

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*We did our best to capture all questions and answers from our Town Hall Meetings, conversations and virtual feedback. If we missed your question, please accept our sincerest apologies, in advance, and submit your question to [mpiccolino@acpsd.net](mailto:mpiccolino@acpsd.net). Anything inadvertently missed and brought to our attention will be added to the Q&A.*

### **Q: Are conditions safe for faculty and students at Byrd Learning Center (BLC)?**

A: The health and safety of students and staff members is of utmost importance to us. Following questions about the safety of Byrd Learning Center raised during the Town Hall Meeting at Leavelle McCampbell, a thorough investigation began immediately. The results of tests we've received to date include Air and Soil Quality from CSRA Testing and Engineering in Augusta, Georgia. There was no indication of indoor air quality concern and the soil samples reflected those of a general background condition, or representing levels that may be found anywhere in our geographic area. A comprehensive release of information on these tests will be made available as water quality results are available. The waste holding pond in question is located approximately 1,800 feet (or three-tenths of a mile) from the Byrd Learning Center campus and sits on property not owned by Aiken County Public Schools. According to maps of the area indicating changes in elevation, the pond site is between 100 and 150 feet **below** the elevation of Byrd Learning Center, meaning any affect the pond might have on water quality at the BLC campus would be negligible.

According to District records, Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (ADHERA) tests conducted at Byrd Learning Center in 1998 recommended, when feasible, the removal of certain areas of floor tiles with Asbestos-Containing Materials (ACM). Environmental Consulting Services, Inc. completed this project on June 19, 2000, at Byrd Learning Center, removing all indicated materials.

Aiken County Public Schools has no greater priority than ensuring the safety of all students and employees. When all testing results are available, Aiken County Public Schools will provide the community with a comprehensive report on all test results.

Update: Aiken County Public Schools has received all testing results. Information from the press release about those results (issued over winter recess and published in The Aiken Standard, December 25, 2017) is included below and is available in its entirety under the Town Hall Tab of our website.

### AIR QUALITY TESTING

An air quality assessment was conducted in November at Byrd Learning Center. The results of that assessment found no visual evidence of moisture damage or fungal growth, and no

indicators of indoor air quality concerns. Sample analyses indicated one area of the facility with an elevated spore count, which the company recommended be addressed with a general cleaning of the space with an anti-bacterial detergent.

## SOIL TESTING

Soil samples were collected in November from four areas at the perimeter of the Byrd Learning Center campus. These samples were analyzed for seven metals, nitrates and 49 volatile organic compounds. Laboratory analysis for nitrates showed no detection (ND) and analysis of all 49 volatile organic compounds showed no detection (ND). Laboratory analysis of metals found in the soil samples reflected only those of a general background condition, or representing levels that may be found anywhere in our geographic area.

## WATER QUALITY TESTING

Eleven water samples were collected in December from a variety of sources covering the entire Byrd Learning Center campus. These samples were tested for copper and lead contaminants, with results matched against Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for drinking water. A laboratory analysis showed all samples as testing well below EPA actionable levels.

## LOCATION OF WASTE HOLDING POND

The waste holding pond in question is located approximately 1,800 feet (or three-tenths of a mile) from the Byrd Learning Center campus and sits on property not owned by Aiken County Public Schools. According to maps of the area indicating changes in elevation, the pond site is at between 100 and 150 feet below the elevation of Byrd Learning Center, meaning any affect the pond might have on water quality at the BLC campus would be negligible.

## IMPROVEMENTS AT BYRD LEARNING CENTER

According to District records, Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (ADHERA) tests conducted at Byrd Learning Center in 1998 recommended when feasible the removal of certain areas of floor tiles with Asbestos-Containing Materials (ACM). Environmental Consulting Services, Inc. completed this project June 19, 2000, at Byrd Learning Center, removing all suspect materials.

**Q: So, the recommendation is for my children to go to Aiken Middle School?**

A: No. The recommendation is that Aiken Middle School be repurposed into a sixth grade only intermediate school, serving all students in Area 1.

**Q: If voted in, when would the sixth grade school start? I have heard next school year 2018 and I also heard 2020?**

A: The board will review recommendations following Town Hall meetings. If the board supports the recommendation for a sixth grade intermediate school for all Area 1 students on the current campus of Aiken Middle, the school would open in fall of 2019.

**Q: Where can I find research to support a sixth grade middle school concept?**

A: We've shared some information about the success of sixth grade schools, namely Crossroads Intermediate School, throughout Town Hall Meetings. The benefits detailed include:

- Community-oriented philosophy for transition year between elementary and middle school.
- Intellectual growth: transition from concrete to abstract thinking.
- Focus on building student confidence and teamwork.
- Social-emotional development and support.
- Age- and developmentally appropriate activities, including those specifically designed activities for sixth graders who are not eligible to participate in middle school athletics.
- Elimination of social influence of older students

For information on how these schools are performing throughout the nation and about sixth grade students generally, the below articles have been published on this subject:

<https://www.howtolearn.com/2014/09/sixth-grade-only-schools/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/09/495961751/heres-how-schools-can-soften-the-blow-of-sixth-grade>

- <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/should-sixth-grade-be-in-elementary-school-or-middle-school>

- [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/admin/admin060.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin060.shtml)

**Q: Wouldn't it be a better plan to better Aiken Middle School rather than distribute those students among the other schools?**

A: Aiken Middle School has historically struggled to find success. Though we've been pleased with recent gains in student performance (largely credited to the visionary leadership of a new school principal and motivated staff there), the existing attendance lines and grade configuration create challenging obstacles to sustained performance. The recommendation for an Intermediate

School for all Area 1 sixth-grade students helps to create opportunities for academic growth and to level the demographic imbalance while providing students with a more accurate representation in their school of the greater community.

**Q: Are the Aiken Middle School parents going to feel good about our kids coming there or about their kids being bussed to Schofield and Kennedy?**

A: We certainly don't want to speak for those parents, but, should that recommendation be supported by the board, we plan to provide opportunities for all parents to help plan the new sixth grade intermediate school together.

**Q: So why aren't we providing additional resources to benefit lower performing schools without sacrificing my special needs child or the financial well-being of my family?**

A: Additional federal and local resources have been made available to lower performing schools, including additional summer training for all professional staff. While gains have been made in Aiken's traditionally underperforming schools, the demographic composition of students attending those schools present numerous obstacles to sustained success.

