

May 10th, 2017

CMS Board of Education
ATTN: Ann Clark
600 E Fourth St
Charlotte, NC 28202

Re: Chantilly Neighborhood Vote

As you may be aware, our neighborhood has held several meetings to discuss the CMS Student Assignment Phase II Plan and the impact it has on the families in Chantilly. During these conversations it has been made clear to me that while many people are impacted in a number of ways, primarily based on the ages of children and personal school preferences, there has been a common concern over the disparity between our current high school of Myers Park High School and the proposed Garinger High School.

To address these concerns and explore some potential alternatives our neighborhood formed an education committee to have an open exchange of ideas, concerns, and desired school feeder paths. The Chantilly Education Committee is composed of approximately 20 members. After several meetings and lengthy discussion, the committee determined four potential alternatives to the proposed plan. It is our belief that each option below carries enough merit to be considered by the CMS Board of Education. The four options we determined to be viable are as follows:

- 1) Request that the proposed CMS boundary adjustments be rejected in order to maintain our current school progression of Oakhurst STEAM Academy, Eastway Middle School, and Myers Park High School.
- 2) Request our neighborhood be rezoned sending children to the Billingsville/Cotswold paired elementary schools, Alexander Graham Middle School, and Myers Park High School.
- 3) Request our neighborhood maintains the current designated elementary school of Oakhurst STEAM Academy, however requests to feed from Oakhurst STEAM to McClintock Middle School and East Mecklenburg High School.
- 4) Make no request to alter the CMS boundary proposal sending children to Oakhurst STEAM Academy, Eastway Middle School, and Garinger High School. Request that CMS provides a comprehensive plan for future school improvement.

On Thursday, May 4th, we held a special meeting with the neighborhood to present these options and received feedback from our community. For your reference, we've included the presentation as an attachment along with this letter so you may review the key points we discussed for the alternative feeders. Our intention was to discuss the CMS Student Assignment proposal, review the maps and the new boundary lines, present the four potential alternatives, discuss "arguments for" and "arguments against" each option which can be found in the presentation document, and most importantly hold a vote to determine which option was most desired by our neighbors. We required that each participant prove to us that they currently resided in the Chantilly neighborhood to avoid any votes from non-

Chantilly residents impacting the results. Each household was allowed one vote. Our neighborhood association bylaws do not permit for any votes by proxy, so to cast a vote attendance was required. Following our presentation we offered individuals one minute time slots to make personal comments about the plan and their preference. Once all comments had been made, we gathered the votes and announced the results.

The results were as follows:

- Option 1)** Reject the plan - 7.79%
- Option 2)** Billingsville/Cotswold Paired Elementary School, Alexander Graham Middle School, Myers Park High School- 49.35%
- Option 3)** Oakhurst STEAM Academy, McClintock Middle School, East Mecklenburg High School – 25.97%
- Option 4)** Accept the plan, but make request for specific improvements at Garinger High School – 16.88%

With a significant majority of the vote, Option 2 to move our neighborhood to the paired elementary school of Billingsville/Cotswold and to then follow the current feed to Alexander Graham Middle School and Myers Park High School was a clear front runner. Based on the feedback we have received from our neighbors, there was a clear preference to maintain our current high school designation. There were also concerns from those individuals whose children are slated to transfer from Myers Park High School to Garinger before there has been enough time for Garinger to see any substantial improvements. It was also deemed to be viable due to the previous zoning of Chantilly to both Billingsville and Myers Park High School. Proximity to both schools also seemed to be in line with other schools and their home attendance areas.

We would like to make a special note about this option when it comes to your consideration. The vote was to send our kids to the “Billingsville/Cotswold paired elementary school”. **It is our understanding that this pairing is also up for debate by your board and should this pairing recommendation not pass, then option 2 would be null and void and no longer represent the desires of our neighborhood.**

It was also brought up that our neighbors feel that we could make a more significant and immediate impact to the SES scores for Billingsville Elementary by joining the Cotswold neighborhood and the suggested integration of the two schools rather than the longer term changes projected at Garinger. Additionally, this option would keep our neighborhood in the existing Blue Transportation Zone, meet your goals of preserving and expanding schools and programs in which students are successfully achieving the Mission and Vision of the board, and provide options to students assigned to schools that are not meeting performance standards established by the state. And finally, this option would allow us to follow your recommended feeder path established in this plan and avoid significant alterations to the CMS Student Review.

