

Blair Cluster

Rolling Terrace ES

With no notice, the school district announced on December 4 a plan for school year 2018-2019 to transfer partial Spanish immersion students (from more than 200 families) from Rolling Terrace Elementary School to William Page Elementary School for a total Spanish immersion program (rising grades 1,2, and 3) and to Burnt Mills Elementary School (rising grades 4 and 5) for a partial Spanish immersion program. This is planned in order to introduce a Spanish dual-language immersion program for rising in-boundary kindergarten and grade 1 students at Rolling Terrace ES. In-boundary immersion students were invited to join Rolling Terrace's English-only program. Out-of-boundary immersion students could either attend their home schools, many of which are overcrowded, or transfer to either Burnt Mills ES or William Page ES.

The situation has been fluid. Burnt Mills Elementary School declined to enroll the Rolling Terrace students as Burnt Mills is overcrowded. The school district relented and returned the Rolling Terrace 4th and 5th graders to Rolling Terrace. Some families want to attend Page ES. Others want to stay at Rolling Terrace. Negotiations continue. I requested that Rolling Terrace community be allowed the same accommodation provided to Burnt Mill's ES: the ability to shape its school experience.

In speaking with BOE members, I learned that they heard about the Rolling Terrace plan on the same day as Rolling Terrace parents. I was told the school superintendent did not know about the plan before it was unveiled at Rolling Terrace. Dr. Navarro is in talks with RT parents currently. Personally, if there is to be a change, I see no reason why the partial immersion program could not transition out, grade by grade, while the dual language program transitioned in, grade by grade, and avert the detrimental effects of school mobility.

All of this capricious chaos is made possible by the fact that MCPS has no policy for transferring students involuntarily from their schools owing to a program change. In researching the experiences of other school districts, I learned that 1-2 years of planning takes place before making program and student population shifts.

Rolling Terrace parents will be bringing forward an alternate plan before the school district in the first week of January.

Submitted by Therese Gibson, Cluster Coordinator