

Case to Save Spalding



The Save Spalding Committee
12-19-2024

Executive Summary

The community challenges the proposed closure of Spalding Drive Elementary School (“Spalding”) and offers constructive, community-supported alternatives. Our analysis reveals significant flaws in the Fulton County Schools (FCS) consolidation rationale, both in terms of enrollment capacity models and facility condition assessments, and underscores the importance of thoughtful, data-driven decision-making that prioritizes community stability, academic quality, and transparent communication.

Enrollment and Capacity Models Do Not Support Closure:

- **Will Not Reduce Excess Capacity:** Closing Spalding, a smaller school operating near optimal capacity, would barely reduce the district’s surplus of empty classrooms. In contrast, consolidating a larger underutilized school would yield a far greater impact on addressing excess capacity.
- **Contradictory and Inconsistent Models:** Conflicting capacity models (CR, CR Need, and DOE) produce contradictory conclusions about overcrowding and available space, calling into question the reliability of the data used to justify closure.
- **Parent Choice and Open Enrollment:** Recent open enrollment policies and extensive private school options in Sandy Springs introduce significant uncertainty into enrollment forecasts. Closing Spalding could drive families out of the system entirely, undermining the district’s goals and stability.
- **The static 450 Capacity threshold is not a valid measure:** Spalding’s enrollment is expected to grow, but factors like exclusion from Open Enrollment in prior years have contributed to lower numbers. Smaller schools, designed to operate at a higher percentage of their maximum capacity, are inherently disadvantaged by this approach. Furthermore, Spalding’s growing Pre-K and Kindergarten enrollment should be considered as indicators of future growth.

Facility Condition Data Is Misrepresented:

- **Spalding is in “Good” Condition:** Credible FCA assessments, both current and projected, rate Spalding firmly in the “good” category. The latest Facilities Assessment rated Spalding above the elementary school FCA Score average.
- **Inconsistent and Flawed Adjustments:** Operations has attempted to reclassify Spalding as “fair” by citing selective data, questionable inflation applications, and unspecified future repairs. These claims contradict documented evidence and the substantial investments recently made to maintain and improve Spalding’s infrastructure.

Disparities and Error in Presented Data/Messaging:

- **Inconsistent Data and Shifting Metrics:** Key metrics such as classroom need estimates and facility condition scores have fluctuated significantly across meetings, with staff dismissing discrepancies and admitting errors only after repeated inquiries. These inconsistencies undermine the credibility of the data used to justify Spalding's closure and cast doubt on the decision-making process.
- **Lack of Financial Analysis:** While financial savings were cited as the primary reason for closure, FCS staff acknowledged no specific cost-benefit analysis had been conducted for Spalding. Instead, generic savings from another school were referenced, despite significant differences in facility needs and conditions. This absence of rigorous financial justification weakens the rationale for closure.
- **Contradictory COSA Policies and Communications:** The district's published COSA policy allows Spalding to remain an option until a final Board vote, yet staff statements suggest closure is a foregone conclusion. This contradiction creates confusion for families and further erodes trust in the transparency and integrity of the process.

Financial Impact

- **Spalding's higher per-student costs reflect a strategic investment** that delivers exceptional academic outcomes for economically disadvantaged, TAG, and special-needs students, outperforming 93% of comparable schools.
- **Closing Spalding would erode efficiency, not improve it:** minimal cost savings, lost enrollment, increased transportation expenses, and the risk of further undermining public confidence make this a short-sighted move.
- **Invest, not Close:** With projected population growth, maintaining Spalding's successful model positions FCS to maximize future capacity, strengthen community ties, and ensure a stable, long-term return on its various investments in schools in the Sandy Springs cluster.

Recommendations

- **Timing and Community Adjustment Needed:** Postpone the decision on closure of Spalding until reliable, consistently applied capacity and facility metrics are established, real and meaningful conversations are had with the community (not a one sided process), and until the effects of open enrollment are better understood. Historical precedent shows that providing multi-year notice for closures fosters smoother transitions. The proposed timeline for Spalding's closure breaks from this practice and risks alienating families and teachers/staff.
- **Adopt a Holistic Master Plan:** Develop a comprehensive Master Plan for schools that includes academic performance, community engagement, and consistent criteria for facility assessment. Align consolidation policies with long-term goals, ensuring that smaller, high-performing schools like Spalding are not penalized for their size.
- **Enhance Marketing and Community Partnerships:** Highlight high performing schools like Spalding to improve public perception of FCS. Work collaboratively with the parent community to promote the district's strengths, retain families, attract new families, and increase enrollment stability.

Conclusion

The proposed closure of Spalding Drive Elementary is neither justified by objective data nor beneficial to the community. Consolidating Spalding will not solve the region's capacity issue and potentially exacerbates potential enrollment declines. By pausing consolidation efforts, improving analytical consistency, and embracing collaborative, long-term planning, the Board can make informed decisions that preserve educational quality, community trust, and fiscal responsibility in Sandy Springs and beyond.

For questions or follow ups, please feel free to contact us directly. Visit our website for more data and information. We welcome your inquiries and appreciate your partnership!

Email: contact@savesde.com

Website: www.saveSDE.com

Introduction

Spalding Drive Elementary (“Spalding”) has long stood as a valued educational pillar in Sandy Springs, offering not only strong academic outcomes but also serving as a hub of community engagement. Despite its demonstrated successes, **ranking in the 94th Percentile of all elementary schools in Georgia**, recent proposals by FCS seek to close this high-performing, well-maintained school. The rationale for consolidation is rooted in concerns about declining enrollment, excess capacity, and building conditions. However, a thorough examination of the data shows that closing Spalding will neither meaningfully alleviate capacity issues nor improve the district’s long-term outlook.

This document is the product of considerable time and dedication by a broad coalition of community members, including professionals from education, finance, law, engineering, communications, and other fields, who have worked diligently to analyze the data, investigate assumptions, and propose constructive solutions. We have conducted our own research, engaged subject-matter experts, and approached this process thoughtfully and collaboratively.

We are not simply frustrated parents venting anger; we seek to partner with the Board and FCS leadership to find better, more sustainable solutions. In addition to rebutting the current consolidation rationale, we have identified viable strategies to address enrollment imbalances, strengthen marketing efforts, and enhance long-term planning. Our goal is to work hand-in-hand with the Board, offering the benefit of our collective expertise and a transparent, data-driven approach.

In the pages that follow, we address each element of the County’s consolidation criteria, highlight inconsistencies in data interpretation and policy application, and outline alternative paths forward. By considering this broader perspective, and welcoming community partnership, the Board can preserve strong schools, attract families, and ensure a sustainable future for every child in Sandy Springs.

Vote to keep Spalding Drive Elementary open. You cannot undo a school closure, but together, we can find real solutions to the challenges at hand.

For questions or follow ups, please feel free to contact us directly. Visit our website for more data and information. We welcome your inquiries and appreciate your partnership!

Email: contact@savesde.com

Website: www.saveSDE.com

Contents

Executive Summary.....2

Introduction5

Our Positions9

 Enrollment and Capacity.....9

 Classroom Allocation Model “CR” & “CR Needs Less Building”9

 Department of Education Model “DoE” 11

 Calculations of Capacity: Conflating Policy & Conflicting Models 12

 Parent Choice & Open Enrollment 14

 Future Enrollment Trends and the Importance of Early Indicators 16

 Enrollment and Capacity Conclusion 17

 Facility Condition 18

 FCA Score: Spalding is in Good Condition 18

 Operations’ Attempt to Establish a “Fair” FCA Score 18

 Facility Condition Conclusion 20

 Disparities and Errors 21

 Data Discrepancies and Shifting Timelines 21

 Financial Justification Without Hard Data 21

 COSA Policies and Contradictory Statements 22

 Disparities and Errors Conclusion 23

 Financial Impact..... 24

 Financial Cost per Student and Its Context 24

 Limited Benefits of Closing a Smaller School 27

 Economic Impact..... 28

 Financial Impact Conclusion 28

Solutions..... 29

 Marketing: Using Spalding as a Model for Public School Success 29

 The Need for Better Marketing of FCS Successes 29

 Spalding as a Model for Success and Community Value 30

Timing and Community Adjustment: The Importance of Adequate Notice and Clear Communication	31
Historical Precedents for School Closures	31
Addressing Enrollment Gaps Across the District	31
Development of a Comprehensive Master Plan: Building a Sustainable Future for FCS .	33
The Need for a Long-Term, Community-Engaged Master Plan	33
Engaging the Community in Planning	33
RESEARCH & SURVEYS	35
Community Survey	35
Community Survey Results	35
Economic Impact Study	37
Traffic Survey.....	38
CONCLUSION	41
Appendix.....	42
Speeches and Letters of Support	42
Julia Bernath – Former FCS School Board President	42
Deborah Silcox, State Representative	45
Susie Greenberg, Candidate For State House	46
Rhonda Smith – President of Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods	47
Emily Faucette – PTO President of High Point Elementary	49
Ginny Conrad – Special Education	51
Dr. Aja Burks – School-based Therapist	54
Phillip Draa – Director of Analytics	56
James Ryu – Multi-Generational Viewpoint	58
Stephen Bell – Open Enrollment + Give Us a Chance!	60
Andrea Pearson – All Things Considered	62
Taiwo Abimbola – We Need More Time	64
Sandy Springs Youth Sports	66
TLC Preschool.....	67
North Springs Neighborhood Association.....	69

Engel & Vokers	71
The Sorted Sanctuary	72
Expressions in Motion Dance	73
ClearWorks Audiology	74
Dimora Designs	75
About Going Places	76
DATA & FIGURES.....	77
Disparities and Errors Figures.....	77
Future Development in Sandy Springs	81
Enrollment Projections	83
2020 Fulton State of Facilities Report Key Pages	84
Economic Impact Study (full study)	94

Our Positions

Enrollment and Capacity

FCS identified declining enrollment and excess classroom capacity in the Sandy Springs region and proposed consolidating an elementary school as a solution. FCS policy states that schools with fewer than 450 students may be considered for consolidation.¹ Currently, two Sandy Springs schools meet this criterion, and FCS has selected Spalding for closure consideration.

To analyze this issue, three different capacity models are used:

- Classroom Allocation Model (CR)
- CR Needs Less Building (CR Need), a variant of the Classroom Allocation Model
- Georgia Department of Education (DOE) model

As shown in the following analysis, none of these models support the conclusion that consolidating Spalding will effectively reduce excess capacity. Additionally, factors such as open enrollment policies and community concerns raise doubts about the reliability of current enrollment projections.

Classroom Allocation Model “CR” & “CR Needs Less Building”

The Classroom Allocation Model (CR), defined by Fulton County Operations, is presented as the "optimal formula" for determining classroom utilization.² CR calculates the number of classrooms needed based on the student population's unique needs, including special education, ESOL, and TAG requirements. FCS has consistently emphasized that CR is the most accurate measure of capacity.

Another metric, "CR Need Less Building" (CR Need), was introduced during the redistricting process.³ However, discrepancies between the CR and CR Need data have created confusion. Despite this, CR Need remains central to the County's consolidation and redistricting plans, and it will serve as the basis for this analysis.

Capacity under the CR Need model is represented by a negative or positive number:

- **Negative:** Indicates excess classrooms or available space.
- **Positive:** Indicates a need for additional classrooms or overcrowding.

¹ FDB, Section F.

² Noon Redistricting 101 meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=_9XtzI4c610

³ https://resources.finalseite.net/images/v1730736209/fultonschoolsorg/vedx6l4sxcsesq1n7un/Round2_Packet_SandySprings.pdf

Using this framework, the following CR and CR Need data are relevant⁴:

School	Current (As Is)		Draft Plan
	24/25 CR Need	27/28 CR Need	27/28 CR Need
Dunwoody Springs	-7	-7	-7
Heards Ferry	-6	-6	-4
High Point	1	0	0
Ison Springs	-14	-16	-3
Lake Forest	-9	-13	-13
Spalding Drive	0	1	---
Woodland	-10	-15	-12
ES Total	-45	-56	-39

If Spalding, a fully utilized, smaller school is closed, the County will **reduce its deficit by only 6 classrooms, leaving 39 empty classrooms**. Consolidating Spalding would merely redistribute students to surrounding schools, not reducing excess capacity in any meaningful amount. Closing this smaller, at-capacity school while continuing to operate larger, underutilized schools is not a logical solution to the problem.

Additionally, consolidating a school with a larger underutilized building may present more growth opportunities for FCS. Analysis of the two schools within Sandy Springs with less than 450 students shows why consolidating Spalding is not the answer. These schools are predicted to have approximately the same student population size - a difference of only 3 students in the 2027-28 academic year. The smaller school is predicted to be full while the larger school is predicted to have 16 empty classrooms. Consolidation of the larger building would result in the same number of students merging into surrounding schools, eliminating approximately the same number of general education and specials classrooms, while also eliminating approximately 16 empty classrooms. Subtracting 16 more classrooms reduces the predicted deficit to 23 empty classrooms. The difference between 39 and 23 classrooms is approximately a 41%⁵ reduction in excess space. This approach achieves a far more impactful reduction in capacity surplus while redistricting the same number of students into surrounding schools.

Closing Spalding leaves no additional capacity to consolidate other schools in the future. The County risks being forced to revisit the issue in a few years, further disrupting an already stressed community. In contrast, consolidating larger schools with substantial excess capacity offers a more sustainable solution.

⁴ Data from the December 9th Redistricting Meeting Data Packet

⁵ (39 Draft – 23 Proposed)/39 Draft = 41%

Closing the smallest school will have the smallest impact on capacity deficits. The County’s reluctance to explore alternative solutions such as consolidating larger, underutilized schools undermines its goal of solving the capacity problem. Community feedback highlights widespread confusion over these decisions. As enrollment projections suggest increasing difficulty in filling larger schools, it is illogical to close a smaller, fully utilized building like Spalding. Failure to consider alternative options will result in failure to resolve the issue.

Department of Education Model “DoE”

The Georgia Department of Education (DOE) capacity model is the simplest capacity metric. DOE uses the square footage available to determine the maximum number of students that can fit into the building. It does not consider space required for special instruction like ESOL, TAG, or Special Needs.

Here are the county numbers as we have been provided:

School	GA DOE Capacity	Enrollment 24-25	Enrollment 27-28	Deficit 27-28
Spalding Drive	550	349	391	159
Ison Springs	850	430	389	461
Dunwoody Springs	850	543	553	297
Woodland	1,000	880	716	284
High Point	850	701	678	172
Lake Forest	850	539	458	392
Heards Ferry	950	860	716	234
Totals	5,875	4,119	3,888	1,987

The DOE model projects a student deficit of 1,987 across the region by the 2027-28 academic year. Spalding contributes the smallest share of this deficit, with just 157 unfilled seats, making it the least impactful school to consolidate. Larger schools in the region have deficits twice as high as Spalding’s, meaning consolidating them would significantly reduce excess capacity.