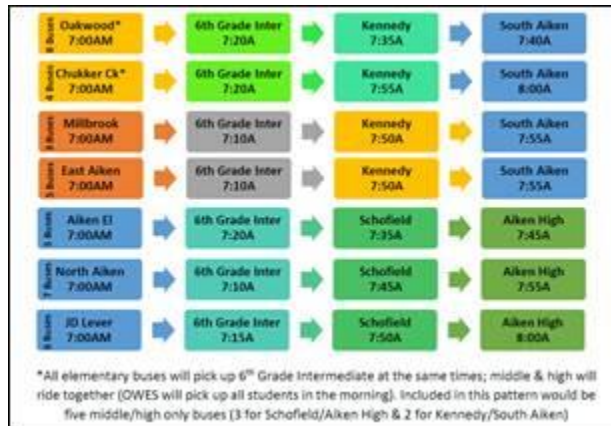
Special needs students will in no way be sacrificed at the expense of these recommendations.

**Q: How can you provide for the transportation concerns of parents who have multiple kids and now have a 6th grade option at the farthest school from the South side?**

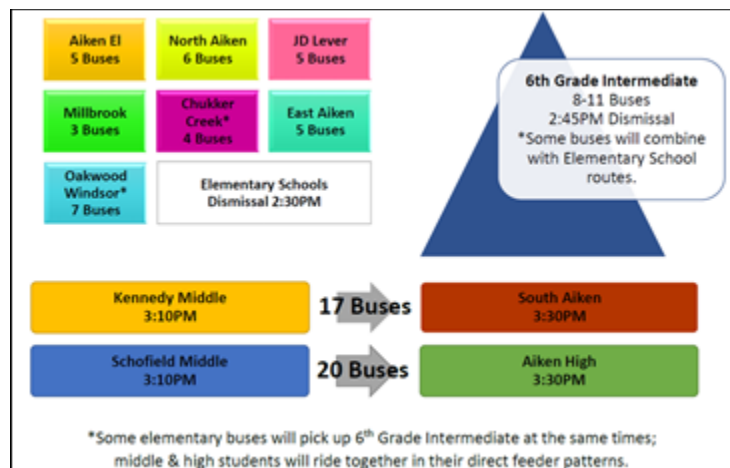
A: Transportation will be provided to students at their zoned school. School start and end times may need to be adjusted, as needed to accommodate parents transporting students to multiple schools. The campus of Aiken Middle School (the proposed location of a new Intermediate School Campus for all sixth grade students) is only 5.8 miles from Kennedy Middle and 3.1 miles from Schofield Middle.

**Q: How would transportation for a sixth grade school work?**

A: Preliminary transportation plans for transporting Area 1 students to a sixth grade only intermediate school have been developed and were shared with the community at the Town Hall Meeting at Aiken high School. All elementary school buses would pick up sixth grade intermediate school students, along with students in grades PK-5th. Seventh and eighth grade students would ride with high school students. Elementary school students would be dropped off first, then those buses would travel to the Intermediate School.



In the afternoon, some elementary school buses would pick up students at the sixth grade intermediate school. Middle (seventh and eighth graders) and high school students would ride together in their direct feeder patterns.



**Q: If an intermediate school is such a great idea, why is it only being recommended for Area 1 students?**

A: The intermediate school is a creative solution to remedy over and underutilization of middle schools in Area 1 as well as demographic imbalance. Middle schools in other areas are demographically balanced and similar in space utilization. While we look forward to the anticipated academic and social benefits of an intermediate school for those students, we believe it to be prudent to pilot this concept at one school before considering or implementing the concept in other areas.

**Q: I don't believe that we should be expected to give up any of our (Area 3) students, not one. Why are you rezoning Trolley Run to Area 1 schools?**

A: Byrd Elementary School and Midland Valley High School are over 100% capacity and there is space for students in Area 1 schools. In addition, due to the close proximity of the Trolley Run neighborhood to Area 1 schools, a large number of students have been approved for transfer and already attend schools in Area 1. Student transfers for the Trolley Run neighborhood include 14 high school students (12 at Aiken High), three middle school students (all at Schofield) and 20 elementary school students (seven at Aiken Elementary and an additional seven at other Area 1 schools).

**Q: Have parents/homeowners in Trolley Run been surveyed to better understand their support or opposition to rezoning?**

A: Parents and homeowners throughout the entire county have been invited to provide feedback on recommendations. Families in the Trolley Run neighborhood haven't been specifically targeted for their feedback, but have been invited to participate in ongoing conversations and requests for input as have all citizens.

**Q: What does Grandfathering mean?**

A: Current students who have already begun school in a school building may elect to stay where they are until the final grade (5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>) in that building. Transportation is not provided to "grandfathered" students. Upon reaching the final grade in the school, the student follows the regular path (middle/high) to which he or she is properly zoned.

**Q: I'm a homeowner in Trolley Run. We bought our house there in 2010 because of the new Byrd. Our daughter is in seventh grade at Leavelle and we have two young boys still at Byrd. We appreciate grandfathering. When will we be able to get waivers so that our daughter can stay with her friends who are on the Midland Valley tract? When is the decision being made? What is the final timeline if recommendations are approved?**

A: Board members will review all community feedback and amendments based on community input in an open workshop on January 6. The board will officially vote on recommendations at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 23. If reassigning Trolley Run to Area 1 schools is approved, it will likely begin in the 2018-19 school year. Your daughter and sons would have the opportunity to be grandfathered to stay in Leavelle and Byrd until their final grade at that school, provided transportation to and from school could be provided by your family. If your daughter wanted to remain with her friends at Midland Valley High School, we would recommend that you apply for a transfer to do so.

**Q: Why not grandfather younger siblings not in school yet?**

A: It's not possible to "grandfather" a younger sibling not yet in school by virtue of the definition of being a grandfathered student. However, it is not the desire to create hardships for any family. Siblings of students grandfathered to stay in a school they've already started will have the opportunity to request a transfer. Every effort will be made to honor transfers of younger siblings.

**Q: What is the long-term impact of not rezoning the Trolley Run neighborhood?**

A: Our demographer has cautioned us that the growth in the areas currently zoned for Byrd Elementary, Leavelle McCampbell Middle and Midland Valley High School will not experience any change in the next 10 years.

In addition to being out of space for classrooms and nine portable units being utilized, Midland Valley High School has five teachers displaced. If the recommendation to expand Midland Valley's campus is approved and a funding source identified and community/voter-supported, if necessary, the expansion couldn't fully accommodate the growth planned for the Trolley Run neighborhood and provide relief to current overcrowding in those schools.

