate 4th grade in portables while leaving adequate field, track and playground space for students to play during recess. There is room for an additional trailer to accommodate a slight increase in our enrollment.

## **C. Adhering to Redistricting Criteria**

We therefore urge you, as you consider rezoning options, to maintain or slightly increase Chesnut's current size, and keep the DNCA area whole, in accordance with the following redistricting criteria.

### Primary Criteria

1. **Geographic Proximity** - We ask all DNCA neighborhoods east of Tilly Mill Road remain in Chesnut district, as they are all closer to Chesnut than Kingsley (per above table). If Perimeter Gardens (Area E in Option 2) were rezoned to Chesnut, they would be .3 miles closer to school than they are to DES.
2. **Instructional Capacity** - Any proposal that ultimately reduces the number of students at Chesnut will cause our small school to lose funding for teachers and instructional support staff, undercutting our proven method of delivering an excellent education for all students. We prefer to welcome additional students from overcrowded areas to retain our working education model.

### Secondary Criteria

1. **Safety and Traffic Patterns** - Moving DNCA students east of Tilly Mill Road to Kingsley will add traffic to already congested main thoroughfares Tilly Mill Road and North Peachtree Road. Conversely, there are established Safe Routes to School that allow these students to walk or bike to and from Chesnut safely. If Perimeter Gardens were to be rezoned to Chesnut, they could utilize the existing DCSD bus route that serves Chesnut students at Columns at Lake Ridge.
5. **Intact Neighborhoods** - After using the appropriate channels in the correct forum — Sept. 26th's Round 1 Austin Elementary Redistricting Meeting — our voice was not heard. We ask again that the DNCA be kept intact. DNCA's area encompasses community members on the west and east side of Tilly Milly Road, including: Dunwoody North, Andover Estates, Laurelwood Farms, Dunwoody Trails, Brafferton Square, Briers North, The Madisons, and Chestnut Landing.

## **D. Prioritize A Chesnut Rebuild**

Lastly, we strongly request DCSD make a rebuild for Chesnut its first priority in addressing Dunwoody's elementary school overcrowding, and expedite this project's undertaking. Not only do we have the lowest Facility Condition Assessment (43.17) in the Dunwoody cluster, we have one of the largest properties, which we hope can be utilized to increase our capacity and eliminate the shortage of elementary seats in the cluster.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chesnut Parent Advisory Council

October 29, 2019

Email: [President@DunwoodyNorth.org](mailto:President@DunwoodyNorth.org)

Dr. R. Stephen Green, District Superintendent  
Mr. Daniel Drake, Interim Chief Operations Officer  
Dr. Sherry Johnson, Regional Superintendent, Region I  
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DeKalb County School District  
1701 Mountain Industrial Boulevard  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

RE: 2019 Dunwoody Cluster Elementary School Redistricting

Dear Esteemed Superintendent, Regional Superintendent, Board Members, and School Leadership:

My name is Thomas C. O'Brien, and I am writing you in my official capacity as president of the Dunwoody North Civic Association (DNCA). The DNCA represents a community of nearly 1,100 homes in neighborhoods that include Dunwoody North, Andover Estates, Laurelwood Farms, Dunwoody Trails, Brafferton Square, Briers North, The Madisons, and Chestnut Landing.

When matters arise such as the current Austin Redistricting effort, the DNCA examines the available information, and the board adopts a position. **Upon reviewing the three detailed maps available at <https://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/operations/planning/redistricting/>, the DNCA board voted overwhelmingly against any of the options that have been drafted. The primary reason behind the DNCA's concern is the splitting of the Dunwoody North Community along the Tilly Mill corridor (labeled "D" on the Option 1 map, page 19/29 of the Powerpoint presentation).**

All three of the current options include splitting the current Chesnut Elementary attendance area along the Tilly Mill Corridor, and sending those on the eastern side of Tilly Mill to Kingsley Elementary. This dividing line separates a cohesive neighborhood, and does not appear to adhere to several of the DeKalb County School District criteria used when evaluating a redistricting effort.

The DNCA is aware that there are several criteria that inform redistricting proposals, and would suggest that the three plans being presented do not serve those criteria. Primary among these criteria are geographic proximity, instructional capacity, and projected enrollment. Of secondary importance are

safety and traffic patterns, previous redistricting, balancing of special programs, school feeder alignment, intact neighborhoods, and efficient operations.

**Geographic Proximity** – Redistricting homes on the east side of Tilly Mill from Chesnut to Kingsley actually increases the distance that these families must travel to attend school by 20% to 40%. Additionally, the significantly increased dangers on those roads to the school requires transport by car, eliminating walking or bicycling.

**Instructional Capacity and Projected Enrollment** – Overcrowding in area schools is the reason for this redistricting effort. Pursuing the best interests of the attending children is certainly at the heart of this effort, and an overcrowded school is arguably less effective. Chesnut’s current enrollment is 473 children. Despite being arguably at or over capacity, school leadership has managed to achieve a CCRPI of 94.9%. This level of capacity is projected to change over the next two years by only 10-15 students, but by all appearances, the mix of Chesnut attendees is being successfully served by the teaching and leadership team. Therefore, it would be the recommendation of the DNCA to cause as few disruptions to this academic institution as possible.

**Traffic Patterns** – Redistricting the homes on the east side of Tilly Mill Road will also result in increased usage of already congested thoroughfares. Under the new proposals, these families will travel longer distances on already congested routes (Tilly Mill and North Peachtree), making congestion worse. Presently, these students travel on Safe Routes to School (many on foot or bicycle) through the neighborhoods on the West Side of Tilly Mill. Any change is likely to result in fewer children walking and biking to their school, and more automobile traffic using already crowded roads.