To illustrate this, consider the two primary options for consolidation within the North Springs High School feeder system:

1. Consolidating Spalding Drive (550 capacity):

This leaves Dunwoody Springs (850), Ison Springs (850), & Woodland (1,000) open.

- Total capacity: **2,700 students**
- Predicted enrollment (2027-28): **2,049 students**
- Remaining capacity after consolidation: **651 empty seats**

2. Consolidating an 850-capacity school:

This leaves Spalding Drive (550), one of the 850-capacity schools, & Woodland (1,000) open.

- Total capacity: **2,400 students**
- Predicted enrollment (2027-28): **2,049 students**
- Remaining capacity after consolidation: **351 empty seats**

By closing Spalding, the County would be left with 651 empty seats. In contrast, consolidating a larger school reduces the surplus to 351 empty seats. This results in a difference of 300 seats, or nearly 50%. This clearly demonstrates that closing Spalding is the least effective option for addressing the overall deficit.

Furthermore, this analysis highlights a critical flaw in the County's logic: Spalding is already operating efficiently and close to capacity, whereas larger schools with significant unused space present a far greater opportunity to address excess capacity. Consolidating a larger school would eliminate more unused classrooms and have a more meaningful impact on the deficit. Additionally, consolidating a larger school would allow FCS to use the larger building to further its long-term goals, including establishing a K-8 school or replacing Sandy Springs Charter Middle School, a feeder school for the new North Springs High School.

Using broad DOE-based projections can create misleading scenarios. For instance, dividing the 1,987-student deficit by the number of available classrooms yields class sizes far above acceptable standards. Dividing the projected enrollment deficits with the projected empty classrooms from the proposed redistricting maps would result in 30-50 students per classroom. This method fails to consider capacity requirements for special needs students. In conclusion, both the CR and DOE models confirm that consolidating Spalding provides the smallest reduction to the capacity surplus, making it the least reasonable choice for solving the issue. The County should prioritize solutions that target larger schools with greater deficits, ensuring a more effective and sustainable resolution to the problem.

Calculations of Capacity: Conflating Policy & Conflicting Models

The community's analysis shows that closing Spalding does not solve the capacity problem. In examining the County's approach, two major issues emerge:

1. **Overreliance on Enrollment Numbers:** Current policy equates the number of enrolled students to available facility capacity, whereas a policy that looks to the number of students vs the capacity deficit is needed.
2. **Conflicting Capacity Models:** Using two different models, the DOE-based approach and the CR-based approach, leads to contradictory conclusions about whether schools are at capacity or underutilized.

These unresolved inconsistencies, combined with limited community engagement prior to and during the process, reinforce the need for the Board to delay any consolidation or redistricting decisions in Sandy Springs.

Policy

Relying solely on a fixed enrollment threshold, 450 students, to determine which schools may be consolidated, regardless of their size and unique student needs, is fundamentally flawed. Without considering the CR Need model, which accurately reflects how schools are used and the specific requirements of their student populations, the County risks choosing consolidation options that simply move students around rather than reducing actual excess capacity.

This approach also disproportionately targets smaller schools. For example, Spalding must maintain 81.8% of its 550-student capacity (450/550) to avoid scrutiny, while an 850-capacity school only needs to be about half, 50%, full. This policy fails to consider schools that have substantial unused space, focusing instead on enrollment counts rather than actual operating efficiency.

Moreover, a simple enrollment threshold fails to account for schools like Spalding that serve a high proportion of students whose needs extend beyond a 1:1 capacity ratio (e.g., ESOL students, students with disabilities, and pre-K programs). CR Need factors in these complexities, ensuring capacity planning aligns with the reality of classroom instruction.

In short, failing to prioritize the CR Need model in capacity decisions leads to policies that neither reflect actual instructional conditions nor address the true nature of the capacity problem.

Conflicting Capacity Models

Before moving forward with consolidation and redistricting, the County must address the contradictory outcomes produced by its two capacity models: the CR model, which measures classroom needs for legally required instruction, and the DOE model, which assesses capacity based on square footage. The County has not explained why it uses one

model for certain processes (like open enrollment) and another for others (like redistricting), resulting in confusing and inconsistent findings.

For example, the DOE model suggests that Spalding can accommodate 195 additional students, yet the CR model and CR Need calculations indicate that Spalding has no real space available. This discrepancy leaves the community unsure whether Spalding is truly full or underutilized.

A similar conflict exists at High Point Elementary, which the DOE model shows can accept 149 more students. At the same time, the CR Need metric finds the school overcrowded, and the County chose to redirect students away from High Point during the November redistricting to “alleviate capacity” while also deeming the school eligible for open enrollment due to “excess capacity”. These opposing conclusions raise questions about which model, if either, accurately reflects the school’s situation.

In short, using two conflicting methods to determine capacity results in confusion and mistrust. The Board should not proceed with a major consolidation decision without first reconciling these contradictions, ensuring that decisions are based on clear, consistent, and credible information.

Parent Choice & Open Enrollment

The recent changes to the open enrollment policy fundamentally challenge the reliability of all enrollment projections. Previously, attendance zones provided a stable basis for predicting student populations. Now, parents can freely choose among public schools, and many may opt for private or charter schools instead of following the County’s intended path. Relying on traditional enrollment models while introducing open enrollment, therefore, creates projections built on shifting sands.

Parent choice has a long and growing legal tradition in American education, underscored by landmark court decisions and the widespread establishment of charter schools. Over the past century, parents have increasingly exercised their right to decide where their children attend school, and today’s policies make it easier than ever to cross district or even public-private boundaries.

Sandy Springs is an extreme example of this trend. More than half (52%) of its school-aged children attend private schools, a far higher rate than the state (9%) or county (17%) average. Private institutions are aggressively courting families with targeted marketing, and the County’s current turmoil only amplifies their appeal. Public schools also compete directly with each other, as open enrollment dismantles traditional barriers and allows families to move freely in search of better perceived educational environments.

In this new landscape, the County cannot assume that families will remain within their assigned attendance zones. If the Board closes Spalding, many parents may leave the system altogether, whether through private education or open enrollment at other public schools. The County has no proven models to predict these choices or the resulting enrollment patterns. Without a precedent for such open-market conditions, all projections become speculative, and miscalculations are likely.

Before making irreversible decisions like consolidation, the Board should recognize the unpredictable nature of parent choice. Pausing consolidation until the effects of open enrollment on actual enrollment patterns are better understood is both prudent and necessary. Such a delay would allow the County to gather reliable data on how families respond, ensuring that any future decisions are based on realistic and stable enrollment figures.

Increased Interest in Early Enrollment:

As recently as two years ago, Spalding had no waitlist for Pre-K enrollment. This year, however, the landscape has notably changed. This year, Spalding's waitlist included 34 students zoned for Spalding as well as more than 100 students outside Spalding's zoned area. These numbers reflect numerous things, including a renewed interest in public school post-Covid as well as parent choice to attend a high performing school like Spalding.

Recently, Spalding hosted a prospective parent open house that attracted 38 attendees, up from a typical count of just 7. Notably, the vast majority of interested families reside outside the Spalding attendance zone. Their feedback suggests approximately 80% from outside the Spalding attendance zone would willingly enroll at Spalding and remain in Fulton County Schools (FCS) if given the opportunity. Without the option to enter Spalding through open enrollment, these families indicated they will turn to private schools. This growing interest underscores the value of Spalding and ensuring flexibility in enrollment processes that draw new families into our public schools at the earliest stages versus merely shuffle existing students between schools. Other schools such as Heards Ferry were not being considered by these families due to commute times as these parents live too far to attend Heards Ferry.

Call to Delay the COSA Window:

To ensure fairness and prevent premature limitations on family choice, we strongly urge the Board to adjust the current COSA timeline. Postponing the COSA window closure until after

the February vote would prevent the disenfranchisement of schools and families. Doing so allows all parties, families, schools, and the Board, to make informed decisions based on the final outcome of the redistricting process rather than assumptions. District staff have conveyed their concerns privately, emphasizing the importance of aligning decision-making windows with confirmed Board actions to maintain trust and stability within our community.

Securing Future Enrollment by Attracting Younger Families:

Our survey data, comprising over 300 respondents, reveals that 125+ children under the age of four reside in the Spalding communities. This figure represents only a sample of the broader pool of future learners. Successfully attracting these families into Pre-K programs is critical. Early engagement can set families on a path to remain in the FCS system, strengthening our schools over the long term. By maintaining school choice options and ensuring that Spalding remains a viable enrollment choice, the District can foster a growing, stable, and engaged K–12 population. This is essential for sustaining academic excellence, community cohesion, and the robust future of Fulton County Schools.

Future Enrollment Trends and the Importance of Early Indicators

Contrary to the narrative of declining enrollment, Fulton County’s own projections show that Spalding is expected to see an increase in student population. This is a significant departure from the broader concern that fewer students will fill available classroom space, and it underscores the importance of recognizing Spalding’s unique position within the district.

Recent changes to the open enrollment policy add another variable to projecting future enrollments. While many schools in the area may now open their doors to students outside their immediate attendance zones, Spalding has not been included in open enrollment for several years. This means its enrollment figures have remained stable without relying on transfers- an indication that Spalding’s foundational enrollment strength comes from within its own community rather than external sources.

Looking ahead, early childhood enrollment data, particularly from Pre-K and Kindergarten classes, serves as a valuable predictor for future school population trends. Spalding’s robust Pre-K and Kindergarten numbers not only suggest a steady pipeline of students advancing through the grade levels, but they also reflect confidence from families in the region’s public education system at the earliest stages of their children's schooling. These youngest cohorts represent the next generation of learners who will feed into Spalding’s upper grades, sustaining or even increasing enrollment over time.

Additionally, survey data collected within our community indicates that the incoming cohorts are likely to be the largest in recent years. This local insight, combined with the district's own projections and the changing open enrollment landscape, reinforces the argument that Spalding's enrollment challenges may be less severe than initially portrayed. In fact, with the right strategies in place, such as targeted marketing and community engagement, Spalding can maintain a healthy, growing student body without requiring the drastic measure of consolidation.

Enrollment and Capacity Conclusion

Both Class Room allocation models shows that Spalding operates close to optimal capacity, and in fact, slightly improves overall capacity utilization. It is one of the few schools expected to maintain or increase enrollment despite declining numbers elsewhere. Under the CR models, Spalding is near capacity, while the DOE model confirms it has the smallest numerical deficit. These metrics strongly suggest that closing Spalding would yield the least effective reduction in excess capacity.

Moreover, the County's reliance on inconsistent models (CR versus DOE), the failure to consider the optimal CR Need measure as a primary guide, and the introduction of open enrollment policies that undermine traditional enrollment projections all indicate that current planning is built on uncertain assumptions. Consolidating a smaller, efficiently utilized school does nothing to reduce large surpluses elsewhere and risks driving families to private or charter schools due to unpredictable open enrollment choices.

In essence, the data and analyses presented throughout this process reveal that targeting Spalding for closure is not only ineffective but also contrary to the goal of achieving true capacity optimization. The County would do well to pause and reevaluate, prioritizing models that reflect classroom realities, considering the genuine impacts of parent choice, and exploring larger, more underutilized schools if consolidation remains necessary.

Facility Condition

The County’s second factor in recommending consolidation is the school’s building condition, measured by the Facility Conditions Assessment (FCA) Score. Operations’ stated rationale is that schools in fair or poor condition should be consolidated into nearby schools in “good” condition with room to spare. Yet, despite Spalding’s consistently “good” FCA rating and significant recent investments that maintain and improve its infrastructure, Operations has misrepresented its condition as “fair.”

This discrepancy raises serious concerns. While the original FCA assessment and subsequent data show Spalding in good condition, the County now relies on inconsistent projections and flawed inflation calculations to justify lowering its FCA score. These tactics undermine the credibility of the consolidation recommendation and fail to align with the established criteria or the County’s own presented standards.

FCA Score: Spalding is in Good Condition

The second factor the County considers in its consolidation analysis is the condition of each school building, expressed through the Facility Conditions Assessment (FCA) Score. Spalding has consistently received ratings well within the “good” range, from its official 2021 FCA score of 89 to future projections of 84 in 2027 and 88 by 2032 – note that due to the projected investments over the next ten years our score actually *increases*.⁶ All credible evidence, from comprehensive assessments to the school’s recent investments in maintenance and infrastructure, confirms that Spalding’s facility is neither substandard nor deteriorating. Yet, Operations has misrepresented Spalding’s status as “fair”⁷ disregarding the objectively strong FCA data and applying inconsistent logic across the district. This selective interpretation of the FCA results not only contradicts the published findings but also weakens the argument that Spalding should be targeted for consolidation.

Operations’ Attempt to Establish a “Fair” FCA Score

The official 2020 Facilities Assessment projected Spalding at an FCA score of 84 in the current 2023-2028 period, a rating squarely in the “good” range. When asked to understand why Spalding was represented as “fair” in the redistricting meeting, Operations provided no data to the public why the score was drastically reduced other than to say it had been recalculated to a 76.

⁶ Page 41 of the 2020 State of Facilities Report.

⁷ September 10, 2024 Working Session, minutes

5-Year Projection: Action vs. Inaction and Proper Use of Inflation

The FCA score, as defined in the Facilities Assessment, improves or declines based on the County's investments. Spalding's 5-year projections would only fall significantly if the County failed to maintain the building. The Assessment itself explains that an 87-rated school would drop to 74 in five years without proper investment. Operations is now presenting Spalding's new FCA score as 76, mirroring this "no investment" scenario, even though the County has invested nearly \$1.9 million in Spalding⁸ since it earned its original 89 rating. These expenditures include a new roof membrane, HVAC replacements, sewer line updates, advanced security systems⁹, and a renovated gym floor. Such improvements are designed to maintain or improve the school's FCA score, not let it deteriorate.

Despite these investments, Operations now suggest that factors like the building's age (originally constructed in 1966) or inflation should reduce Spalding's FCA score from good to fair. Yet Spalding's own history contradicts this notion: between 2016 and 2021, after appropriate investments, its FCA score rose from 85 to 89¹⁰. Similarly, North Roswell Elementary, built in 1960 and also rated at 89, remains classified as "good," despite facing higher projected repair costs. If inflation and age truly justified lowering Spalding's score, they would apply similarly to other schools. Instead, this selective reasoning suggests an inconsistent application of the County's criteria.