**Q: Why don't we combine South Aiken and Aiken High School and create a large high school, maybe near the interstate?**

A: Cost; a school like that would cost well more than \$100 million. Construction for the new Aiken High School is already underway and would not be large enough to house students from both schools.

**Q: Why was the Area 1 rezoning not immediately shared with families? A letter was sent home with information about the middle school, but no information about the elementary rezoning.**

A: Information about the recommendation to move attendance lines in Area 1 was immediately shared during Town Hall Meetings. Attendees at the Town Hall Meeting held at South Aiken High School, particularly parents of Chukker Creek Elementary School students, expressed great concern about a sixth grade school. Chukker Creek Elementary's Principal and leaders from the PTA felt that there was a lack of understanding about the Intermediate School Concept and drafted a letter for that purpose to be sent home with all students.

**Q: I am part of that 116 on the East Side of Whiskey Road that are currently going to Chukker Creek. We are within two miles of Chukker Creek. I just think that's a little far-fetched to ask that we go to another school, don't you?**

A: That was the sticking point because that is the biggest and most direct inconvenience we're asking of parents located within that swath of land. Proximity wise, every way you cut it besides this one took Chukker Creek as a school even further away from the district average for poverty numbers. Please let us hear your feedback and we will absolutely look at alternative means to achieve greater balance and attendance numbers for the school.

**Q: How can we justify moving students from a highly ranked elementary school to a lower one?**

A: Our goal is to guarantee a high quality educational experience for ALL students. With a more proportional distribution of students from families with financial security and those less fortunate, we anticipate greater academic success for all students.

There are a multitude of articles written regarding the benefits to all students of more diverse schools. The below is a small sampling of published articles on this subject:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/10/19/446085513/the-evidence-that-white-children-benefit-from-integrated-schools>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-meeks/why-affluent-parents-should-benefit-from-integrated-schools\\_b\\_10100202.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-meeks/why-affluent-parents-should-benefit-from-integrated-schools_b_10100202.html)

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_students\\_benefit\\_from\\_school\\_diversity](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_students_benefit_from_school_diversity)

<http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf>

**Q: My property values are going to go down because of the move to East Aiken. What are you going to do about it?**

A: We certainly hope that realignment doesn't impact the value of any Aiken County resident's home. Homes in the E Aiken zone have very stable values. We encourage any families concerned about the shift from Chukker Creek to visit East Aiken School of the Arts.

**Q: Have you taken into consideration the new development on Talatha Church Road? Will this change East Aiken's demographics to turn East Aiken like Chukker Creek is today?**

A: We have taken into consideration Summerton Village, the new development on Talatha Church Road, as well as all approved developments available to us through the Planning Commission in every area of our county. Summerton Village is expected to have 70 units in its first section of development.



We are not able to determine the demographic impact of community that has yet to be occupied by students or families.

**Q: What is the District's plan for the homeowner loss if capital gain?**

A: Public school districts do not benefit financially from a homeowner's sale of their home, nor are school systems responsible for a potential loss of capital gain.

**Q: Why are some areas being rezoned to East Aiken and Woodside isn't – why not Woodside?**

A: One of the goals of the recommendations is to have more contiguous zones and if shifts are necessary, move entire neighborhoods, not streets or sides of streets to different schools. The amount of elementary-aged children in the Woodside community is much less than that of neighborhoods along Whiskey Road. Moving just a few of the neighborhoods off Whiskey Road to East Aiken considerably lowers the overall number of students at that school. In addition, the neighborhoods off of Whiskey Road have direct access to alternative route options to East Aiken (such as Powderhouse Road), making them closer to the east side of Aiken.

**Q: What I don't understand, and I'm really struggling with is, what in the world does this have to do with demographic equalization?**

A: The main concern we are trying to address is utilization, simply stated – overcrowding of schools. Demographic equalization is not a focus of the recommendations. In addition to utilization, we are striving for a greater level of demographic balance between schools of the same grade span. We have 20 elementary schools in our school district, and 19 of the 20 have a significant population of students who come from homes who meet the federal definition of poverty. In Aiken County, 64% of school district families meet the same definition. Chukker Creek is the exception. Across the 20 elementary schools, the percentages range from 27% at Chukker Creek to 91% at North Aiken. In addition to addressing the issue of overcrowding, we are also attempting to have a greater “balance” by narrowing the gap between elementary schools. As a point of reference, Chukker Creek is not only the exception but the next lowest elementary school population is 47% at Hammond Hill. The next lowest elementary school poverty percentage in Aiken is Aiken Elementary at 59%, twice as large as Chukker Creek.

**Q: Why do we need demographic equalization? What is demographic equalization? What is the definition? Why is it important? What does it have to do with reduced lunches? Is it a race thing? Are schools supposed to be equally populated by race? By income level? Does this get more schools more funding?**

A: Researchers have documented that students' exposure to other students who are different from themselves is socially, emotionally and academically beneficial. We believe diversity, simply defined as comprehensive inclusion and tolerance, is also beneficial. The federal definition of poverty is established by the percentage of students who receive subsidized school lunch. That is the primary reference to school lunches. This is not a race issue; the issues are related to overcrowding and a lack of socio-economic balance. Unfortunately, people tend to couple poverty with race. In Aiken County, we have many families of all races who meet the federal definition described above. We receive federal funding based on the number of students throughout the county. The recommendations will not provide additional funding but would require that we split the finite funding for elementary schools by 20 instead of 19, if adopted.

**Q: Should my kids go to a different school so we can balance something for everyone else? Or are we in the right schools because we are a minority? In my mind, why does it even matter? I'm a person with a family, living my life, making ends meet. Who cares what color or gender or religion my kids are? All lives matter. ALL. So what makes it important to you where my kids go to school?**

A: The main concern we are trying to address is utilization, simply stated – overcrowding of schools. In addition to utilization, we are striving for a greater level of demographic balance between schools of the same grade span. You are correct, color, gender, or religion have no bearing at all. Chukker Creek Elementary School is densely populated and new developments are underway in the current attendance zone. The recommendations are designed as options for consideration.

**Q: How can the Board justify having students/parents go past elementary/middle schools/high schools to go to their zoned school? Is that safe?**

A: We don't believe that there is a safety concern with parents driving by a school to attend the school to which their children are zoned. This is already commonly done in our school district. The recommendations actually create more contiguous zones, largely eliminating that practice in many areas.

**Q: How much did the Aiken County School District pay Cropper GIS and McKibben Demographics for the realignment study and where did those funds come from?**

A: Approximately \$60,000 from the general fund.

