

TO: Montgomery County Board of Education

FROM: MCCPTA Executive Committee

DATE: November 22, 2017

RE: Boundary Process for Richard Montgomery Elementary School #5

As you continue deliberations, we ask that you prioritize the input of the communities served by the Richard Montgomery Cluster elementary schools, honor the work of the Boundary Advisory Committee, and in that way ensure consistent application of, and adherence to, FAA-RA. This demonstrates good governance and enhances trust and transparency with the parent community represented by MCCPTA.

FAA-RA VII.A. – Community Involvement

1 -- “Parents, staff, and students are the primary stakeholders in the planning process.”

It is critical for the Board to follow regulation FAA-RA in a manner consistent with that regulation’s use and application across the county. This involves a reasonable effort to satisfy priorities set forth by the primary stakeholders, represented as the Boundary Advisory Committee. This includes the Board taking a balanced approach to FAA-RA required factors for determining boundaries, and refraining from assigning weight to other factors - particularly factors not fully discussed and reviewed during the long process of consultation with the Boundary Advisory Committee. If sociological or school performance factors are deemed appropriate to the decision-making process, this information should be included in FAA-RA. The Board’s deliberations should prioritize the factors and criteria shared with, studied, and discussed by the Boundary Advisory Committee and school communities.

FAA-RA VIII – Specific Evaluation Criteria

A.3 – Geographic Proximity of Communities to Schools

- Parent engagement and teacher excellence represent the two strongest and most undisputed determinants of academic achievement – and MCCPTA opposes Board decisions that would make it more difficult for parents to be present and participate in the activities of their school community. Travel time, distance and transportation challenges all represent obstacles to parent engagement in schools. Options before the Board of Education concerning Richard Montgomery Elementary School #5 offer stark contrasts in likely parent engagement. Relocating students out of their neighborhood and increasing transportation time and distance may reduce opportunities for student participation in school activities of all types, and increase barriers to parent engagement and participation in PTA and other essential school events. It is imperative the Board use the primary stakeholders’ input in considering this criterion.

FAA-RA VIII – Specific Evaluation Criteria

MCCPTA is hearing concerns that the Board may be incorporating in its deliberations factors not part of the FAA-RA boundary changes and geographic assignments criteria, and therefore not part of the extensive Boundary Advisory Committee consultation process. Recent references to research on housing and school policy to promote academic success appear to be inaccurately represented and may be confusing the criteria that should be included in the deliberations. The research that has been summarized in public testimony is based on families attending

neighborhood schools, not schools to which they must be bused. Extrapolating this information to other scenarios not considered in the research is of concern. Placing significant weight on criteria not shared with the school communities and Boundary Advisory Committee, and not openly discussed during the lengthy boundary review process, raises concerns about transparency.

Thank you for considering these comments as you contemplate options for elementary school assignment in the Richard Montgomery Cluster. As we move forward please continue to count on MCCPTA as an honest broker and strategic partner in carrying out the mission of our fantastic public schools.

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