Inflation as a Weak Justification

Inflation is another weak justification. The FCA formula divides projected repair costs by the building's replacement cost; both should be adjusted consistently for inflation. Yet Operations appears to inflate repair costs without proportionally adjusting replacement costs. For example, the newly provided FCA score of 76, or \$4,347,373 repair cost, shows the actual repair costs increased 24% from what was projected in 2020. Even if we add a 24% post-pandemic inflation increase to both repair and replacement costs, Spalding's FCA score remains around 81, comfortably within the "good" range:

$$\text{FCA Score} = 1 - (\$4,347,373) / (\$18,114,053 \times 1.24) * 100 \approx 81$$

If inflation truly explained a drop to "fair," then other schools with higher projected repair costs, such as North Roswell Elementary, would also suffer a similar downgrade. Since that

⁸ <https://go.boarddocs.com/ga/fcss/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=C8MJZH4E4BF3>

⁹ RFP 408-22 PHASE 5 - SECURITY CAMERA REPLACE - SCOPE ATTACHMENT 4.26.2022.pdf

¹⁰ [Fulton Facilities Master Plan DRAFT 021716.pdf](#)

is not happening, simply citing inflation without applying it consistently, does not credibly justify lowering Spalding's FCA score.

In short, the County cannot ignore its own investments in Spalding while treating it as though no maintenance occurred. Nor should it selectively apply inflation or aging arguments to force a "fair" rating. With proper, consistent application of these variables, Spalding's FCA score remains firmly in the good range, just as the official assessments and completed improvements indicate.

Facility Condition Conclusion

In every credible assessment, Spalding remains in "good" condition, supported by a steady record of investments and maintenance. The County's attempts to reclassify Spalding as "fair" rely on selective data interpretation, inconsistent application of inflation adjustments, and neglect of the substantial capital improvements made to the facility. Moreover, recent statements by Operations suggesting a preference against schools older than 50 years, or not fitting their template school, regardless of their objectively strong FCA scores, run counter to the standards previously presented to the Board and public.

The community urges the Board to acknowledge the documented evidence that Spalding's facility is in good shape and to reject the flawed arguments of "inaction" and "inflation" that contradict published data. After investing nearly \$1.9 million into Spalding, some of it within the last few months, fiscally responsible stewardship calls for maintaining the school rather than closing it. The path forward should honor both transparency and the best interests of students, teachers/staff, and the community.

Disparities and Errors

Recent reviews of data, timelines, and justification materials provided by Fulton County Schools (FCS) raise significant concerns about the credibility and consistency of the information being used to support the potential closure of Spalding. The following sections highlight key issues found in the data presented, the rationale behind the closure, and the changing narratives surrounding Open Enrollment / Change of School Assignment (COSA).

Data Discrepancies and Shifting Timelines

- **Inconsistent Classroom Need Estimates:** At the October Redistricting Meeting #1, Fall 2024 Classroom Need was reported as -51. In November's Redistricting Meeting #2, reported Classroom Need of -45 was presented. Notably HighPoint and Spalding went from having excess capacity to at or needing more capacity. These discrepancies were dismissed when asked by the FCS staff, raising questions about the reliability and accuracy of the data. See Figure 2 and Figure 3 in the appendix for the referenced slides.
- **Different FCA And Educational Adequacy Score:** The FCA score in October was reported as "Fair". In December it was reported as "Poor". Additionally, between the same meetings the Educational Adequacy score went from "Fair" to "Excellent". Only after repeated attempts to bring this error forward did the staff admit errors were in the presentation. See Figure 4 and Figure 5 in the appendix of the referenced slides.
- **Impact on Confidence:** Such fluctuations in key metrics over a short timeframe cast doubt on the overall data integrity. ***With numbers shifting between meetings, the Board faces uncertainty when making critical decisions that affect entire school communities.***

Financial Justification Without Hard Data

- **Primary Closure Rationale Cited as Financial:** During the December 12th community meeting, FCS Operations stated that the justification for closing Spalding was purely financial. When asked if there were any other reasons, the answer was "No."
- **No Specific Financial Studies Completed:** Despite financial impact being the main rationale, **FCS staff conceded that no specific financial studies or calculations for Spalding's closure had been performed.** Instead, referenced cost savings from a different school (SL Lewis Elementary) was offered with a generic assumption of \$2.2 million in savings. It is an important callout that Spalding's 2020 FCA score was 89, while SL Lewis' was 59. It is inconceivable that

the savings could be comparable: in the 2020 – 2022 Facilities Condition Report SL Lewis needed \$7.8 million of maintenance, compared to Spalding’s \$1.9 million.

- **Contradiction in Logic:** Closing a school for supposed financial purposes without concrete data or a formal cost-benefit analysis undermines the credibility of the decision. How can the Board be confident in a decision based on unverified financial assumptions?

COSA Policies and Contradictory Statements

- **Policy vs. Practice:** The FCS Redistricting website states that if the Board has not yet voted on closure, schools may remain listed as options for COSA. If the Board later votes to close a school, only then would that school be removed from the COSA list, after families have already made their selections. Reference Figure 1, a screenshot of the “Current Redistrictings” section of the FCS website which clearly states only should the Board vote in February will schools become ineligible for COSA. For reference, the text as copied here from the FCS website:

Change of School Assignment (COSA) Regarding Schools Potentially Impacted by a School Closure/Consolidation/Redistricting Plan

Per FCBOE Policy JBCD, schools identified for redistricting will not be eligible as an “accepting school” for the Change of School Assignment process in the year in which they are being redistricted. However, if the School Board has not yet voted on the plan then the school(s) can be included on the list of accepting schools. Should the Board later vote to close/consolidate/redistrict the school(s), they will be removed from the list and families who selected the school(s) as a placement option will be assigned one of their other ranked choices. If the Board votes not to close/consolidate/redistrict, the schools will remain on the list and can be assigned as a placement option.

- **Contradiction with Staff Assertions:** Staff statements have indicated an expectation that Spalding will close, yet the district’s own documentation allows Spalding to remain on the COSA list until a final vote is taken. This discrepancy suggests that FCS is telling families one thing while official policies present another scenario entirely.
- **Eroding Confidence in Data and Processes:** If fundamental details about enrollment policies and potential closures can be contradicted by the district’s own published materials, it further erodes confidence in the data and assertions provided to the Board.

Disparities and Errors Conclusion

The presented evidence, from inconsistent classroom need estimates to the reliance on generic financial assumptions and contradictory COSA information, calls into question the reliability of the data and reasoning given to support the closure of Spalding. If critical decisions are being made with incomplete or shifting information, how can the Board be assured that these choices are truly in the best interest of the community? The need for transparent, data-driven decision-making is paramount, and current inconsistencies suggest that more rigorous analysis and verification are required before moving forward.

Financial Impact

Spalding serves a unique population with substantial educational needs. Approximately 42% of Spalding's students come from economically disadvantaged households, and nearly 19% are students with disabilities, placing it in the 96th percentile for special education needs statewide¹¹. Supporting these students requires additional resources, naturally increasing per-student spending. However, Spalding achieves exceptional academic outcomes, ranking in the top 7% for Content Mastery in its socioeconomic cohort. This demonstrates that the financial commitment to Spalding is not an inefficiency but a strategic investment that yields superior results compared to 93% of schools with similar populations. This success should serve as a benchmark for other schools, providing a model for how to achieve excellence in challenging circumstances.

Disrupting this stable environment could incur significant costs. Research on school closures reveals that transitioning students, especially those with learning challenges, often results in academic setbacks and increased behavioral support needs. For instance, one study found that moving schools has significant negative effects on special needs students¹².

Spalding's proven track record in effectively educating economically disadvantaged and special-needs students aligns with Fulton County Schools' (FCS) strategic goal of fostering academic excellence across all demographics. Instead of closing Spalding, FCS should view the school as an invaluable asset, leveraging its success to strengthen educational equity district-wide.

Financial Cost per Student and Its Context

Spalding's annual operating budget is approximately \$6 million, primarily allocated to salaries (\$5.2 million) and benefits. Some critics argue the per-student expenditure is higher than the district average due to its smaller enrollment of 349 students. However, it is woefully incomplete as an explanation as Spalding also has a much higher enrollment of special needs (20%) and TAG students than the county average as well. This higher percentage of special needs and special programs costs will follow the student wherever they may go – Spalding simply has a higher concentration of these students which appears to inflate our per-student cost above other schools.

The argument for closing Spalding also fails to consider the strategic benefits of small dollar SPLOST-funded improvements. SPLOST has historically allowed FCS to reduce debt and maintain its facilities without straining operational budgets. Using SPLOST funds to

¹¹ [School Profile Reports - Fulton County School System](#)

¹² [School Mobility and Developmental Outcomes in Young Adulthood - PMC](#)

invest in Spalding represents a modest and targeted expenditure that ensures the school remains in proper operating condition. The community recognizes the significant investment of SPLOST funds made to North Springs High School, noting that we also must invest in the feeder schools which are minimal investments of county/SPLOST funds in comparison to feed students into North Springs High School.

For example, addressing future facility maintenance and/or repairs would cost a fraction of what it would take to build or renovate a new school should the population needs rebound. Further, these investments are smaller relative to other schools in the district. This is a realistic concern given recent demographic trends. COVID-19 temporarily reduced school enrollments across the country. By their own admission, during the redistricting presentation, the staff of FCS recognize that recent data from areas north of Sandy Springs are unreliable due to Covid effects. Fulton County now risks losing a facility that could be instrumental in absorbing future population increases, particularly as nearby residential developments, such as nearly 3,000 new housing units are coming online, including large public/private investments in the existing stock.

Strategic use of an FCS Master plan may provide opportunities for collaboration between City of Sandy Springs, Fulton County Schools, and the Fulton County Development Authority to work with developers to bring online housing stock that meets the needs of lower and middle income families. Single Family Attached and Multifamily Housing with 3 or more bedrooms is the development style most likely to recruit families with children into our area as their \$/Sq. Ft. is lower than single family detached with 3+ bedrooms. Developers typically focus on 1- or 2-Bedroom units as the number of doors and price per Square Foot tends to be higher. The collaboration between CoSS, FCS, and FCDA has the opportunity to work with developers to invest in a minimum percentage of 3BR units in each of the many designated zones in Sandy Springs. A collaboration that produces more actual family friendly housing stock versus young professional housing stock naturally increases the available student population in Sandy Springs. A key element of this housing concept is that these residents are less likely to pursue private school options than homeowners of Single Family Detached.

Closing Spalding would also increase transportation costs for the district. Currently, many families live within walking distance and do not qualify for bus services as shown in the image below. If the school closes, additional buses and drivers will be necessary to transport these students to schools farther away. This not only increases operational costs but also adds logistical challenges, including longer commute times for students and potential traffic congestion in the affected areas. Overall, as many families remain within the existing neighborhood, moving schools will add both cost and significant time to commuters. Reference the [Traffic Survey](#) section for our own professionally conducted traffic study. Of note, students reassigned to Woodland expect an average 414% increase in travel time, 513% increase in average distance, crossing some of the most accident prone and dangerous intersections in the county (87 Crashes alone at the key intersection of Roswell and Dalrymple in 2023).



In for-profit business, efficiency can be achieved by either decreasing costs or increasing revenue. When faced with financial strain, businesses often default to cutting costs as the quickest path to efficiency. However, this approach can lead to a self-reinforcing downward spiral, where short-term savings undermine long-term sustainability.

For FCS, a not for-profit business, success is measured by mission fulfillment, in this case, delivering the highest quality education to the largest number of students. The proposal to close Spalding prioritizes marginal cost savings over educational outcomes, a short-sighted approach akin to the business scenario of focusing solely on cost-cutting. In doing so, FCS risks undermining its own mission, weakens its credibility, and damages its ability to serve students effectively in the future.

Recent demographic data highlights a critical challenge: Fulton County enrolls only about 83.5% of its school-aged children. According to the **U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 estimate**, there are 165,208 children between the ages of 5 and 18 in Fulton County, but FCS enrollment stands at just 87,824. Of note, Atlanta Public School (within Fulton Count) lists 54,956 enrolled students. This means 16.5% of the county's school-aged population opts for private schools, other districts, or alternative education options. Closing Spalding

would exacerbate this problem. Families displaced by the closure may leave the district altogether, further eroding enrollment and weakening FCS's ability to attract and retain students.

This enrollment gap points to a capacity issue, not just in infrastructure – but in FCS's ability to maintain public confidence and appeal to families. The system is not attracting and retaining enough of its existing servable population. Spalding is uniquely positioned to address this challenge. Its academic excellence and strong community support make it an asset for retaining current students and attracting new ones. Closing Spalding would send a damaging message to families, accelerating the exodus from FCS and resulting in more unused capacity, ultimately leading to less financial efficiency, not more.

Finally, Spalding is poised for enrollment growth. Recent residential developments, including 1,200 new apartment units, announced public/private investments in existing stock, and announced plans for 3,000 additional housing units, are expected to bring many more families to the area. Unlike other schools in its zone, Spalding is projected to see increased enrollment in the coming years based on our own survey. Closing the school would disrupt this trajectory, likely leading to overcrowding at neighboring schools as the population rises. By keeping Spalding open, FCS can proactively address its capacity challenges and leverage Spalding's growth potential to strengthen the district overall.

Limited Benefits of Closing a Smaller School

Even if Spalding's \$6 million operating budget were eliminated, any cost savings from closing Spalding would be minimal. Staff retention plans stated publicly by the COO would mean the largest expense, salaries, would remain. It is important to note that no data has been presented showing what the financial savings of closing Spalding would be. On December 12, at a Community Meeting hosted by Board Member Katie Gregory, Deputy Chief Operations Officer Yngrid Huff stated that operations had no specific financial projections regarding a Spalding closure. Ms. Huff shared that FCS Staff had only incomplete assumptions based on earlier estimates for a different school with an entirely different facility and enrollment profile.

Research on school closures consistently finds that shutting down small schools offers only nominal savings unless accompanied by large-scale restructuring, such as facility sales or significant staff reductions. However, Spalding's property, zoned as R-2, is restricted to residential use, making it unlikely to generate meaningful revenue if sold. The other option, selling to another school, would only make it easier for families in the area to leave the public school system, resulting in additional capacity issues; a self-reinforcing downward spiral.

Closing a successful school with incredible community support, like Spalding, would not solve any budgetary issues. Instead, it would magnify FCS's existing enrollment challenges, creating financial inefficiencies and wasting taxpayer dollars on a school system that struggles to attract and retain students.