**Q: Why aren't the needs created by additional students offset by additional tax revenues.**

A: Schools are funded on a per pupil (per student) basis. South Carolina does not provide any funding for facilities improvements or new construction.

**Q: You said no decisions have been made, how can I stop you (Dr. Alford)?**

A: No decisions have been made. We are seeking community input on these recommendations. Any feedback will be shared with our school board members prior to their decision in late January. How can you stop it? Let us hear from you. Visit our website. Call your board member. Email me (Dr. Alford: [salford@acpsd.net](mailto:salford@acpsd.net)).

**Q: What are you doing to ensure that Ridge Spring has strong educational programs like that of other high schools?**

A: Ridge Spring has expanded college-course offerings available virtually through Aiken Tech to lower grades. In addition Ridge Spring has expanded the number of Advanced Placement classes from one to five. Through partnership with Wagener Salley, Ridge Spring students have access to additional CATE (Career & Technology Education) courses on their campus.

**Q: There seems like a lot of focus and attention on North Augusta? What is going to be done to support our area (Area 5; Silver Bluff)?**

A: The need is in North Augusta right now as the schools are overcrowded. We are addressing those needs. When there is a need here (Silver Bluff), the need will be addressed.

**Q: Are the decisions of board members weighted?**

A: No. there are nine members; everyone gets a vote.

**Q: Have you had any study or input on the impact to the county in terms of traffic and local economy?**

A: While a traffic and economics study has not been commissioned on behalf of the school district as it relates to the recommendation for attendance line shifts, recommendations have been shared with local officials and their input and feedback requested.

**Q: Will minutes and our questions be posted? What about people that can't make the meetings?**

A: The information provided at each Town Hall meeting has been posted on our website. As we complete the Town Hall meetings, we will be adding a comprehensive list of questions asked during the meetings. This will be posted prior to the Winter Recess. We did not have a stenographer recording meeting minutes, but will take your recommendation under advisement for future Town Hall Meetings.

**Q: How will we know info published on the 6<sup>th</sup> will be inclusive? And why can't the community see this feedback sooner? You hold it for MONTHS, stop meetings when questions get tough for one-on-one Q&A instead, and none of that was captured?! Why on earth can you not open a public forum for public opinion? ACPSD needs more transparency! Especially when affecting so many families. When will County traffic implications be evaluated and considered? When will County economic implications be evaluated and considered? How can you rob families of their investments and rezone neighborhoods past MULTIPLE schools to get to new school?! Undue hardship is the result! Please stop this effort and help Aiken families, including the children**

A: Every Town Hall Meeting included an open forum, with open questions from the community. In an effort to respect the time of all attendees at the meetings, anyone with a question still unresolved was invited to stay. The answers to those more in-depth and lengthy responses were provided openly, not one-on-one (unless just one person remained with a question still unresolved).

While we did not have a stenographer record the entirety of each meeting, the information shared at each meeting has been shared on our website, [acpsd.net](http://acpsd.net) under the "Town Hall" channel/tab. A series of amendments to the recommendations have been developed by our demographer and administrative team based on community feedback from meetings and other conversations. Those, too, are posted online under the "Town Hall" channel/tab.

We are committed to transparency and listening and learning from students, families and the entire community and appreciate your recommendation for opportunities to demonstrate that even further.

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**Q: You say demographic balancing is a recommendation from a consultant. I still have not reviewed your consultant's recommendation. Where is the study with the free and reduced lunch data? Where are you getting your numbers? The demographic study does not include any statistics on free and reduced lunch. How can you trust the numbers are not being skewed? How can we as a community provide options and input when we are not properly informed?**

A: The study containing both the recommendations from the consultant as well as the free and reduced lunch data is available on our website, [acpsd.net](http://acpsd.net), under the Town Hall channel/tab, Demography Study, Restructuring Options for Consideration,

<https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.acpsd.net/cms/lib/SC02209457/Centricity/Domain/6392/Aiken+SC+Options+Analysis+with+Maps+171103.pdf>.

The free and reduced lunch data appears on page four of that document. A screenshot of the free and reduced lunch numbers is included below.

**Elementary Demographic Statistics: Continued**

The following table reflects the free reduced lunch percentages for 2017-18 and the Elementary Plan.

Planning Area	School Name	Grade Config	Percent FR Lunch		
			2017-18 Total Enrollment	2017-18 Estimated Live-In <sup>1</sup>	Elementary Plan Estimated <sup>2</sup>
1	Aiken Elementary	PK-5th	59%	56%	56%
1	Chukker Creek Elementary	PK-5th	29%	38%	49%
1	East Aiken School of the Arts	PK-5th	76%	71%	53%
1	J. D. Lever Elementary	PK-5th	79%	80%	81%
1	Millbrook Elementary	PK-5th	63%	63%	61%
1	North Aiken Elementary	PK-5th	91%	87%	84%
1	Oakwood-Windsor Elementary	PK-5th	86%	85%	84%
2	Belvedere Elementary	PK-5th	52%	50%	50%
2	Hammond Hill Elementary	PK-5th	46%	51%	51%
2	Mossy Creek Elementary	PK-5th	61%	60%	60%
2	North Augusta Elementary	PK-5th	59%	58%	58%
3	Byrd Elementary	K-5th	61%	61%	67%
3	Clearwater Elementary	PK-5th	81%	80%	79%
3	Gloverville Elementary	PK-5th	85%	90%	75%
3	Jefferson Elementary	PK-5th	78%	78%	76%
3	New Elementary	PK-5th	NA	NA	78%
3	Warrenville Elementary	PK-5th	73%	67%	64%
4	Busbee Corbett Elementary Middle	PK-8th	74%	75%	73%
4	Ridge Spring-Monetta Elementary	PK-5th	81%	79%	79%
5	Greendale Elementary	PK-5th	77%	74%	74%
5	Redcliffe Elementary	PK-5th	71%	72%	72%
Total			66%	66%	66%

Students reflect the preliminary 2017-18 data.

<sup>1</sup> The estimated enrollment is calculated by adding the 2017-18 students that are not within the K-5th cohort, plus those students that live outside of the district, plus the total number of K-5th grade students living within each option zone. Charter Students are not included in these estimates.

Free and reduced lunch numbers for every school are available and are part of our reporting to the state department of education. The free and reduced lunch numbers for students enrolled are readily available to us as those families apply yearly and are qualified for free/reduced cost meals. The estimated live-in free and reduced lunch numbers are calculated by adding the 2017-18 students that live-in and attend the school to which they are zoned plus the free and reduced lunch status of students living within the zone, but on special permission to attend a different school.