**Intact Neighborhoods** – While intact neighborhoods represent a secondary interest to be considered in a redistricting effort, the current proposals will have a profound impact on the Dunwoody North community. Not only would this change cause 40+ children to be removed from a well-performing school near their homes, but it would also potentially disrupt social relationships, and would seriously interrupt parental involvement in the Chesnut community. Approximately 40% of the PAC (Parent Advisory Council) volunteers live in the portion of the neighborhood east of Tilly Mill, and it is clear that active and engaged parental partners are a hallmark of academic success.

There are a multitude of reasons for not splitting the current Chesnut attendance area along the Tilly Mill corridor. It is my earnest hope that the Dekalb County School Board and leadership team considers the substantial negative impact that the current models would create, and instead works toward a solution that does not damage a neighborhood and a well-performing elementary school.

*John Heneghan*

*Gil Wood*

*P*

*P. Boudewyns*

Very truly yours,



Thomas C. O'Brien  
President, Dunwoody North Civic Association

*Mark Stephenson*

*Angela Renals*



November 3, 2019

Email: [president@dunwoodynorthdc.org](mailto:president@dunwoodynorthdc.org)

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RE: 2019 Dunwoody Cluster Elementary School Redistricting

Dear Esteemed Superintendent, Regional Superintendent, Board Members, and School Leadership:

On behalf of the Dunwoody North Driving Club, I thank you for your service to the students and families of DeKalb County, and for your commitment to keeping the Dunwoody North neighborhood intact and zoned to Chesnut Elementary.

The Dunwoody North Driving Club (DNDC) is a shared amenity available to over 1100 homes in the neighborhood collectively known for over five decades as Dunwoody North. This area encompasses North Peachtree Road, the Dunwoody Side of Peachtree Industrial Blvd, and both sides of Tilly Mill Road and includes the subdivisions of Dunwoody North, Andover Estates, Laurelwood Farms, Dunwoody Trails, Brafferton Square, Briers North, The Madisons, Cherry Hill, and Chestnut Landing.

We applaud the commitment that DeKalb County Public Schools has made to keeping existing neighborhoods intact. We are, however, extremely concerned that the three options presented at the last public Austin Elementary redistricting meeting do not meet the spirit of that commitment. All three of the proposed options included a change that is in direct conflict with several of the criteria for redistricting. As stewards of our neighborhood, we are strongly opposed to any proposal that divides our community.

**Notably, all three proposals presented include splitting the current Chesnut Elementary attendance area along the Tilly Mill Corridor and sending those on the eastern side of Tilly Mill to Kingsley Elementary.**



On behalf of the Dunwoody North Driving Club Board of Directors, and its membership, I would like to address why this is harmful to us as a community.

**The three current proposals conflict with the Dekalb County School District policy criteria of *geographic proximity and safety and traffic patterns* that are to be considered when evaluating a redistricting effort.**

- Redistricting homes on the east side of Tilly Mill from Chesnut to Kingsley Elementary increases the distance that students must travel to attend school by 20% to 40%. The interconnected nature of the streets within the Dunwoody North neighborhood allows children in the DNDC membership area on the east side of Tilly Mill walk and bike to school via Safe Routes to School on the west side of Tilly Mill Road, *not* by walking along Tilly Mill Road. There is no interconnection of streets between the Dunwoody North and the Kingsley neighborhoods, which would eliminate the ability for students to safely walk or bike to school, and which would add significant traffic burden to the already heavily congested Tilly Mill corridor.

**The three current proposals conflict with the Dekalb County School District criteria of *intact neighborhoods*. The arbitrary dividing line of Tilly Mill Road separates a historically cohesive neighborhood and will have a profound impact on the Dunwoody North community.**

- This change would cause 43 students, who represent nearly 10% of Chesnut's current school population, to be removed from a well-performing school near their homes. Further, almost half of Chesnut's Parent Advisory Council volunteers live in the portion of the neighborhood east of Tilly Mill. Redistricting these families would thus have a disproportionate impact on the overall success of Chesnut Elementary.

The Dunwoody North Driving Club has **shared amenities** including a pool, tennis courts, playground, and a club house that is used by the Dunwoody North community for various activities throughout the year, and which is also used by the Dunwoody North Civic Association for their meetings. **These facilities are important to our community on both sides of the neighborhood.** The facility is 1/4 mile from Chesnut Elementary. Students who walk home from school may stop by our playground to play with their friends as they walk to their homes on the other side of Tilly Mill Road. Some students have scheduled tennis lessons after school. Others may use our clubhouse for an after-school party or for Cub Scout events. When May arrives, our swim team holds practice after school and Chesnut students walk there from school. By moving 43 students to Kingsley, those students will be prevented from being able to walk to the DNDC after school and use these shared facilities. These are just some examples of the disruption to student life that this change would cause.



The Dunwoody North Driving Club Board of Directors respectfully asks that DeKalb County Public Schools explore alternative options that keep the 43 students who are all part of the Dunwoody North neighborhoods at Chesnut Elementary. It is our sincere hope that the Dekalb County School Board and leadership team consider these impacts that the current models would create, and work toward a solution that keeps our neighborhood intact and does not damage a well-performing elementary school, its students, and its families.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'David Ratonyi'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

David Ratonyi  
President, Dunwoody North Driving Club

Cc:  
DNDC Board  
Chesnut Elementary PAC  
Thomas O'Brien, DNCA President  
Veronica Williams, Principal, Chesnut Elementary