Economic Impact

Many of the ideas in support of Spalding have been backed by a study prepared by Dr. Greg George with the Center for Economic Analysis. Dr. George assessed the economic impact of Spalding, projecting that Spalding will generate **\$58,743,652** in economic activity over five years, including **\$50,766,264 in regional earnings**, and supports **151 jobs**. The study finds that every \$1 spent by Spalding results in \$2.017 in economic activity and \$0.8642 in total earnings in the region. Beyond these quantitative impacts, **Spalding offers significant qualitative benefits such as increased productivity, reduced crime and poverty, and enhanced community well-being**. Furthermore, maintaining Spalding is deemed fiscally responsible due to its high performance, full utilization, and positive impact on property values, with closure potentially triggering a decline in property values and tax revenues. The report concludes that these economic impacts are considered conservative, not including the aforementioned qualitative benefits.

See the [Economic Impact Study](#) section for more details.

Financial Impact Conclusion

The proposal to close Spalding on financial grounds is misguided. Spalding exemplifies FCS's commitment to equity, academic excellence, and community engagement. Its higher per-student costs reflect an intentional investment in addressing the diverse needs of its student population, while its projected enrollment growth bucks the trend to the district's broader capacity challenges. Closing Spalding would undermine these achievements, shifting costs elsewhere and eroding vital community support. By keeping Spalding open, FCS can uphold its mission, align with its strategic goals, and ultimately ensure that taxpayer dollars are used effectively.

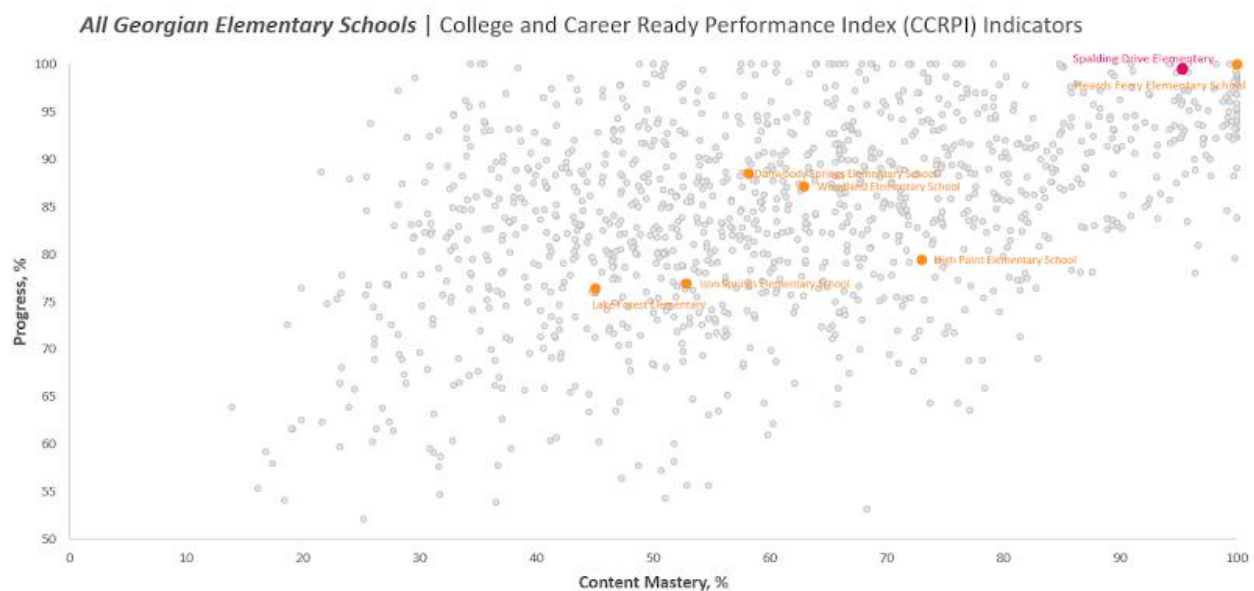
Solutions

Marketing: Using Spalding as a Model for Public School Success

The Need for Better Marketing of FCS Successes

A major barrier that FCS faces is a lack of awareness regarding the quality of education available in public schools, particularly among families who may assume private or charter schools offer a superior experience. Spalding stands as an example of high academic achievement and strong community engagement within FCS, yet many families in Sandy Springs and beyond remain unaware of the school's excellence due to insufficient marketing efforts by the district. Families often base their decisions on broad perceptions rather than specific information about individual schools, which can lead to students leaving FCS for alternative options, impacting enrollment.

As the second-highest performing elementary school in Sandy Springs, and one of the top elementary schools in Georgia as shown below, Spalding Drive has established a track record of academic success and community engagement, supported by strong standardized test scores and the dedication of its faculty. However, without an effective marketing strategy, FCS is missing an opportunity to retain and attract students who could benefit from schools like Spalding. FCS could implement various marketing strategies, including targeted social media outreach, community events, and partnerships with local organizations, to showcase the achievements of schools like Spalding.



Studies support the notion that well-marketed schools see higher retention rates, as families are more likely to commit when they understand the specific benefits a school

offers (Jones & Turner, 2021). With a more comprehensive marketing approach, Spalding could serve as a model to dispel misconceptions about public education and highlight FCS's commitment to academic excellence.

Spalding as a Model for Success and Community Value

Spalding represents more than just academic success; it embodies a sense of community that many families seek in a school environment. FCS's objective to make each school the "preferred school for its students and parents" is reinforced through examples like Spalding, where strong parental involvement and neighborhood support have helped create a thriving educational environment (Schools, F.C.). Showcasing this aspect of Spalding would not only improve public perception of the district but also reinforce the idea that FCS values community engagement as much as academic achievement.

The district could expand on this by promoting Spalding's programs, family involvement, and academic resources. As research from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research shows, community schools with high levels of engagement create positive academic and social outcomes for students (Gwynne, 2009). By marketing Spalding as a model of success, FCS can illustrate that its public schools are more than capable of meeting the needs of students and families, thereby retaining students who might otherwise leave for private or charter schools.

Through a strategic marketing campaign focused on schools like Spalding, FCS can showcase its commitment to high-quality public education. This not only attracts families but also positions FCS as a district that values both academic and community success. Highlighting schools like Spalding as exemplary would further reinforce FCS's mission and help build confidence in the district's capacity to deliver exceptional education. Additionally, marketing does not have to rest solely on FCS. The community stands ready to partner and help FCS and Fulton County market our schools!

Timing and Community Adjustment: The Importance of Adequate Notice and Clear Communication

Historical Precedents for School Closures

Typically, multiple years of advance notice when planning school closures is given allowing parents, students, and teachers/staff adequate time to adjust and avoid unnecessary disruption. Charter schools are given years to correct poor performance. Why then is Spalding, a school that *is highly performing*, not given the same courtesy? This precedent of years (not months) has allowed families and teachers/staff to transition smoothly, minimizing disruption in students' academic experiences and enabling better planning for both the district and the community. The current proposal for Spalding's closure is a significant departure from this norm, with an accelerated timeline that has left parents and teachers scrambling to adjust.

When examining similar cases in neighboring districts, research indicates that a minimum of two to three years of notice is generally provided to enable a smoother transition for families (Williams & Harris, 2020). A rushed closure timeline leaves families with limited options, particularly if Open Enrollment is restricted due to recent updates to FCS policies, as outlined in Policy JBCD in August 2024. This policy change states that schools involved in redistricting are ineligible for Open Enrollment, leaving many families unable to select nearby elementary schools and essentially limiting their choices to schools outside their community. This new stipulation, which was not clearly communicated to parents, was only discovered by the community.

Julia Bernath, a former FCS Board President, highlighted the importance of effective communication with parents and elected officials, suggesting that FCS must listen to community stakeholders to avoid misunderstandings. In her letter, she emphasized the need for transparency and the inclusion of community voices in decision-making processes ([see Letters](#)). By providing families with adequate notice and clearer communication about policy changes, FCS can foster trust and ensure that transitions are managed more effectively.

Addressing Enrollment Gaps Across the District

The challenges of enrollment at Spalding must also be viewed within the broader context of the entire Sandy Springs school district. While Spalding may face lower enrollment, other schools in the area struggle with overcrowding, creating a need for a more strategic approach to balancing classroom capacities across the district. Solving Spalding's enrollment issue alone without addressing district-wide patterns fails to create a

sustainable solution, as isolated adjustments could lead to unintended impacts on other schools.

By extending the timeline for Spalding's closure, FCS can take the time to assess broader enrollment patterns and develop a more comprehensive strategy for optimizing classroom spaces throughout Sandy Springs. This could include boundary adjustments, facility improvements, and the introduction of specialized programs to better meet the needs of the district's student population. Rather than focusing on immediate enrollment figures, FCS could benefit from analyzing long-term demographic trends and adapting its approach to accommodate shifts in population.

A five-year extension provides FCS with the necessary time to address enrollment disparities across the district systematically. By taking a holistic approach to classroom distribution and resource allocation, FCS can create a balanced and equitable system that serves the entire community, not just individual schools. This district-wide perspective will enable FCS to develop sustainable solutions that benefit all students and align with the district's long-term objectives.

Development of a Comprehensive Master Plan: Building a Sustainable Future for FCS

The Need for a Long-Term, Community-Engaged Master Plan

Current FCS policies on school closures rely heavily on enrollment metrics, such as a minimum student count of 450, which disproportionately affect smaller schools like Spalding Drive. This threshold does not consider factors such as academic performance or community importance, leading to the risk of closing high-performing schools solely due to enrollment figures. Spalding Drive, as one of the top-performing schools in the state, is a prime example of the value that smaller schools can offer in terms of educational quality and community engagement. However, under the current policies, Spalding's size makes it vulnerable to closure despite its success.

To address this issue, FCS should adopt a Master Plan that considers both quantitative data (like enrollment) and qualitative factors (such as community feedback) and not omit logical and important metrics such as academic performance. A comprehensive Master Plan would allow the district to prioritize closures or consolidations based on data-driven insights that reflect FCS's mission to provide equitable, high-quality education. Moving beyond enrollment metrics to include factors like academic success would demonstrate FCS's commitment to supporting schools that positively impact their students and communities.

Including academic performance as a criterion in closure decisions would also align with FCS's vision of educating each student to their fullest potential. The district's belief in equitable access to quality education resonates with the broader goal of the 2015 APS Turnaround Plan, which emphasized addressing inequities and ensuring that vulnerable student populations have access to the resources they need to succeed (Schools, A.P., 2015). A Master Plan grounded in these principles would prioritize academic achievement and community value, preventing closures that may disrupt high-performing schools.

Engaging the Community in Planning

Effective stakeholder engagement is a core component of sustainable district planning. FCS's belief in the importance of "involved family, community, and staff" reflects its commitment to making decisions that incorporate community feedback and reflect the needs of local families (Schools, F.C.). This approach is further supported by the 2015 APS Turnaround Plan, which highlighted the significance of community involvement in major district decisions (Schools, A.P., 2015).

Involving the community in the development of a Master Plan would foster transparency, build trust, and create a sense of shared purpose within FCS. By engaging parents, educators, and community leaders in discussions about the district's future, FCS can develop a plan that addresses the unique needs of each neighborhood and aligns with the broader goals of the district. Families are more likely to support district initiatives when they feel their voices have been heard and their concerns addressed.

Through a structured Master Plan, FCS could prioritize long-term planning and focus on sustainable improvements. Community engagement in this process would help alleviate the frustrations that parents have felt due to a lack of clarity and rushed decision-making. By developing a plan that allows for public input, FCS can demonstrate its commitment to transparency, ensuring that families understand the rationale behind district changes and can contribute to shaping the future of their children's schools.

RESEARCH & SURVEYS

Community Survey

To address the lack of critical, transparent data from Fulton County Schools (FCS) regarding enrollment trends, housing development, and the broader implications of closing Spalding, we took proactive steps to fill this gap. The community conducted its own survey to capture the voices and concerns of parents, residents, and stakeholders, while an Economic Impact Assessment was undertaken in partnership with a local university to evaluate the potential financial and social ripple effects of the closure. These efforts reflect our commitment to ensuring that decisions are based on comprehensive, data-driven insights that prioritize the best interests of students and families.

Additionally, as of 12/13/2024 2,826 signatures have been collected on our Change.org petition. Available at: <https://www.change.org/p/save-spalding-drive-elementary>

Community Survey Results

A community survey was conducted to gather data and feedback. Below are the highlights, the full report is available at www.saveSpalding.com in the data section.

Survey Participation and Demographics

The dataset represents a community survey with 300 complete responses and an additional 214 incomplete responses, providing valuable insights into the perspectives of stakeholders regarding Spalding. 94% of respondents are homeowners in the school district, indicating a vested interest in the school's future.

Enrollment and Family Composition

The survey reveals an average of 1.96 children under 18 per household among respondents (367 kids within the Spalding district across 187 Spalding households). This suggests a significant number of families with school-age children in the community, underscoring the importance of local educational facilities. Our survey data also reveals that over 200 children under the age of four (34% of children in the results) reside in these communities – importantly this is only a sample of the community extrapolating much higher numbers of upcoming Spalding student count than shown in FCS projections.

Community Sentiment

Importance of Spalding:

- 80% of respondents indicated that the presence of Spalding was "Very important" in their decision to move to or purchase a home in the area.

- 95% also expressed that the school is "Very important" to the community, even among those without children attending the school.

Satisfaction with Education Quality:

- There is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education provided at Spalding, with many respondents rating it as "Very Satisfied".

Impact of Potential Closure

Daily Routine:

- A significant number of respondents anticipate a "Major impact" on their daily routines if the school were to close, affecting commuting times and childcare arrangements.

Alternative Education Options:

If closure occurs, families are considering various alternatives, with top preferences ranked as follows:

1. Open Enrollment at another school of choice
2. Private School
3. Moving to a different school district
4. Attending the newly zoned public school

Economic Impact Study

The study, prepared by Dr. Greg George of the Center for Economic Analysis, assesses the economic impact of Spalding, over a five-year period:

- **Economic Impact:** Spalding is projected to generate a total of **\$58,743,652** in economic activity in the region over five years. This includes **\$50,766,264** in increased regional earnings. The school's operations also support a total of **151 jobs** (direct and indirect).
- **Demographic Inflection Point:** The research suggests that we may be at a demographic inflection point, meaning that the current trend of declining birthrates might not be permanent. The study indicates that these decisions risk exacerbating long-term funding challenges if these trends reverse.
- **Efficiency Considerations:** The report argues that maintaining Spalding is a financially sound choice based on the school's high performance and full classroom utilization. Closing Spalding would lead to minimal reductions in district-wide overcapacity, increased costs for maintaining underutilized schools and would be less efficient than maintaining Spalding.
- **Other Qualitative Impacts:** The report acknowledges various qualitative benefits from Spalding that are not included in the quantitative economic impact. These include positive externalities like an increase in productivity, a reduction in crime and poverty, and an overall improvement in economic growth. The report notes that quality education provides direct benefits to students and extended benefits to the local community.
- **Property Value Impact:** High-performing schools like Spalding stabilize property values and increase local tax revenue. Closing Spalding could trigger a decrease in local property values and reduce the overall property tax base.
- **Conservative Estimates:** The study's economic impacts are considered conservative as they do not include the qualitative benefits associated with a well-functioning school and its positive community impact.