**Q: How can you vote to rezone at this time when almost 1200 new homes with permits were not included in your maps? This only includes the first phase. That means more phases will follow which are also not considered.**

A: The demography study did include projected growth for the next 10 years for all of Aiken County, their projections included the 1200 new homes with permits. At the request of our school board, at the end of 2017, our school district administrators attained all permits pulled for the year and color coded the document by current area lines and proposed new area lines in order to provide concrete documentation by subdivision and area of our community's growth.

**Q: What are you going to do with the new 1500-acre development in North Augusta with land donated for a brand new school? I am guessing the demographic balance will look similar to Chukker Creek. Are you going to force the new homeowners of this development to bus to a less desirable school whether by rating or distance?**

A: We are not able to determine the demographic impact of a community that has yet to be occupied by students or families. The recommendation for a new elementary and a new middle school between Graniteville and North Augusta was made with the intention to relieve overcrowding and account for new growth in those areas. The feasibility of that school hinges upon identifying and securing a funding source for the project. Several funding mechanisms have been shared as possibilities; most require a taxpayer vote.

**Q: Since overcrowding is not an issue, why is the school district refusing to produce an option that keeps Talatha Gardens at Chukker Creek?**

A: Utilization of all schools has been at the center of discussions involving attendance line shifts. Efforts have been made at Chukker Creek in recent years to reduce the number of transfer students into the school; that effort has impacted utilization and the school is no longer over 100% capacity. However, it's utilization is the highest for Area 1 elementary schools at 98% enrolled and 99% live-in.

Creating balance and contiguous zones have also been goals of the recommendations. Chukker Creek's minority and free and reduced lunch numbers are 29% for enrolled students (and 38% for all students living in the zone). Chukker Creek has the lowest minority and free and reduced lunch numbers in Aiken County Public Schools. The next closest percentage is Hammond Hill Elementary School in North Augusta, with a free and reduced lunch percentage of 46% (51% live in). In the Aiken area (Area 1 schools), Aiken Elementary has the next lowest free and reduced lunch percentage at 59% (56% live in). On the high end, North Aiken's poverty index is 91%.

The school district has produced an option that keeps Talatha Gardens at Chukker Creek and it placed the school at 109% capacity (Map G). Other alternatives to the original recommendations have been shared as well that keep some neighborhoods off Whiskey Road which are closer to the school than Talatha Gardens (such as South Meadows) and impact the overall utilization less drastically (Maps H, I and J).

**Q: Does the need to replace dangerous and inefficient 20+ year old buses with over 400,000 miles affect the safety of students in Aiken County, especially with the proposed increase in travel times for some students (particularly those that reside in the southern portion of Aiken County that may be rezoned from Chukker Creek to East Aiken)?**

A: Aiken County Public Schools stands alongside the state Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman in advocacy and support of new school buses for South Carolina students. Aiken's Board has been an active voice urging our legislators to override a veto of more than \$20 million to support updating South Carolina's aging fleet.

Over the last two years, the State Department of Education's Transportation Department has replaced many 1990 transit model buses. To date, we've received \_\_\_\_\_ new buses, replacing all rear-engine buses needing repair in Aiken County Public Schools.

The safety of students is paramount to us and to our state superintendent. Advanced safety features, better visibility, an upgraded crossing arm, and rear door evacuation feature are all enhancements on newer models. You have very likely seen an increase in urgency of this issue state-wide as the senate is anticipated to weigh in on the issue during Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup>'s session.

Please know that regular inspections of older buses and safety training for our drivers are ongoing in order to ensure the safest possible transportation for students despite limited funding state-wide for school bus upgrades and replacement.

**Q: Are you going to put our children on buses for longer periods of time knowing they are run down and dangerous and parents aren't going to be contacted when they break down? The Aiken County Public School Site states: "It is common for several buses to have operational problems or be doubled routed simultaneously. Unfortunately, we cannot contact parents."**

A: The remainder of the sentence you've referenced from our website continues and includes, "When your child's bus is behind schedule, please contact your local transportation office. In the event no one is available to take your call, each transportation office has an answering machine with up to date information regarding late/delayed buses."

(please note that I believe that we should be able to record the same information on a robocall to parents.)

Safety is our top priority and we certainly understand and appreciate a parents' concern with a late or delayed arrival. In the unfortunate event of an accident, parents are notified immediately and students are evaluated by school officials and/or by emergency medical team members on scene.

**Q: Why are we rezoning before professional (traffic and economic) feedback?**

A: Our board sought the professional expertise of demographers in drafting recommendations for community feedback. While our district did not commission its own study, our demographers did take into recent studies regarding traffic and economics in our county.

Current recommendations are largely prefaced by a need for more contiguous zones around our schools. Many of the recommendations are aimed to create less traffic on Whiskey Road, one of the busiest in the county.

**Q: With the sixth grade intermediate school concept, will you have 11 year olds riding on the bus with 18 year old adults for longer periods of time on unreliable buses with no supervision? Not to mention it will be earlier and darker while stopping at two schools. This is a major safety concern that has not been addressed.**

A: If the board supports the recommendation for an Intermediate School for all sixth grade students in Area One (Aiken Area), those students would range from 11-12 years old and would be transported with our elementary school students.

Typically seventh and eighth grade students in Aiken County range from 12-14 years old. Middle and high school students already share buses in many areas.

We do not anticipate earlier pick up times for students with these proposed changes to our grade configuration. Our bus routes already stop at multiple schools on their morning and afternoon routes.

**Q: How does the sixth grade academy impact my children? How does it benefit them academically and socially. How do we avoid pitfalls of other sixth grade academies?**

A: Our Chief Officer of Instruction Dr. DeeDee Washington was joined by Mr. Jess Hutchinson, Principal of Crossroads Intermediate School, during our Board Workshop on January 6. Some of the information discussed in that open-to-the-public study session included:

Academic benefits such as the ability to increase course offerings, the benefit of highly qualified educators specific to the sixth grade learner able to help students transition from concrete to abstract thinking,

Social benefits discussed included: The ability for students to participate on an equal level in more age and developmentally appropriate activities, the elimination of the social influence of older students, and an overall focus on confidence-building and teamwork.

In consideration of this recommendation, we've already visited Crossroads Intermediate and anticipate further conversation and collaboration with this model school as we plan our unique experience for Aiken's students. Working with our community of highly engaged parents, student advisors, teachers and administrators at every level, we are confident that our Intermediate School would receive the support necessary to ensure its success.