In second place was Option 3 with 25.97% of the vote which requested to maintain Oakhurst STEAM Academy as our home attendance neighborhood school, but then feed all students from the Oakhurst STEAM Academy to McClintock Middle School, and then to East Mecklenburg High School. The basis for the viability of this option would be the existing link between Oakhurst STEAM Academy's magnet students feeding into the McClintock Middle School. As one of the guiding principles of this Student Review is to keep whole elementary attendance areas intact as part of the middle and high school feeder patterns, this option would achieve this objective. As it stands now, one set of children attending Oakhurst Elementary School would progress to Eastway Middle School and another set on to McClintock. By feeding all students from Oakhurst to McClintock you would avoid elementary children from one school splitting out to two middle schools.

When considering the goals of this review, in our opinion, it would provide choice and promote equitable access to varied and viable programmatic options for all children; maximize efficiency in the use of school facilities, transportation and other capital and operational resources to reduce overcrowding; provide school assignment options to students assigned to schools that are not meeting performance standards established by the state; and preserve and expand schools and programs in which students are successfully achieving the Mission and Vision of the Board.

In third place with 16.88% of the vote was Option 4 to conditionally accept the CMS Proposal as presented by the Board. It is crucial to express to you the many concerns that our neighborhood has with attending Garinger. In our presentation, we have a couple slides that illustrate some of the deficiencies with this school and included in our email are links to the sources for this data. The exceptionally high crime/violence rate, drastic difference between EOC proficiency levels, lack of fully licensed teachers, and a clear history of not retaining quality educators is worrisome. In looking at data from the NC School Report Card for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years for Garinger High School, there were trends that are concerning to our neighborhood. For the last three years, crimes per 100 students have increased each year with the most recent year having 4.44 criminal acts per 100 students. For this same time frame, the percent of licensed teachers at Garinger has decreased each year and for the most recent school year is down to 56% of teachers being fully licensed. The school's grade three years ago was a C, but the last two years it has scored a D.

While we understand your efforts to make an impact at Garinger through changing the culture at Eastway Middle School, it is our opinion that this is not enough to gather the community support to implement the changes. We would need to see a more detailed and immediate plan of improvements to be made at Garinger from an academic performance and program perspective (i.e. Magnet Program), a student security perspective, and understand your time frame for these improvements. Although we agree that culture change begins with good leadership and hiring a new, committed principal is an important step, we'll need to understand more about the short and long-term strategies to make sure our rising high schoolers will actually benefit from this border change and not have their quality of education sacrificed for the long term benefits.

It is our opinion that rezoning our neighborhood from Myers Park High School to Garinger High School does not meet stated goals to provide choice and promote equitable access to varied and viable programmatic options for all children; provide school assignment options to students assigned to schools that are not meeting performance standards established by the state; preserve and expand schools and programs in which students are successfully achieving the Mission and Vision of the Board; and maximize efficiency in the use of school facilities, transportation and other capital and operational resources to reduce overcrowding. Specifically regarding overcrowding it was pointed out at the May 8th meeting at Oakhurst STEAM Academy that Garinger is currently at 121% of school capacity and the recommended changes would INCREASE overcrowding to 130%.

Finally, in 4th place with 7.79% of the vote was Option 1 which was a request that the Board of Education reject the proposal in its entirety. While this option would maintain consistency for our children as we have been in this middle school and high school feeder pattern for a while, would fail to meet many of the stated goals and guiding principles of the Student Review. However we would like to make it known that the current feeder path for Chantilly has been deemed acceptable among the neighbors and we are concerned about having more boundary changes in the future given our specific location, proximity to multiple schools, and positioning between some potential borders of Independence Blvd, Central Ave, and the railroad. We hope to find a solution that will provide us with some academic consistency. Many families, not only in Chantilly, but within Mecklenburg County make decisions on where to live based upon the public school options for their children. The constant changing and redrawing of zoning lines makes it very difficult for families to plan into the future.

In closing, we would like to thank you for taking time to read our proposal and for taking it into consideration. We know that the Board of Education and the consultants associated with this plan have spent a great deal of time and resources to prepare it and this plan was not designed haphazardly. We are looking forward to continuing the conversation with you and your team to work towards a resolution that can achieve your goals within your guidelines and also provide the best education for the children of Chantilly.

Sincerely,

The Chantilly Neighborhood Association Education Committee