In conclusion, the report indicates that Spalding has a significant positive economic impact on the local community and contributes to its overall well-being. The school not only generates direct economic activity but also provides qualitative benefits, supports local property values, and is an efficient use of resources. It is more fiscally responsible to operate a smaller school at capacity than a larger school with numerous empty classrooms.

The full study is included at the end of this document (post Appendix).

Traffic Survey

The proposed closure of Spalding Drive Elementary School is unjustified and would create significant hardships for families, increase safety risks, and impose logistical and financial burdens on the school district. A traffic study, which surveyed 39 parents (representing approximately **15% of the school population**), underscores the severe consequences of redistricting students to Heards Ferry Elementary (HFE) or Woodland Elementary. This analysis adds to the growing evidence that the school must remain open.

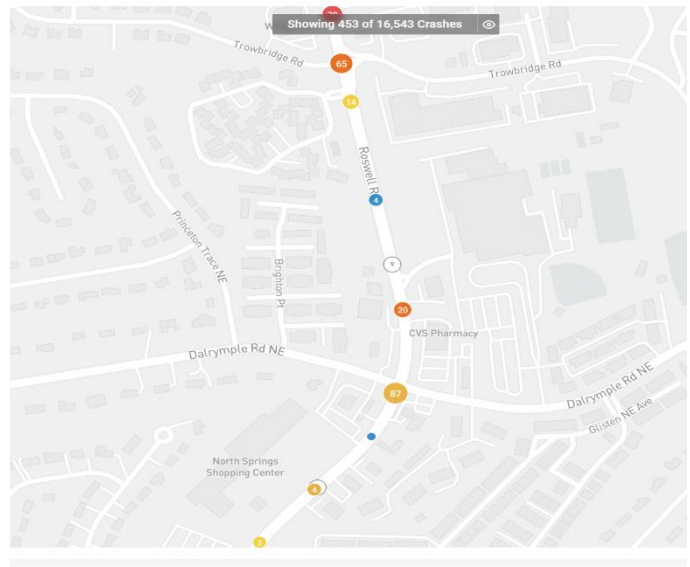
Commute Time and Distance Impacts

The redistricting of students would result in steep increases in travel times and distances:

- **Woodland Elementary:**
 - Families reassigned to Woodland Elementary would experience an **average distance increase of 513%**, with commute times rising by an average of **414%**.
 - These changes reflect the dramatic disruption caused by redistricting, particularly for families who previously lived near Spalding Drive.

Safety Concerns

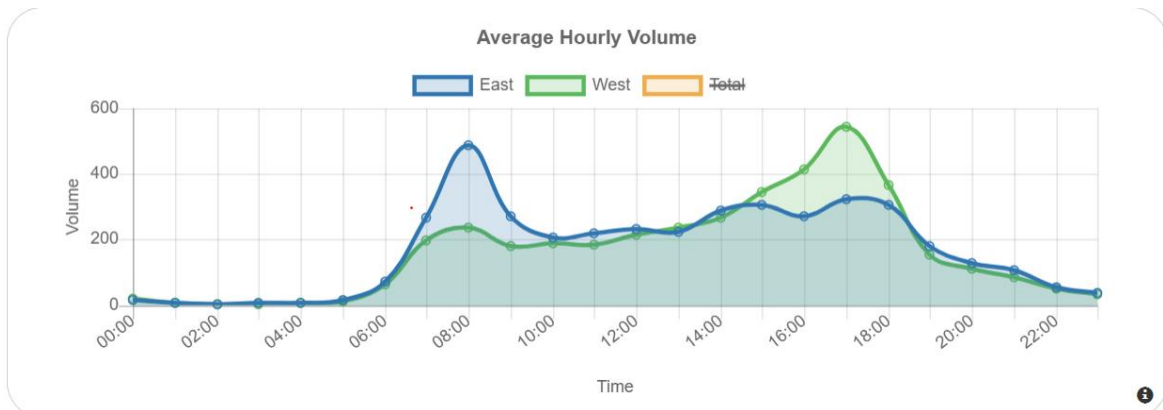
Increased traffic resulting from the closure poses significant safety risks for both families and the broader community. The estimated **200 additional vehicles** passing through the intersection of **Roswell and Dalrymple Roads** daily would exacerbate congestion at one of Sandy Springs' **four highest crash-rate locations**, where **87 crashes were reported in 2023**. GDOT traffic flow data further highlights peak congestion at:



- **7:00 AM:** Heavy eastbound traffic toward Woodland during morning school drop-offs.
- **2:00–5:00 PM:** Significant westbound traffic away from Woodland during school pick-up hours.

Which corridors have the highest crash rates?

- Excluding I-285 and SR 400, the highest crash rates are perceived to be at the following locations:
 - Mount Vernon Highway
 - Riverside Drive at Heards Ferry Road
 - Roswell Road at Dalrymple Road
 - Powers Ferry at Northside Drive



13

The influx of vehicles during peak times would heighten the risk of accidents, further straining already congested infrastructure.

Increased Bussing Requirements

The closure would also impose significant logistical and financial burdens on the school district due to increased bussing requirements for over **300 children**. Many families that currently walk to school or drop their children off at Spalding Drive would require bus transportation. This would necessitate:

- **More Bus Routes:** To accommodate longer distances and the increased number of students, additional bus routes would be required, leading to higher operational costs.
- **Longer Travel Times:** Longer bus routes would result in children spending significantly more time in transit, affecting their daily schedules and well-being.

¹³ GDOT provided data:

https://gdottrafficdata.drakewell.com/sitedashboard.asp?node=GDOT_PORTABLES&cosit=0000121_0124

- **Increased Costs:** The district would face heightened expenses for fuel, bus maintenance, and driver salaries, diverting funds that could be used for educational improvements.

These logistical burdens add yet another layer of complexity and cost to an already problematic proposal.

Traffic Survey Conclusion

The significant increases in commute times and distances, combined with heightened safety risks and the logistical challenges of bussing over 300 children to either Woodland or Heards Ferry, make it clear that closing Spalding Drive Elementary School is not a viable or responsible option. These findings, supported by a representative traffic study, emphasize that the closure would impose unnecessary hardships on families and the community. For the well-being of students, parents, and the district as a whole, Spalding Drive Elementary must remain open.

CONCLUSION

In the face of contradictory enrollment projections, flawed data interpretations, and a building condition rating that remains firmly “good,” closing Spalding Drive Elementary is neither logical nor beneficial. Spalding is one of the few schools in Sandy Springs operating near its optimal capacity and delivering exceptional academic outcomes, especially for students who most need additional support. The thorough analysis conducted by the community, supported by credible evidence and open dialogue, reveals that this closure does not meaningfully reduce excess capacity, save significant money, or improve the region’s long-term outlook. Instead, it risks pushing more families away from Fulton County Schools, undermining public confidence, and wasting the district’s substantial recent investments in Spalding’s facility and infrastructure.

A well-considered approach, one that preserves high-performing schools, truly addresses the district’s capacity challenges, and embraces authentic community engagement, will help ensure the long-term viability and excellence of public education in Fulton County. We stand ready to partner with the Board and FCS, not only to keep Spalding open but to work collaboratively on practical, data-driven solutions that can restore trust, retain families, and secure a stable, thriving future for all students. By welcoming our input, harnessing community expertise, and pursuing sustainable plans that put children first, the Board can reaffirm its commitment to effective stewardship, educational equity, and the shared success of every school in our community.

For questions or follow ups, please feel free to contact us directly. Visit our website for more data and information. We welcome your inquiries and appreciate your partnership!

Email: contact@savesde.com

Website: www.saveSDE.com

Appendix

Speeches and Letters of Support

The following are speeches given at FCS Public Comment or Letters of Support from individuals and/or businesses, all provided to the Committee To Save Spalding.

Julia Bernath – Former FCS School Board President

Dear Board Members and Dr. Looney,

I know you have received information from many citizens about the possibility of closing Spalding Drive Elementary School. I understand the district's reasons behind this proposal, but I wanted to give you some food for thought as you entertain this idea. I apologize for the length of this email, but I have many ideas and options for your consideration! You will see me using "we" frequently, because even though I am no longer a board member, Fulton is still my district, my heart, and my home.

First, the big picture for Fulton County Schools. I understand we are looking at a drop in enrollment across the district and across the nation. One thing Fulton County has not had to focus on over the last 20+ years is marketing ourselves to our communities. As demographics have changed and we are now in a declining mode, I would suggest that the district should consider mounting a campaign for our schools and all the wonderful opportunities offered in Fulton. Local communities who love their schools would benefit from the expertise of our Communications Department in rebranding the district and supporting the schools who want to work to win back families from private schools and home schools. Engaged parents and community members would then happily do the heavy lifting!

I have always been told that students who enter our pre-K program tend to be more successful moving on into kindergarten, and we are limiting ourselves as a district by not petitioning the State DOE to allow additional pre-K classrooms, especially when we have waiting lists at many of our schools, including Spalding. I understand pre-K classrooms do not offer the same amount of FTE funds, but getting families in the door in pre-K often leads to them remaining in the school, so for a community like Spalding, with many young families moving into that area, opening up more pre-K classrooms could be the catalyst that propels their enrollment in the next few years.

Over the years, the district has discussed offering choice options to our students, through such ideas as Theme Schools (Arts, STEM/STEAM, Design Thinking Campuses, Technology,

Dual Language Immersion), additional Magnet Schools (particularly as feeders to our magnet high schools), and the list goes on.

The community vibe is that the decision to close Spalding has already been made. I hope that is not true. I am one of the people in the district who does not understand the sense of urgency to jump in and close Spalding without first having a long runway to gain community input and maybe come up with an innovative idea that could re-engage families. Fulton has always been a leader in the concept of innovation, so why would this decision be an exception?

The Sandy Springs community is thrilled to see the rebuilding of North Springs, and our parent leaders have just come up for air after working for years with board members to ensure the rebuild would happen. We in the community look forward to opening this new school and reinvigorating the families around public education. Closing Spalding before North Springs families can get back on track in this new school could cause a ripple effect as elementary families now look to other options beyond our public schools, which could potentially reduce the populations at both Sandy Springs Charter Middle School and at North Springs Charter High School.

Although construction growth in the city has slowed, we have at least one apartment complex being built that would be a feeder for Spalding, and while it won't be immediately occupied, waiting a couple of years could also have an impact on Spalding's enrollment.

Spalding was built with a much smaller capacity than the current model in Fulton County, so of course their enrollment will be less, but looking at percentages, this little neighborhood school could actually be in better shape than many schools in the district. Their performance numbers are good, which indicates their students are receiving the quality of education expected in our district. The dedication of their staff is well-known in the community, and we often see administrators and teachers at community events, such as the SSEF Lightning Road Race, Rotary, and the SSEF STEAM Showcase. Because of their dedication, Spalding is often the winner of the greatest participation at community events, and the parent leaders in the community during this decade have been and continue to be Spalding parents.

Fulton County Schools has prided itself in the number of successful charter school we have in the district. When a school starts to flounder, typical practice has been to shorten their renewal time from 5 years to 3 years, in order to allow them to try to correct their missteps, before denying renewal of their charter. Shouldn't our own schools be given this same consideration? The Spalding families have some great ideas on how to help boost enrollment. Allowing them the time to see if their plans can come to fruition should not be

a burden for the school district to grant. Giving them time would also decrease the burden for the staff, since redistricting is already in progress in South Fulton, and the district typically only looks at redistricting for one area of the county at a time.

The 1990s was the last time Fulton experienced a drop in enrollment that caused consolidation, much of which was in Sandy Springs. Fulton County closed four elementary schools and sold the property. Less than five years after the last school was closed and sold, the Sandy Springs area needed TWO additional elementary schools. I would hate to see the district fall prey to this poor foresight once again.

Please engage the community in conversations (maybe even a task force!) to seek a solution beyond closing Spalding Elementary School. I think they will surprise you with their energy, ideas, and enthusiasm, and their plans could be a model the other areas of the district could use to help return families to public schools.

Thank you for your time and your dedication to the students and staff of Fulton County Schools.

Sincerely,

Julia

Julia C. Bernath

Deborah Silcox, State Representative



DEBORAH SILCOX
REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 53
6300 Powers Ferry Rd.
Suite 600, #177
Atlanta, GA 30339
(404) 657-1803 (OFFICE)
Deborah.silcox@house.ga.gov

House of Representatives

18 CAPITOL SQUARE, SW
COVERDELL LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, SUITE 408-A
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334

STANDING COMMITTEES:
MARTOC- Chairman
Judiciary Non-Civil- Vice Chairman
Judiciary
Public Health
Urban Affairs

September 15, 2024

Dear President Dove, Dr. Morancie, and other members of the Fulton County School Board,

I am writing to you today to express my serious concerns for the potential closing of Spalding Drive Elementary School. I have fond memories of growing up in Sandy Springs and riding my bike to school at Spalding Drive Elementary. Two of my nieces, Katherine and Audrey Balkcom, are also alums. As a legislator, I have read to the preschoolers there for Georgia Pre-K Week twice. It is a well-established school in a very established neighborhood.

I have heard from a number of my constituents that they moved to this neighborhood specifically to attend this school. As I am sure you are aware, it is very disruptive to children and parents to switch schools. Friendships with classmates and teachers are lost for the students that must relocate and commuting routines must be completely rearranged.

With the success and reputation of Spalding Drive as a school, many families are moving into the surrounding neighborhoods. Pre-K lottery applications are up substantially over the last three years; there were approximately thirty-four children on the in- district wait list and over 100 on the out of district wait list. Open enrollment for Fulton County will begin in the 2025-2026 school year, and the construction of the new North Springs High School will further encourage more families to send their children to Spalding Drive Elementary. The current enrollment is consistent with low turnover. School leaders believe that the declining enrollment is only a temporary challenge.

I know that the building is old, but is there a way it could be renovated? North Springs High School was remodeled several times before building a new building.

I know and respect that these decisions are hard to make in your position, but I certainly hope that you will give all the families and alums of Spalding Drive Elementary thoughtful attention to preserve the culture and success of a wonderful neighborhood school.