**Q: You are proposing a bond referendum to build and rebuild schools in the western part of the county and you are asking a lot of the folks in the Aiken Area, or Area 1. Could we not maybe do something where we renovate Chukker Creek. The utilization is very high. Could we maybe possibly renovate Chukker Creek so it's not overcrowded and that we allow for more area for classrooms. Could we renovate South Aiken High School since it's also outdated?**

A: Renovating Chukker Creek and South Aiken High School are both options. Although, allocating funding for that purpose at this time may not be the best possible use of public funds as we have nearby schools that were built prior to Chukker Creek. In addition, nearby schools are underutilized (not yet at



capacity). Adding onto the area's newest school when there is space for students at a nearby school is usually not the best use of public funds.

We have long stated that we will not have have and have not schools and we are committed to that. The differences now between our three largest high schools (North Augusta, Aiken and South Aiken) in terms of facilities will present a challenge to that commitment.

While South Aiken is not among the list of schools recommended to be included as part of the recommendation for the \$90 million bond referendum to fund current needs, renovations and improvements to that campus, and others, will very likely become part of our cyclic maintenance and facility improvements plans.

Mr. and Mrs. Dalbec

We appreciated your comments Tuesday evening and thank you for taking the time to address our school board with your concerns.

Unlike the format of our Town Hall Meetings where we engage in open discussion and public questions and answers with the community, public input at school board meetings does not lend us the opportunity to respond immediately.

We noted several questions that you presented Tuesday. While specific responses will soon appear in the Question and Answer pages under the Town Hall channel/tab on our website, I hope we've addressed your specific concerns in the information below.

Utilization of all schools has been at the center of discussions involving attendance line shifts. Efforts have been made at Chukker Creek in recent years to reduce the number of transfer students into the school; that effort has impacted utilization and the school is no longer over 100% capacity. However, its utilization is the highest for Area 1 elementary schools at 98% enrolled. Creating balance and contiguous zones have also been goals of the recommendations.

The inconvenience in these recommendations to families residing off Whiskey Road in the South Meadows, Exeter and Talatha Gardens neighborhoods have been a frequent discussion for our administrative team and board. The school district has produced multiple options based on community feedback. Some of those options result in students from South Meadows, Exeter and Talatha Gardens remaining at Chukker Creek or being reassigned to East Aiken or Millbrook Elementary. In every circumstance, students from those communities being assigned to Chukker Creek increase the utilization at that school.

I apologize that you've had trouble locating the demographic study on our website. The study containing both the recommendations from the consultant as well as the free and reduced lunch data is available under the Town Hall channel/tab, Demography Study, Restructuring Options for Consideration. The free and reduced lunch data appears on page four of that document.

The demography study did include projected growth for the next 10 years for all of Aiken County. Tangible, concrete data on our community's growth, I believe, was necessary to demonstrate the impact of housing growth to our schools. Over the holiday break, our district staff attained all permits pulled for the year 2017 and color coded the document by current area lines and proposed new area lines in order to provide further clarity on the recommendations.

We previously noted that our district did not commission its own traffic and economic study, though many of the recommendations from the professional demographer we did commission are likely to have a positive impact on Whiskey Road traffic.

Aiken County Public Schools stands alongside State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman in advocacy and support of new school buses for South Carolina students. Aiken's Board has been an active voice urging our legislators to override a veto of more than \$20 million to support updating South Carolina's aging fleet.

The safety of students is paramount to us and to our state superintendent. Advanced safety features, better visibility, an upgraded crossing arm, and rear-door evacuation feature are all enhancements on newer models. You have very likely seen an increase in urgency of this issue state-wide as the senate is anticipated to weigh in on the issue during their session on January 16.

As part of our current operations, students from multiple grade spans share bus routes. Preliminary transportation plans for the recommended new Intermediate School for sixth grade students has sixth graders sharing the route with elementary school students. Should the board vote in favor of that recommendation, transportation, planning and other logistics would begin immediately and be worked through over a 19-month period in collaboration with the community.

Mr. Dalbec: thank you also for attending our open work-study session on January 6. There you heard from the developers of the land being donated to us for a new elementary and middle school between Graniteville and North Augusta. The feasibility of those schools hinges upon identifying and securing a funding source for the project. Several funding mechanisms have been shared as possibilities; most require a taxpayer vote.

In closing, we do hope that the information provided here provides greater clarity on the issues at hand. I invite you to sit down and talk with me directly so that we can get to a greater level of clarity and understanding regarding your concerns. I sincerely appreciate your involvement in these difficult realignment discussions and remain hopeful that through open dialogue we are able to meet the needs of your family and all who entrust our district with a safe and sound education for their children. I look forward to hearing from you in the coming days to set up a meeting. Please contact me via email at [salford@acpsd.net](mailto:salford@acpsd.net) to arrange a time that's convenient to you.

Mr. Ben Harm,

We appreciated your comments Tuesday evening and thank you for taking the time to address our school board with your and Wells' ideas and concerns.

Unlike the format of our Town Hall Meetings where we engage in open discussion and public questions and answers with the community, public input at school board meetings does not lend us the opportunity to respond immediately.

We noted several questions that you presented Tuesday. While specific responses will soon appear in the Question and Answer pages under the Town Hall channel/tab on our website, I hope that we've adequately addressed your specific concerns in the information below.

With two children nearing middle school age, I trust that your family has numerous questions surrounding the intermediate school concept.

Our Chief Officer of Instruction Dr. DeeDee Washington was joined by Mr. Jess Hutchinson, Principal of Crossroads Intermediate School, during our Board Workshop on January 6. Some of the information discussed in that open-to-the-public study session included:

Academic benefits such as the ability to increase course offerings, as well as the quality of educators specifically selected and qualified to teach sixth grade learners was discussed. **Why.** With uniquely qualified teachers and a single grade configuration, educators can provide additional supports to help students transition from concrete to abstract thinking.

Social benefits discussed included the ability for students to participate on an equal level in more age and developmentally appropriate activities, the elimination of the social influence of older students, and an overall focus on confidence-building and teamwork.

In consideration of this recommendation, we've already visited Crossroads Intermediate and anticipate further conversation and collaboration with this model school as we plan our unique experience for Aiken's students. Working with our community of engaged parents, student advisors, teachers and administrators at every level, we are confident that, if board supported, our Intermediate School would receive the support necessary to ensure its success.

Your second questions, I believe, were centered around the idea of renovating Chukker Creek and South Aiken High School. Both are certainly options. However, allocating funding for that purpose at this time may not be the best possible use of public funds as we have nearby schools that were built prior to Chukker Creek and South Aiken. In addition, nearby schools are not yet at capacity.

