

Date: March 9, 2020  
To: The Atlanta Public School Board  
From: The Inman Park Education Committee

Re: Future Use of the Samuel Inman Middle School Building

Our committee has attended the various community meetings held by Atlanta Public School (APS) and meetings held by the Mary Lin community. These meetings were attended by Atlanta Public School Board (ABoE) members, which was greatly appreciated. Our experience thus far has been that the process is transparent, informative, and has included valuable conclusions made by Sizemore Group, the contractor hired to complete a full facilities assessment.

After attending the meeting on February 25th, examining the data, and looking carefully at all five possible solutions, the Inman Park Education Committee has determined that Option C will provide the most comprehensive solution that will provide significant relief to all of the Grady Cluster schools. While none of the options create a perfect scenario, the committee believes that Option C will maintain and increase diversity in all of the Grady Cluster schools, address overcrowding, create opportunities for students to become cohorts at specific developmental periods, and provide valuable time to continue examining enrollment data and make decisions that will likely need 7-10 years for implementation.

Option C would create a 5th and 6th grade academy long term and the David T. Howard School would change from a 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade to 7-9<sup>th</sup> grade. Grady High School would receive students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The committee's conclusions are based on the following:

- Opening a 5/6 grade academy is the best long-term use for the Inman Middle School building from a facilities utilization standpoint as it helps relieve Grady Cluster elementary school overcrowding by taking a grade out of each of the cluster elementary schools.
- This option achieves a long time Grady Cluster goal of combining all of its elementary school-age students together at a younger age. Chief among the social advantages that this scenario would bring is grouping children of disparate socioeconomic backgrounds together prior to their entering David T. Howard in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Starting in fifth grade, all of the Grady Cluster elementary school children will be together in one building, allowing them to build relationships and perhaps head off some of the problems that occur in middle school/junior high that are borne from unfamiliarity. (i.e. - fighting, clique building, etc.).
- The current Inman Middle School footprint needs to be managed and a two grade configuration (5/6) best nurtures this historic building as a resource and protects the surrounding Virginia-Highland neighborhood.
- A 5/6 academy on the site of the current Inman Middle School footprint mitigates traffic in that busy city corridor when compared to a K-5 elementary. Eleven- and twelve-year-olds are more likely to walk and take the bus, and less likely to be driven by car. This is important from the perspective of residents who live in the dense neighborhood bordering the current Inman Middle School.

- A 5/6 academy, known also as an “Intermediate School”, is a configuration used elsewhere in the US. The current principal of Inman previously was principal of one in Indiana. It is a very developmentally appropriate age grouping, and offers a unique opportunity to cater to this age that is on the “cusp” of teen years.
- As Grady’s renovation is not large enough to meet the future enrollment projections, pulling a grade out of Grady High (9th grade) relieves crowding on a footprint where space issues project to be most acute over the next decade.
- A 7-9 grade configuration or junior high is quite commonplace over much of the Northeast and other pockets of the country. An argument can be made that the 7-9 cohort have more in common developmentally than a 6-8 grouping.
- From an extracurricular perspective, a 7-9 junior high would see 7th and 8th grade sports teams and clubs grouped together with single grade teams and clubs for 9th graders and/or transport to Grady for participation.
- Many of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers currently working at the Grady Cluster Elementary schools already have Middle School Certifications. Inman Middle School will be used as a holding school for two years which should provide ample time and opportunity for any teachers to become Middle School certified, thus creating a flexible educator team.

The committee recognizes that these configurations do not currently exist in the APS system and will create significant concern from administrators and educators. The two-grade academy model does exist in the highly successful City of Decatur Schools and around the nation. The creation of the cluster model was promoted as an opportunity to look at each cluster individually and to make recommended changes/enhancements based on the unique population of each cluster. While the two -grade academy may not work in the other APS cluster communities, it would work very well for the Grady Cluster because of the close proximity of most of the cluster elementary schools to the Inman, Howard, and Grady campuses. This proximity will allow continued walking/biking opportunities for the students as they transition to each new campus which would maintain associated transportation costs. As demonstrated by the results of the survey, the number one issue for respondents is maintaining walkable community schools.

Lastly, it is our position that Inman Park stays together as a neighborhood. That its children attending APS go to the same elementary school, middle school and high school.

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