Sincerely,

Honorable Deborah Silcox
State Representative, HD 53
Georgia General Assembly

Susie Greenberg, Candidate For State House



On Sept. 10, the Fulton County School Board recommended closing Spalding Drive Elementary next school year, triggering redistricting for seven Sandy Springs elementary schools. Although a final decision won't come until February, I believe this recommendation was made hastily and without considering its broader impacts.

Spalding Drive Elementary serves 349 students, and parents are struggling to access the necessary data to contribute meaningfully to the redistricting process. This lack of transparency raises concerns over special needs programs, teaching staff, and feeder school alignment. Closing the school would also worsen traffic congestion by sending students outside their neighborhood.

There are solutions, like expanding open enrollment next year. The Pre-K lottery program has seen increased applicants, with 34 children on the in-district waitlist and over 100 on the out-of-district waitlist. If enrollment is low, why aren't these children being admitted?

Additionally, the school's successful special education program and the rebuilding of North Springs High, its primary feeder, make keeping Spalding open a smart decision.

Public schools play a critical role in building communities, bringing people from diverse backgrounds together. As someone with firsthand experience in Fulton County public schools, I know their value in shaping the workforce of tomorrow.

Our community deserves time to explore alternatives that don't compromise education quality for current and future students. We need more investment in underfunded public schools and a reversal of voucher programs that divert public funds to private schools. Closing Spalding Drive Elementary is not the answer.

Susie Greenberg
Candidate, State House District 53
404-594-1243

Rhonda Smith – President of Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods



Fulton County School Board Members,

In this time of uncertainty and potential change for Spalding Drive Elementary and other Elementary Schools Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods asks you to limit disruptive changes for our youngest students. For the sake of the continuity of the educational experiences of our community's children you have options that are less disruptive than closure of Spalding Drive Elementary. We ask that in January you vote NO to bringing the matter of a closure to any vote in February. Should you decide to move forward with the February vote please vote NO to the closure of Spalding Drive Elementary.

Alternatively, defer your vote by 5 years to decide if there will be a closure of Spalding Drive Elementary. This allows for; the impact of Covid to sufficiently pass, school choice to demonstrate the draw Spalding creates from the broader community, the completion of North Springs High School and the apartment complex under construction at Dalrymple and Roswell Rd. All will have positive impacts on enrollment.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, the effects of which still linger, the closure of that which is now a beacon of consistency would have a profound negative impact on young minds and the educational future of our youngest learners. The consistent positive impact that Spalding Drive Elementary has had on its students and community is felt in every level of student ability and across all cultural and socioeconomic lines.

Parents are choosing Spalding for their children when they have other options. They support the teacher and administrator efforts every day. This support is evident in the levels of achievement of Spalding and the high levels of parent involvement in the school.

Sandy Springs is enjoying popularity and is drawing new and young families making the age complexion of the citizenry trend younger as families buy, build and improve homes in neighborhoods Spalding serves and across the city. The draw centers around Spalding Drive Elementary as a high performing school that is the critical link to the North Springs High School feeder system. It serves a breadth of students of every economic strata and does it better than other schools in the cluster.

Closing Spalding Drive Elementary risks degrading the viability of public education and the loss of parent choice creates a likelihood that they would lean towards private instead of public school for their children.

Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods is asking you to make the least disruptive choice which is to vote No to a closure of Spalding Drive Elementary. This choice is the best choice for the sake of the community's children. Stability in our children's educational pathways ensures a bright and successful future for them. It also bears proof to the quality of that which your educators bring to the Fulton County Schools system as student achievements demonstrate the success of teacher efforts.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ronda Smith
Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods
President / Zoning Chair

Emily Faucette – PTO President of High Point Elementary

Members of the Board and Dr. Looney, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Emily Faucette. My address is 578 Glenforest Rd. I am a former teacher, current parent, and PTO President of High Point Elementary. I stand before you as a concerned member of this community, deeply invested in the well-being and future of Spalding and the entire city of Sandy Springs. I know that all of us share the goal of providing the best education possible for our students, but closing Spalding is not the solution to the challenges we face. In fact, closing Spalding would have profound and lasting negative effects, not only on the students but on our entire community.

Let me take you back to the early 2000s when Lake Forest was built. Back then, I was teaching Kindergarten at High Point. We went from 9 Kindergarten classes down to 5 after Lake Forest opened. We lost almost 100 students in just our grade level alone. It was one of the most challenging things to go through as an educator. Teachers were asked to volunteer to leave High Point to help open Lake Forest. Most were forced to leave because they were the last hired. I was lucky enough to make the cut to stay where I wanted to be, but I can tell you that it took YEARS for our school to find a new normal. Beloved staff members were no longer around to collaborate with. Students were sad their friends had moved to another school. It disrupted our morale to our core.

Beyond the immediate effects on students and staff, the closure of Spalding would have long-term consequences for our community. Schools are the heart of any neighborhood, and when they close, it's not just the building that is affected—it's the social fabric of the area. Families may be less likely to settle down in a city that has seen its schools close. I'd like for history to stop repeating itself. We all know that the possibility of needing a brand new school in just a few years is highly likely, just as it's always happened in the past. Please break the cycle of bad decisions and give Spalding the gift of time. As Sandy Springs taxpayers who give 38% of our tax dollars to Fulton County schools, I urge you to consider the opportunity cost at this moment versus five years down the road. Sandy Springs isn't abundant in available land. We need to hold on to what's ours and problem solve how to make what we have better.

I stand before you today not just to highlight the negative effects, but also to propose solutions—ones that can help Spalding thrive and contribute positively to our district.

One of the most powerful ways we can help Spalding grow is by giving them the freedom to stand out and provide unique educational offerings. I believe that allowing them to pursue a STEM certification would make a significant difference. STEM education is in high demand, and families today are increasingly seeking schools that offer a rigorous, forward-thinking curriculum. By making Spalding a certified STEM school, we would not only

increase its appeal to prospective families, but we would also prepare their students for the future job market. It would give Spalding a unique identity and a reputation that could draw new families to them.

Another step we can take is to engage directly with prospective families. We have a wealth of talent and experience in this community, and it's time to tap into that. Hosting regular prospective parent coffees or school tours is one way to engage with families who may not know much about Spalding. These informal events provide parents with the chance to meet the teachers, hear about the school's programs, and ask questions. We can highlight the positive aspects of Spalding—its dedicated staff, its close-knit community, and its academic successes. Word of mouth can be a powerful tool, and when parents feel personally connected to the school, they are more likely to recommend it to others. We've had great success with this at High Point. Several current families will tell you that it was the parent coffee or the school tour that solidified their decision to go public. The Spalding community has done a great job engaging local businesses and organizations in this process thus far. If we all work together, we can create a buzz around their school that attracts new families and helps to build enrollment.

Lastly, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention our shortage of Pre-K classrooms throughout Sandy Springs. We are seriously lacking affordable Pre-K education in our area. As we all know, many families who are forced to go private at Pre-K simply don't return to public education. Those who are not as fortunate don't attend school until Kindergarten, putting them behind their peers from the start. Let's work together to lobby for additional Pre-K classrooms to give our kids the much needed foundation they deserve. Also, keeping Spalding open alleviates the headache of relocating the 2 Pre-K and 2 preschool SPED classes they currently have.

I urge you all to vote NO to closing Spalding. Instead, let us come together as a community—teachers, parents, local businesses, and district leaders—and focus on the many opportunities available to help Spalding thrive. By pursuing STEM certification, engaging directly with prospective families, and leveraging the collective strength of our community, we can ensure that Spalding remains a vital and valuable part of our educational landscape.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ginny Conrad – Special Education

Prepared by:

Ginny Conrad, FCS Stakeholder - Current and Prospective Parent

Learning Zone 4, Spalding Drive Elementary (Woodland Elementary Zone)

6835 Lisa Lane, Sandy Springs, 30338 - ginnymconrad@gmail.com - 941.661.8540

The Urgent Need to Preserve Spalding Drive Elementary: A Special Education & School Choice Perspective

Prepared Remarks

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Ginny Conrad, I live in the Branches Community at 6835 Lisa Lane, 30338, and I am a parent to a child attending Spalding Drive Elementary in the special ed Kindergarten. I also live in the Woodland school zone and have a prospective preschool student for the 2025-2026 school year.

I'm here today to ask you to reconsider the closing of Spalding Drive Elementary on the basis of new data and information not factored into the classroom allocation model. All of my sources for information are provided in your packet today and include recently published studies from the CDC and NIH, the Department of Education, and several other sources.

This data points to higher classroom needs, higher enrollment numbers, and the need for balance of special programs throughout the learning zone.

The first data points I want to share are on COVID's impacts on special education - and how this impact will be echoed for years - beyond the District's current projections.

COVID's Impact on Child Find is Understated

A recent study suggests that nearly 20% of elementary school-aged students missed identification for special education services between March 2020 and March 2022. ¹

These students who have entered the school system since, [covid] missed the crucial opportunity to receive early intervention services. As a result our schools are working to overcome the gap in adequate support staff to keep up with these students' emotional and behavioral needs.

Additionally, the obligations of the District to those who missed identification altogether is far less clear. *(And understandably so with the pandemic's impact and the limited resources)*

Diagnosis and Special Education Enrollment is Surging

Recent data highlights a dramatic increase in diagnosis like autism, ADHD, and other learning disabilities - due to impacts of the pandemic, a shrinking stigma, and better identification.* Autism rates have tripled in recent years and continue to rise - and these students often require a self-contained classroom of 8-13 students depending on placement.³

Between 2014 and 2023, special education enrollment **rose from 6.5 million to 7.5 million, even as public school enrollment fell by more than 400,000**. Even more telling, that number jumped from 7.3 to 7.5 million in the last year alone and represents the highest number ever.⁴

Nationally, these students make up **15.2% of the public school student population** and the vast majority go to regular schools, with **just 5% enrolled** in specialized schools, private schools, or other types of programs.⁵

Increased diagnosis and the need for more classrooms, IEP's, and special education services are imminent.

You're Probably Thinking...

Fulton County Schools Takes this Data Into Consideration

However, nationwide models for forecasting resources needed are not only unreliable - the models haven't been updated in two decades. This points to a much larger issue, not the fault of our District.⁶

An early look at **new special education datasets reveals** massive inconsistencies in how many children states are identifying as needing services. In fact, **Georgia ranks 36th in the nation** with just 8.7 percent of the population served by the IDEA.⁷ (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

Federal law mandates children served under the IDEA can access education in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment.

Within Learning Zone 4...

We are **not meeting our State Targets** for Preschool or School-Aged children being served in the least restrictive environment per the most recent annual report and by closing

schools Spalding Drive Elementary, we put our most vulnerable students at risk of this falling even further.⁸

Spalding Drive Elementary carries the highest load of these students with nearly 17% of their student population who have a disability.**

My home school, Woodland, on the other hand, only has a disability population of 8% and **has claimed they will end some of these programs if the redistricting moves forward.*****

I understand they may not have the authority to make these decisions, but an email sent on September 17th from the PTO stated that *“This decision would eliminate their preK program as well as early intervention and special needs programs.”*

Our son is thriving at Spalding Drive Elementary thanks to well-trained, caring teachers who will go above and beyond for their students. Zach skips into school everyday, happy to be there and learning. He’s achieving the same grades as his peers in regular classrooms. This is what the least restrictive environment looks like for him.

It is critical for our school district to proactively plan and allocate resources to meet these growing needs of our students, not diminish them. We need to be proactive in considering this data in the Classroom Allocation model instead of it costing our students and our tax payers later on.



[Resources Linked Here](#)

Dr. Aja Burks – School-based Therapist

Dr. Aja Burks 124 River Park Drive NW Sandy Springs I have 2 children 2nd and 3rd at Spalding Drive Elementary.

Good evening, members of the school board. My name is Dr. Aja Burks, and I come before you today as a counselor educator, a former school-based therapist, and, most importantly, a concerned parent. I'm here to advocate for keeping Spalding Drive Elementary open. A decision that carries profound implications not only for our children's education but also for their mental health and overall well-being.

When my family moved to this area, it was with the hope of finding a community and a school environment where my children could thrive. My son's first year at our amazing sister school, Heard's Ferry Elementary was a difficult one. Attending a large school, he struggled to find his place and was often overlooked in the crowd. He was diagnosed with ADHD, a diagnosis that carries significant implications, particularly for Black children. Too often, these labels can result in lowered expectations, misinterpretation of behavior, and missed opportunities for growth and learning.

But when we moved into the Spalding Drive school zone, everything changed. In this smaller, more intimate setting, my son received the attention and support he needed to thrive. The educators at Spalding saw past the label to his true potential. They recognized his brilliance, nurtured his talents, and now, he's excelling in the TAG program. This transformation is not just a testament to my son's hard work but also to the power of small, community-focused schools that prioritize understanding and supporting the whole child.

As a former school-based therapist, I've seen firsthand the impact of school consolidations on childhood mental health. Large schools can exacerbate feelings of isolation and overwhelm, especially for students who may already struggle with anxiety, attention, or learning differences. When children feel lost in the shuffle, their sense of belonging, a critical factor in academic and social success, can erode. Spalding Drive offers something unique: a nurturing environment where every child is known, valued, and given the opportunity to succeed.

Beyond size, Spalding's specialty programs, like STEM, and close-knit community are irreplaceable. These programs are not just academic but holistic, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and a love for learning. Schools like Spalding Drive are where the seeds of lifelong success are planted, where children are encouraged to dream big and are given the tools to achieve those dreams.

I urge the board to consider the voices of parents and the community in this decision. The families who have chosen Spalding Drive did so because it aligns with their values and

priorities for their children's education. We have data to support this. A decision of this magnitude deserves a collaborative approach, one that includes transparent communication and meaningful input from those most affected... our families and our children.

I also ask that you slow down the process. Decisions made in haste often overlook critical factors and unintended consequences. Let's take the time to thoroughly assess the potential impacts on our students, their mental health, and their educational outcomes.

Spalding Drive Elementary is more than just a school. It's a cornerstone of our community, a place where children are not just educated but truly seen. Keeping this school open is not just an investment in our children's futures but in the future of our entire community.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. I am hopeful that together, we can find a solution that prioritizes the well-being and success of every child in our district.