For the last several years, I've stated that we will not have have and have not schools and we are committed to that. The differences now between our three largest high schools (North Augusta, Aiken and South Aiken) in terms of facilities will present a challenge to that commitment.

While South Aiken is not among the list of schools recommended to be included as part of the recommendation for the \$90 million bond referendum to fund current needs, renovations and

improvements to that campus, and others, will very likely become part of our cyclic maintenance and facility improvement plans in order to ensure as equitable as possible facilities for all learners.

In closing, I hope that you and Wells find that the information included here provides greater clarity on the issues at hand and the rationale behind the proposed solutions. Should you have additional questions or concerns, please know that I am open to discussing any matter of importance to your family and school community.

We sincerely appreciate your involvement in these difficult realignment discussions and remain hopeful that through open dialogue we are able to meet the needs of all families who entrust our district to educate their children.

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Mr. Burt Carey,

Thank you for taking the time to address our school board on behalf of South Meadows residents Tuesday evening with your collective concerns regarding realignment of your neighborhood.

Unlike the format of our Town Hall Meetings where we engage in open discussion and public questions and answers with the community, public input at school board meetings typically do not lend us the opportunity to respond immediately to citizens.

The misunderstanding you voiced that recommendations were rooted in an effort to secure additional federal funding was a circumstance where immediate clarification was necessary. K-12 educational funding is complex, however I believe that our Federal Programs Director explained Title 1 funding well.

To reiterate and further detail how Title 1 funding works:

The state department allocates Title 1 funds to districts based on poverty information. The total sum of funding is based on the number of students in K-12<sup>th</sup> students in Aiken County Public Schools who are on free and reduced lunch. The total sum of money for last year was roughly \$7.5 million for our district.

The money our District allocates to schools is based on which free and reduced lunch students are at those schools.

The law provides that districts provide more Title I funding to schools in greater need. In Aiken, we give a higher per-pupil amount to higher poverty schools.

Title 1 Funds are utilized by our schools in accordance with their greatest needs and in a variety of ways. Some use the funding for additional teachers to reduce class sizes, for intervention programs to support struggling students, activities to increase parent involvement, or instructional materials and supplies. Others use the additional funds to supplement educational programs, technology, and strategic tutoring efforts (after school, Saturday Sessions, and certified tutors during the day to provide intervention). While some Title 1 funds are allocated at

the school level for professional learning and teacher training, we have a district-wide focus on systemic growth and most schools find those district provided trainings fitting for their educators' professional growth.

We believe that the parent involvement at Chukker Creek is outstanding. However, it is certainly not the only school with highly engaged and involved volunteers. East Aiken School of the Arts, for example, has 40-50 community members who volunteer their time each year as part of their Rotary Reader Program. These volunteers on average give 400 hours of their time to work with students during the course of a year. In addition, 115 parents at East Aiken are trained parent volunteers.

We are certainly proud of our teacher-generated guaranteed and viable curriculum in Aiken County Public Schools. A relevant and consistently utilized curriculum, as you have noted, is not the only key to student success. However, it is an excellent indicator of systemic efforts to ensure equity and access across all elementary, middle and high schools. November 2014 was the last state department generated report card rating for schools and district. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, state and federal report cards were combined and another overall rating for schools and districts will not be available until Fall of 2018.

While we too are certainly proud of the academic achievements of Chukker Creek Elementary. Please note, however, that it is not Aiken's lone National School of Excellence. On the elementary level, Chukker Creek joins in that honor with Aiken Elementary and Hammond Hill Elementary schools. It is our goal that these schools and others with high achievement serve as model programs, rather than pockets of excellence, as we pursue excellence district-wide.

We sincerely appreciate your involvement in these difficult realignment discussions and remain hopeful that through open dialogue we are able to meet the needs of all families who entrust our district to educate their children.

**Q: You say demographic balancing is a recommendation from a consultant. I still have not reviewed your consultant's recommendation. Where is the study with the free and reduced lunch data? Where are you getting your numbers? The demographic study does not include any statistics on free and reduced lunch. How can you trust the numbers are not being skewed? How can we as a community provide options and input when we are not properly informed?**

A: The study containing both the recommendations from the consultant as well as the free and reduced lunch data is available on our website, [acpsd.net](https://www.acpsd.net), under the Town Hall channel/tab, Demography Study, Restructuring Options for Consideration, <https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.acpsd.net/cms/lib/SC02209457/Centricity/Domain/6392/Aiken+SC+Options+Analysis+with+Maps+171103.pdf>.

The free and reduced lunch numbers for students enrolled in Aiken County Public Schools are readily available to us as those families apply yearly and are qualified for free/reduced cost

meals. The free and reduced lunch data appears on page four of that document. A screenshot of the free and reduced lunch numbers is included below.

**Elementary Demographic Statistics: Continued**

The following table reflects the free reduced lunch percentages for 2017-18 and the Elementary Plan.

Planning Area	School Name	Grade Config	Percent FR Lunch		
			2017-18 Total Enrollment	2017-18 Estimated Live-In <sup>1</sup>	Elementary Plan Estimated <sup>1</sup>
1	Aiken Elementary	PK-5th	59%	56%	56%
1	Chukker Creek Elementary	PK-5th	29%	38%	49%
1	East Aiken School of the Arts	PK-5th	76%	71%	53%
1	J.D. Lever Elementary	PK-5th	79%	80%	81%
1	Millbrook Elementary	PK-5th	63%	63%	61%
1	North Aiken Elementary	PK-5th	91%	87%	84%
1	Oakwood-Windsor Elementary	PK-5th	86%	85%	84%
2	Belvedere Elementary	PK-5th	52%	50%	50%
2	Hammond Hill Elementary	PK-5th	46%	51%	51%
2	Mossy Creek Elementary	PK-5th	61%	60%	60%
2	North Augusta Elementary	PK-5th	59%	58%	58%
3	Byrd Elementary	K-5th	61%	61%	67%
3	Clearwater Elementary	PK-5th	81%	80%	79%
3	Gloverville Elementary	PK-5th	85%	90%	75%
3	Jefferson Elementary	PK-5th	78%	78%	76%
3	New Elementary	PK-5th	NA	NA	78%
3	Warrenville Elementary	PK-5th	73%	67%	64%
4	Busbee Corbett Elementary Middle	PK-8th	74%	75%	73%
4	Ridge Spring-Monetta Elementary	PK-5th	81%	79%	79%
5	Greenlake Elementary	PK-5th	77%	74%	74%
5	Redcliffe Elementary	PK-5th	71%	72%	72%
	<b>Total</b>		<b>66%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>66%</b>

Students reflect the preliminary 2017-18 data.

<sup>1</sup> The estimated enrollment is calculated by adding the 2017-18 students that are not within the K-5th cohort, plus those students that live outside of the district, plus the total number of K-5th grade students living within each option zone. Charter Students are not included in these estimates.

CropperGIS



**Q: How can you vote to rezone at this time when almost 1200 new homes with permits were not included in your maps? This only includes the first phase. That means more phases will follow which are also not considered.**

A: The demography study did include projected growth for the next 10 years for all of Aiken County. In an effort to provide more tangible, concrete data on our community's growth and demonstrate the impact of growth to our schools, our district staff attained all permits pulled for the year 2017 and color-coded the document by current area lines and proposed new area lines in order to provide further clarity on the recommendations.

Because of expected growth and fluidity, an additional recommendation is expected that enrollment studies be conducted at least every five years and as new or significantly renovated/expanded facilities approach completion.

**Q: What are you going to do with the new 1500-acre development in North Augusta with land donated for a brand new school? I am guessing the demographic balance will look similar to Chukker Creek. Are you going to force the new homeowners of this development to bus to a less desirable school whether by rating or distance?**

A: We are not able to determine the demographic impact of a community that has yet to be occupied by students or families. The recommendation for a new elementary and a new middle school between Graniteville and North Augusta was made with the intention to relieve overcrowding and account for new growth in those areas. The feasibility of that school hinges upon identifying and securing a funding source for the project. Several funding mechanisms have been shared as possibilities; most require a taxpayer vote.

**Q: Since overcrowding is not an issue, why is the school district refusing to produce an option that keeps Talatha Gardens at Chukker Creek?**

A: Utilization of all schools has been at the center of discussions involving attendance line shifts. Efforts have been made at Chukker Creek in recent years to reduce the number of transfer students into the school; that effort has affected utilization and the school is no longer over 100% capacity. However, its utilization is the highest for Area 1 elementary schools at 98% enrolled. Creating balance and contiguous zones have also been goals of the recommendations.

The challenge in these recommendations to families residing off Whiskey Road in the South Meadows, Exeter and Talatha Gardens neighborhoods have been a frequent discussion for our administrative team and board. The school district has produced multiple options based on community feedback. Some of those options result in students from South Meadows, Exeter and Talatha Gardens remaining at Chukker Creek, or being reassigned to East Aiken or Millbrook Elementary. In every circumstance, students from those communities being assigned to Chukker Creek would increase the utilization at that school.

**Q: Does the need to replace dangerous and inefficient 20+ year old buses with over 400,000 miles affect the safety of students in Aiken County, especially with the proposed increase in travel times for some students (particularly those that reside in the southern portion of Aiken County that may be rezoned from Chukker Creek to East Aiken)?**

A: Aiken County Public Schools stands alongside State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman in advocacy and support of new school buses for South Carolina students. Aiken's board has been an active voice urging our legislators to override a veto of more than \$20 million to support updating South Carolina's aging fleet.

The safety of students is of paramount importance to us and to our state superintendent. Advanced safety features, better visibility, an upgraded crossing arm, and rear-door evacuation feature are all enhancements on newer models. You have likely seen an increase in urgency of this issue state-wide as the Senate was expected to weigh in on the issue during their session January 16.

**Q: Why are we rezoning before professional (traffic and economic) feedback?**

A: Our board sought the professional expertise of demographers in drafting recommendations for community feedback. While our district did not commission its own study, many of the recommendations from the professional demographer we did commission are likely to have a positive impact on Whiskey Road traffic.

**Q: With the sixth grade intermediate school concept, will you have 11 year olds riding on the bus with 18 year old adults for longer periods of time on unreliable buses with no supervision? Not to mention it will be earlier and darker while stopping at two schools. This is a major safety concern that has not been addressed.**

A: As part of our current operations, students from multiple grade spans share bus routes. Preliminary transportation plans for the recommended new Intermediate School for sixth grade students has sixth graders sharing the route with elementary school students. Should the board vote in favor of that recommendation, transportation, planning and other logistics would begin immediately and be finalized over a 19-month period in collaboration with the community.

**Q: How does the sixth grade academy impact my children? How does it benefit them academically and socially. How do we avoid pitfalls of other sixth grade academies?**

A: Dr. DeeDee Washington, our Chief Officer of Instruction, joined Mr. Jess Hutchinson, Principal of Crossroads Intermediate School, during our Board Workshop January 6. Some of the information discussed in that open-to-the-public study session included:

Academic benefits such as the ability to increase course offerings were part of the discussion. Additionally, with a single grade configuration, our qualified educators can provide additional supports to help students transition from concrete to abstract thinking.

Social benefits discussed included the ability for students to participate on an equal level in more age and developmentally appropriate activities, the elimination of the social influence of older students, and an overall focus on confidence-building and teamwork.

In consideration of this recommendation, we have already visited Crossroads Intermediate and anticipate further conversation and collaboration with this model school as we plan our unique experience for Aiken County students. Working with a community of engaged parents, student advisors, teachers and administrators at every level, we are confident that, if board supported, our Intermediate School would receive the support necessary to ensure its success.

**Q: You are proposing a bond referendum to build and rebuild schools in the western part of the county and you are asking a lot of the folks in the Aiken Area, or Area 1. Could we not maybe do something where we renovate Chukker Creek. The utilization is very high. Could we maybe possibly renovate Chukker Creek so it's not overcrowded and that we allow for more area for classrooms. Could we renovate South Aiken High School since it's also outdated?**



A: Renovating Chukker Creek and South Aiken High School are both options. However, allocating funding for that purpose at this time may not be the best possible use of public funds as we have nearby schools that were built prior to the construction of both Chukker Creek and South Aiken. Chukker Creek and South Aiken are also not yet at capacity.

For the last several years, Dr. Sean Alford, Superintendent, has insisted that we will not have have and have not schools. Our District remains committed to that. The differences now between our three largest high schools (North Augusta, Aiken and South Aiken) in terms of facilities will present a challenge to that commitment.

While South Aiken is not among the list of schools that are part of the recommendation for the \$90 million bond referendum to fund current needs, renovations and improvements to that campus, and others, it will very likely become part of our cyclic maintenance and facility improvement plans in order to ensure as equitable as possible facilities for all learners.