Phillip Draa – Director of Analytics

Good Evening Board Members, Thank you for your time. I recognize you're being inundated with community outreach, and we deeply appreciate your attention to this crucial matter. My name is Phillip Draa. My wife and I live at 560 Cambridge Way. We are in the Spalding Drive attendance-zone and I have a current 1st grader there. We have two other future Spalding Tigers, with the youngest born just 2 weeks ago. I am a product of Georgia public schools and as a Director of Analytics at a Fortune 10 company, I approach this issue both as a concerned parent and as someone who seeks data-driven decision making. I'm hopeful in the next months that you'll find the data, or lack thereof, proves closing Spalding would be a mistake for our district. According to our FCS Balanced Scorecard school profile, 42% of Spalding's Population are Economically Disadvantaged. Taking the last available state-wide data from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, among the 140 Georgia elementary schools with similar economically disadvantaged populations between 35% and 50%, Spalding Drive ranked #1 in Average CCRPI with a score of 96.2%. To be clear: you are considering closing the highest-performing elementary school in its demographic cohort across the entire state. The financial implications obviously also require careful analysis. Spalding supports a high population of Students with Disabilities - at 19%, which puts us in the 96th percentile of Georgian Elementary Schools. We rank around the 90th percentile in TAG student percentages vs the state and also have a population of ESOL students and these special programs directly lead to a higher Per Pupil Expenditure. Upon closure, the vast majority of our relatively high PPE will not be savings, only cost transfers to a new school. Since 2020, Spalding has had many major facilities upgrades already paid for by the county. We've requested from the county what they are actually projecting to save with the school closure from the few redundant admin positions and have still not received an answer. Financial Efficiency is more than just costs. Outcomes must be considered as part of the equation. Early Intervention programs in Elementary school, especially when high results are achieved, is a long-term tax savings and societal benefit. The Brookings Institution's research confirms that strong general education programs like Spalding's are crucial for cost-effective special education service delivery and disrupting successful integrated special ed programs typically increases costs at receiving schools. Spalding's smaller size, close-knit community, and high stability lead to exceptional outcomes that larger schools have difficulty achieving. Our high percentage of Special Program population makes Spalding an outlier which does not fit well into the county's several capacity models. Which is why our Classroom Requirement by FTE showed Spalding at full capacity and ineligible for Change of School Assignment. But in the same year, under GADOE square footage capacity models we are so far under capacity we warrant closure. Why then is the county using CR Need again for cluster redistricting

modeling after closure. Are our schools full or empty? The county continues to leave us with more questions than answers in this seemingly ever-changing metric. What the metrics underscore is that Spalding is more than just a building - it's a community and proven model of school excellence. As a people leader, I know firsthand how difficult it is to create and maintain a culture where everyone succeeds, this includes both the county employees and our children. Scattering this community and changing the environment means starting over, with no guarantee of replicating these results. I'll conclude with a couple questions I keep asking myself and that we've posed to the FCS planning committee without sufficient answers. - Why are we closing a school that provides disproportionately great results for economically disadvantaged kids and students with disabilities, some of our most vulnerable Georgians. - Why are we closing the only growing enrollment school in the district when we have a declining enrollment problem? - This is a time of great change. New post-pandemic trends, newly-released county strategy, new policies set to enact this year. Why not take time to evaluate impacts and stabilized data to help us make truly informed decisions and policies. - Can you honestly say you have no doubts that this is the best outcome for our students and the best use of tax-payer dollars? This closure process has been very rushed, very confusing for the community and with all the changes, I believe the prudent response would be to vote to prevent Spalding's closure, further evaluate data, trends and policies and to work with us as engaged parents and our city planning to solve enrollment and funding issues in our cluster

James Ryu – Multi-Generational Viewpoint

Hello Fulton county board of education,

Thank you for the time to speak today. My name is James Ryu, I live at 155 Seville Chase in Sandy Springs and I currently have two children who attend Spalding Drive elementary school with a prospective rising pre-Kindergartner. I myself am a proud Spalding Drive alumni from the class of 1995 whose mural still hangs proudly in the gym my kids run around in. Many people say that they bought their home to be in the Spalding attendance zone and I don't think anyone can dispute that is true in my case. I have fond and crystal clear memories of my teachers and experience at Spalding, my children look through my yearbooks on a regular basis and they tell me that they want to do the same thing with their kids in the way way way future.

I have worked for the past 10 years at Delta Air Lines in Sales right down the street managing a \$500M travel agency commission budget. We're all here because of low enrollment and alleged underutilization of an asset? Try working at an airline during covid.. we know a thing or two about a decline in usage of a service as demand disappeared overnight during covid as the business model and existence of travel agencies were threatened. You know what we did not do, hoard every penny of that budget and hang them out to dry despite losing \$40M EVERY SINGLE DAY during 2020. We made "good faith payments" and had a rock-solid leadership vision and worked with our stakeholders to make sure we BOTH made it to the other side and the travel agency community has not forgotten that as we have achieved record levels of market share in this post pandemic period. When we identify smaller agencies maybe slightly more expensive economics with exceptional performance, we don't try to cut them off, we understand what they're doing well and make them a model for others.

Transparency throughout the process was the most important thing. As a point of contrast, we as parents have gotten differing answers on what models have been used to determine recommendations for closure and whether or not Spalding will be on the open enrollment list in December, just weeks before a vote on whether to open or close. I know according to one model, pre-K enrollment is excluded but the waiting list is 2x as long as available capacity, that does not sound like a school with waning demand. Anecdotally our small 40 home neighborhood had 2 school aged children when we moved there in 2017 and now has 12 children that will be school aged in the next 3 years. Per 2023 census data, the Sandy Springs birth rate is 30% higher than that of the rest of Fulton county with a vibrant housing market.

This particular meeting comes at a very appropriate time to bring up this next topic. If you live in Fulton county, last week homeowners across the county cut quite a large check for

their yearly property taxes. Sharing a humungous sample size of exactly one, my property taxes in Fulton county have gone up nearly 40% since 2017, 58% of that bill goes towards Fulton county schools. Many people like to say “public school is free” but my bank account begs to differ. We as taxpayers pay for a service and getting less for more money is something we’ve come to expect at the grocery store and at restaurants but not our educational provider.

As I mentioned, I and many of my friends are fulton county schools alumni, many have returned “to their roots” to raise their families because of the positive experiences we had growing up and giving back to the communities, businesses, and organizations that raised us in a kind of virtuous cycle. The thing about a cycle is that it can be broken. We all have coworkers and friends who ask how our experiences are in the cities that we live and where they should consider moving and I don’t want the response to be “not fulton county, they care more about optimizing costs than education.”

I know I alluded a lot to my public employer in my remarks but education is not a publicly traded fortune 500 business, cost and efficiency ARE important to be good stewards of funds BUT your mission statement is that “Students Come First.” According to current policy, educational performance is not a metric for identifying school for closure but that does not mean you cannot take that into consideration when casting your vote. Let’s work together to make Spalding Drive Elementary successful now and into the future. Thank you.

Stephen Bell – Open Enrollment + Give Us a Chance!

Good evening. I have watched hours of school board meetings recently, and I have seen that this board cares deeply about the education and safety of the students in Fulton County. It is evident that to this board, academics matter. Over the past 5 years, Covid and the new state laws around open enrollment amplify the planning difficulties for this school system.

Last year, this board adopted a policy that reflected the longstanding reality of our community in Sandy Springs that where a student lives does not limit what school that student attends. In Sandy Springs, students have been open enrolling into the over 30 nearby private schools for 50 years.

Last February, FCS policy, utilizing the Classroom Allocation Model, stated that Spalding, with enrollment of 348 students was full and could not accept any students from households outside our district evaluating private school open enrollment. Now, using the new policy, with 351 students, FCS recommended its closure. How can this board consider such a recommendation as complete when it comes a mere 7 months later and the new policy isn't even in effect? How can Woodland Elementary be so far over capacity that 5 Temporary Educational Units have been in place since 2012? How could a policy place 5 ESOL classrooms in trailers outside the security perimeter at Woodland, while Spalding Drive, only a mile away, must be shutdown? Those students deserve better.

The students within the FCS system are unique individuals enduring many challenges, whether it's building security, food security, housing security, learning English, or Special Needs. All of that is before you ever get to why FCS exists, which is to educate these babies. The culture of a school is unique and a reflection of the community, the students, the teachers, and the administration. At Spalding Drive, over 40% of the school is economically disadvantaged and the Mobility rate is over 25%. Dr. Looney, you said yourself last year that Mobility rate is the single greatest challenge to educational growth, and by our stats every four years, we turn over the entire student population. And yet, year over year, before, during, and after Covid, Spalding Drive has consistently educated all the children in the school. The inclusive culture of Spalding Drive provides a positive peer pressure on the children that success is expected. How can this board sit here and tell the community that even when a school does everything right supporting its community, that's not enough?

Last year, I watched Dr. Bates describe her efforts to create opportunities for all the students at Conley Hills. She talked about using smaller groups and how specialized instruction was possible because her school building has available rooms for these smaller breakout groups. This board celebrated how these smaller learning groups create

better learning opportunities for those students. How then does a school like Spalding Drive, which is using all available classrooms to deliver smaller break out groups for its students get penalized? How can this board tell the community that at Conley Hills, small break outs and facility utilization is key to supporting these students, but grounds for closure at Spalding?

I ask that in February, you give Spalding Drive a chance to create an educational zone of opportunity at Spalding, tailored to our broader community in Sandy Springs through the new open enrollment. The current kindergarten class size is the largest in a decade and is the first post-covid class. I ask that you give this community a chance to create an educational zone of opportunity at Spalding that makes Spalding into the destination FCS school for northern Sandy Springs so they can experience what my three children experience currently at Spalding. Help us make Spalding a model school to help solve for mobility, economic status, and other barriers to the kind of education FCS schools deliver all over this county.

Andrea Pearson – All Things Considered

My name is Andrea Pearson, 310 Westerhall Court, Sandy Springs Georgia. I am a resident of North Springs Neighborhood, and my son started pre-k at Spalding in August. My husband and I purchased our home 10 years ago, with the specific intent of sending our future child, years before his existence, to Spalding Drive. I was shocked to learn that so soon after being welcomed into the community that the school could be taken away from us. I am here to voice my fundamental objections to Fulton County's policy on closing and consolidation and the application of that policy to Spalding Drive.

Facilities

This factor does not support closing Spalding. It is undisputed that Spalding Drive is rated as Fair. Mr. Maloof said that the assessment of Fair is not actually a current assessment, but instead of a projection of the facilities condition in 5-7 years. Mr. Maloof also touted that even schools that are poor or very poor under Fulton County's standards are still well above what other school systems consider the norm. So being a Fair condition in the next 5-7 year certainly cannot justify closing a beloved community school.

Enrollment/Projections

Administration's theory is that enrollment is projected to decrease County-wide and as a solution wants to close Spalding. But the actual data does not support that theory for Sandy Springs. Ms. Jones Huff said at the September meeting that Springs elementary enrollment is projected to be relatively steady. Spalding is projected to only lose only 7 students, which is within the margin of error. So the massive loss of students, which is the theory behind these closures, does not hold true for Spalding. The real massive enrollment issues are in the North, which is projected to lose 717 students. But inexplicably, the County has decided to wait 5 years to address that problem. I have heard no rational, plausible explanation for treating Sandy Springs differently from the North. Dr. Looney mentioned kindergarten enrollment, but he admitted that the data could be a hiccup and they don't really know what it means yet. That is not solid ground on which to base a decision to close a school that has taught generations of students.

Fundamental problems with the Policy

The real issues are with the policy itself. Administration is considering closing a high performing, racially, ethnically, and economically diverse school and "academics are not part of this process." Mr. Maloof says that Fulton County provides a great education at all its schools. That is dismissive of every teacher, administrator, and student working hard for Spalding's high test scores. You judge them based on test scores every day, but you aren't going to consider academics when deciding whether or not to close their school? Fulton

County has everyone's attention. We have 2344 signatures on our petition against closing Spalding Drive. We are your constituents, you are the custodians of our tax dollars. We have spoken with a loud, clear, undivided voice. We do not want you to close Spalding Drive. If you close Spalding, you are going to be looking into the eyes of every one of us and sending one clear message: Fulton County, WHERE ACADEMICS DON'T MATTER. I think the fastest way to create an even bigger enrollment problem in this cluster is to send that kind of message and close a high performing academic institution like Spalding.

All we are asking you to do is to consider what is actually important: Consider academics, consider the children, teachers, and administrators, the community, tradition, consider a school's intrinsic value, all of which strongly justify keeping Spalding's doors open for years to come. At a minimum, give us the same time you are giving the North. There is absolutely no justifiable reason not to. As an aside, Fulton County is taking 4-6 weeks to give us documents in response to ORR requests for documents that should be readily available. That is not as fast as is reasonably practicable, and is severely hampering our ability to contest the administration's theories.

Taiwo Abimbola – We Need More Time

About me: good afternoon, my name is Taiwo Abimbola and I live at 7365 Brandon Mill Rd NW Sandy Springs, GA. I'm the mother of a 3rd grader at Spalding Drive Elementary School. I also have a 7th grader in Sandy Springs Middel School who attended Spalding from Pre-K to 5th grade.

I'd like to thank the members of this board for the opportunity to address you today. I'm proud to be represented by this board and by the leadership of this school district. These aren't just nice words because they're convenient. I say this because I've come to appreciate that in America, there are only a few things as important as the community. Knowing your neighbors, walking your child to school, and knowing that you can count on one another. This is why I reached out to Dr. Morancie and Dr. Looney on December 13th, 2023, to describe the safety issue with walking kids to Spalding without a crossing guard. I couldn't be more satisfied with the support from this board, FCS leadership and the City of Sandy Springs on the request for the crossing guard and I hope you will continue to support us with that request. This is why I've come to this board knowing how committed you are to investing in our children's future and the well-being of our community.

About SDE: When I learned in September, 2024, that Spalding Drive Elementary was being considered for closure. I, like every Spalding Parent was taken by surprise by this announcement because we were given 6 months until the board votes on the issue. I've had many unsettling nights (I'm sure like most Spalding parents), contemplating what I think could have been different with the school closure plan presented by FCS. Why six months? Could FCS have engaged with our community earlier? Why wasn't the community presented with a holistic plan that considers Spalding in the context of a strategic plan to ensure the continued vibrancy of our neighborhood and ensures good stewardship of our tax dollars?

I wonder whether we could have had a different approach where the community was consulted 2-3 years in advance. Closing Spalding now will only send more parents out of the FCS system, weakening enrollment for our cluster of schools into the future, and weakening the resiliency of our community. Surely, this outcome is not what the board wants for our community!

What if we had a plan that considers the well-being of our community. Let's start with the current plan to renovate North Springs High School with an estimated cost to the county of 175 million dollars. How can we ensure we have a vibrant public school system for the residents of Sandy Springs so we can justify our investment in North Springs? According to FCS, North Springs is estimated to decline in enrollment over the next 5 years. We should ensure that enrollment in the catchment area for North Springs remains strong. Let's work

with the community to understand reasons underlying the short-term trends that we're using to determine the threshold for school closures. As a feeder school for North Springs, Spalding parents want to work with FCS on a holistic solution that wouldn't just kick the can down the road one school closure at a time.

We need more time to develop a broader plan that will ensure our community continues to be attractive to future residents. Closing Spalding will NOT solve anyone's problem. In fact, it'll bring new problems for our community.

Thank you!

Sandy Springs Youth Sports



Dear Members of the Fulton County Board of Education,

My name is Colan Wheat, and I am the current President of Sandy Springs Youth Sports. I recently learned about the potential closing of Spalding Drive Elementary. Over 7 years ago, I took on the volunteer leadership position to Sandy Springs Youth Sports, and since my involvement in leadership at SSYS, I have seen a plethora of amazing kids at our park that have been students from Spalding Drive Elementary. After hearing about the closing of Spalding Drive Elementary, I instantly knew that our Youth Sports organization would be adversely affected by the decision to close Spalding Drive Elementary.

The school is not only a vital educational institution that helps define the character of our athletes, but a central part of our community. Many families connected to the school are regular consumers of local businesses, including SSYS, and the foundation of education and discipline to our athletes is crucial to our success as a youth sports organization. Again, if Spalding Drive Elementary closes, it's my belief that many of these families will leave the county (specifically, Sandy Springs) in search of schools that meet their needs, which would significantly impact the local economy, and more importantly, the quality of our sports organization.

I urge the board to reconsider this decision and explore alternatives that support both our children's education, their extracurricular activities, and the economic stability of our area. Three years ago, Sandy Springs Youth Sports was voted as the best Youth Sports Program in the Perimeter area, and it's my belief that the foundation given our kids from our local schools has helped build a program that is the envy of the city and the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to discuss this further if needed.

Sincerely,

Colan Wheat

President - Sandy Springs Youth Sports

513-490-7358

colanwheat@680thefan.com

TLC Preschool

Warm greetings Fulton County School Board,

I am writing in advocacy of revitalizing Spalding Drive Elementary. I live and work in Sandy Springs. I'm a local business owner and Fulton County community stakeholder. I operate a childcare that is a feeder preschool to Spalding.

As a community member who does **not** have a child at Spalding, I want to shed some light on the economic and **business impact** of closing a local school.

Our childcare shares many parents with Spalding, usually with an older child enrolled at the public school, and a younger child enrolled at our preschool. Our weekly tuition is \$450. The parents who attend our preschool are usually white collar workers like doctors, lawyers, bankers, and IT workers. In short, these are the well educated brains *and* bank accounts of Fulton County. They have the minds and means to relocate, or send their child to private school, if dissatisfied.

The geography of Spalding is key! Spalding is located in zip code 30328. This is adjacent to the wealthiest zip code in Georgia, 30327. Also, Spalding is located about 1 mile from the Cobb County district line. Parents choose Spalding because they are able to purchase a home with high property value *in Fulton*, yet send their children to a quality public school.

Closing Spalding will activate the Law of Unintended Consequences. These are outcomes that are not currently visible, but **will manifest**, and negatively impact the community, if Spalding closes.

- **Current parents will...**
 - enroll in private schools and vacate public schools entirely. (If parents pay childcares like us \$450 per week, they have the means to attend private school.)
 - sell their property at an all time high and move to East Cobb, Forsyth, Milton, etc. where they *can* attend a high quality public school.
 - *not* send their child to a low performing school like Ison or High Point Elementaries. Emptying Spalding will *not* fill High Point, Ison, or Lake Forest Elementaries.
- **Young prospective parents** shopping real estate in the Spalding area will find it is *not* family friendly and subsequently relocate.
- **Tax demographics will change.** If Spalding Elementary closes, the area homes will attract retirees, **not** families with school aged children. Retirees are *exempt* from school taxes. Fulton's tax base will drop.

Closing Spalding *pushes* tax dollars *out* of Fulton County. Closing Spalding incentivizes parents to move to East Cobb, Forsyth, or Milton counties which are experiencing explosive growth... and wealth. Spalding parents are well educated, well funded,... and poised to move upon your vote.

As seen at the Fulton County BOE meeting on 10.08.24, Spalding parents recruited Rep. Deborah Silcox to advocate on their behalf. This is not a "down and out" school without options. Spalding parents are lawyers and doctors with discretionary income to fundraise and donate to political causes... or send their children to private school... or relocate their families.

As a community stakeholder, I respectfully suggest...

- creating a "Revitalize Spalding" committee to brainstorm creative options to fill Spalding
- opening enrollment to Spalding from other schools
- asking the PTO to help fund any needed renovations. Spalding parents are willing and able to host fundraisers to see their children succeed.

The report advising Spalding close was a huge wake up call, and quite frankly, a welcome jolt that is revitalizing the PTO and community. A "yes" vote to *revitalize* Spalding keeps tax dollars, and families, in Fulton County.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration on this issue. We appreciate *your* service to our community.

-Shannon Gordon

TLC Preschool

--

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

www.TLCCHILDscaping.com



North Springs Neighborhood Association

To: Fulton County Schools Board of Education members

From: North Springs Neighborhood Association

Subject: Support for Spalding Drive Elementary and Concerns Regarding Proposed Closure

Dear Esteemed Board Members,

On behalf of the North Springs Neighborhood Association, we are writing to express our strong support for Spalding Drive Elementary (SDE) and to share our concerns about the proposed closure of this vital community institution.

As you may be aware, Spalding Drive Elementary serves not only the immediate area but also the broader North Springs community, extending far beyond its physical location. SDE has been a cornerstone of this community for generations, educating countless children whose families often return to the neighborhood to raise their own children and send them to the same beloved school. The presence of Spalding Drive Elementary is a significant selling point for homes in the area. We are repeatedly told that the quality of education and community spirit at Spalding is a major factor in why our neighborhood remains so desirable.

Spalding is More Than Just a School – It’s a Community: For many families, Spalding Drive Elementary is not just a school but a close-knit community that supports students both academically and emotionally. Closing the school would displace hundreds of students and fragment the community, disrupting their education and well-being.

Spalding Drive Elementary represents a diverse, inclusive, and high-performing environment that plays an essential role in fostering the growth of our neighborhood. This school is integral to the identity of our community and should be preserved.

Disrupting Education Hurts Students: We ask the Board to carefully consider the emotional strain this proposal is causing for students and parents alike. Studies have shown that school closures can have lasting mental health effects, similar to those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption caused by the closure of Spalding Drive Elementary could negatively impact the well-being of many young students.

Additionally, the closure of this school would likely have a significant effect on local property values, which could, in turn, reduce revenue for Fulton County Schools. Sandy Springs provides approximately 40% of the funding for the district, and any disruption in our

community could lead to a decrease in the resources available to support all schools in the area.

Closing Spalding is Shortsighted: While the building may be older, it is in no worse condition than other schools in the district. According to the district's own assessments, capital improvements could be made to modernize and maintain the facility instead of closing it entirely.

Moreover, the district must take into account the demographic trends in the North Springs neighborhood. We are seeing an influx of young families eager to send their children to Spalding Drive Elementary in the coming years. With the "COVID baby boom" creating a future surge in student enrollment, it is crucial that we maintain the capacity to meet this growing need.

We strongly urge the Fulton County Schools Board of Education to reconsider the proposed closure of Spalding Drive Elementary. This school is an invaluable part of our community and its closure would have far-reaching, negative consequences for both the families it serves and the wider neighborhood.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin Sparano, President

North Springs Neighborhood Association

Dear Members of the Board,

We are writing to express our strong support for keeping Spalding Drive Elementary School open. As both community members and local real estate professionals, we see firsthand how vital this school is to the families, property owners, and overall appeal of our neighborhood.

Elementary schools are the heart of their communities, and this school is no exception. Families move to this area specifically because of its reputation for excellent education, strong community involvement, and the accessibility of local schools. Closing Spalding could have far-reaching consequences, including a decline in property values and diminished interest in our area from potential homebuyers. Not to mention a mass exodus from the area and more importantly Fulton County.

As real estate advisors, we often work with families who prioritize neighborhoods based on the quality and proximity of schools. Spalding is frequently cited as a deciding factor in their decision to move here. It serves as a key selling point, creating demand and stability in our local housing market. A closure could negatively impact this dynamic, making it harder for homeowners to sell and attracting fewer families to the area.

Beyond its influence on property values, the school fosters a sense of connection and community that is irreplaceable. Schools like this one serve as gathering places for families and children, contributing to the overall livability and desirability of our neighborhood. Without it, the community risks losing this central pillar of engagement and support.

We urge you to carefully consider the long-term effects that closing the school would have on our community and economy. Keeping the school open not only supports the families it serves but also sustains the vibrant local market that makes this neighborhood a great place to live and raise a family.

Thank you for your time and dedication to our schools. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you would like additional insights into how this decision impacts the local real estate market and our community as a whole.

Sincerely,

Christin Coffin, Real Estate Advisor & Director of Business Development
Kristen Skebe, Managing Broker

The Sorted Sanctuary



Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed closure of Spalding Drive Elementary School. As a local business owner of The Sorted Sanctuary, a professional organizing and decorating business based right here in Sandy Springs, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that Spalding Drive Elementary has had on our community.

Spalding is not just a school—it is a cornerstone of our neighborhood. It has long been a gathering place where families connect, students thrive, and a sense of community is fostered.

Beyond its role in education, Spalding Drive Elementary serves as a hub for local engagement. As a business owner, I have witnessed how the school fosters relationships among families and strengthens the bonds within the neighborhood. The closure of Spalding would not only disrupt the lives of the families who rely on the school but would also leave a significant void in the community fabric.

Spalding's students and families frequently support local businesses like mine and the school community plays a vital role in helping local entrepreneurs succeed. The loss of Spalding would directly impact the vitality of our small business ecosystem, which depends on the tight-knit relationships and strong community support that schools like Spalding provide.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider this decision. Spalding Drive Elementary is more than just a school; it is an integral part of our community's identity. Its closure would not only affect the children and families who rely on it but would also have a ripple effect on local businesses and the broader Sandy Springs area.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope that you will take these concerns into account as you continue to deliberate on the future of Spalding Drive Elementary.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Buice

Owner, The Sorted Sanctuary

Sandy Springs, GA

becky@sortedsanctuary.com

Expressions in Motion Dance



Whitney Teyf - Artistic Director

PO BOX 1662

Tucker, Georgia 30085

(404) 993 4122

eimdance@gmail.com

To whom it may concern,

Expressions In Motion Dance after school program has been a part of the Spalding Drive Elementary community for four wonderful years. Currently Expressions In Motion Dance provides dance classes after school to many Spalding Drive Elementary students.

Spalding Drive Elementary is an amazing neighborhood school with an incredible community. Even as an after school vendor, Spalding Drive Elementary has brought us into their family, the support is always mutual. When walking through the hallways at Spalding Drive, it is easy to see that the students love coming to school and learning, the parent involvement is great, and the staff is an amazing team of teachers, administrators, and support professionals. I have seen the importance of having this small community school, as it has a large impact on shaping the lives of the children and fostering the growth of the community around it. Due to the size of the school, students are able to receive more individualized attention which in return creates greater abilities to learn and grow for the students success.

EIM Dance is honored to be a partner with Spalding Drive Elementary and we are hopeful to have this relationship with this wonderful school for many years to come. We hope you will consider the importance of community schools and their positive effects on the students and families lives.

Sincerely,

Whitney Teyf



220 Sandy Springs Circle, Ste 185
Sandy Springs, GA 30328
Phone (404)919-7219
Fax (470)490-0854

Dec 3, 2024

Dear Fulton County School Board,

I am writing as a Sandy Springs resident and business owner in support of Spalding Drive Elementary Charter School. I understand that the school is under consideration for closure, which could have negative consequences for my community and therefore my business and our patients.

It is clear that my patients that live in the Sandy Springs community love and support the school, many of them having children that were educated at Spalding Drive in the past and speak of the school and community fondly.

I hope the school board will consider the impacts on traffic and commute. With students who currently attend Spalding shifting to Heard's Ferry or Ison Springs, school buses and parents will be traveling further and on more major roads commuting children to school, creating more traffic for my staff and my patients. As an audiologist with a more senior patient demographic, convenience and ease of driving is a concern. Our patients make decisions about when they will schedule appointments and if they will schedule appointments based on traffic.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meryl Miller", is written over a faint circular stamp.

Dr. Meryl Miller

Audiologist

mmiller@clearworksaudiology.com

Dimora Designs



Dear Members of the Fulton County Board of Education,

I am Michelle Schiessle, owner of Dimora Designs near Spalding Drive Elementary. I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed closure of Spalding Drive Elementary.

The school is not only a vital educational institution, but a central part of our community. Many families connected to the school are regular customers of local businesses, including mine, and their support is crucial to our success. If Spalding Drive closes, I fear many of these families will leave the county in search of schools that meet their needs, which would significantly impact the local economy. The loss of these families would lead to reduced consumer spending, harming businesses and weakening the fabric of our community.

I urge the Board to reconsider this decision and explore alternatives that support both our children's education and the economic stability of our area. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to discuss this further if needed.

Sincerely,

Michelle Schiessle, President & Designer

Sandy Springs Resident for 10 years

Dimora Designs

Dimora-Designs.com

(941) 345-3789

About Going Places



Dear Members of the Board,

I'm writing to share my strong feelings about the proposed closure of Spalding Drive Elementary School. As a local business owner of About Going Places, located on Sandy Springs Circle for 28 years right here in Sandy Springs. I am also a mother of 3 children who were privileged enough to enjoy all the benefits of Spalding Drive Elementary and have seen firsthand how important Spalding is to our community.

Spalding isn't just a school—it's a vital part of our neighborhood. It's a place where families come together, kids grow, and a real sense of community is created.

Beyond just education, Spalding is a gathering spot for local families. As a business owner, I've noticed how the school helps build connections between families and strengthens the neighborhood. Closing Spalding would not only disrupt the lives of those who rely on the school, but it would also leave a huge hole in the heart of our community.

The families at Spalding are frequent supporters of local businesses like mine, and the school plays a key role in helping entrepreneurs like me thrive. Losing Spalding would hurt our small business community, which depends on the close-knit relationships and community support that schools like Spalding provide.

In short, I urge you to reconsider this decision. Spalding Drive Elementary is so much more than a school; it's an essential part of what makes our community special. Closing it wouldn't just affect the kids and families who count on it—it would have a ripple effect on local businesses and the wider Sandy Springs area.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my thoughts. I hope you'll keep these concerns in mind as you make your decision about Spalding Drive Elementary.

Sincerely,

Lauren Rubin

Owner, About Going Places

DATA & FIGURES

Disparities and Errors Figures

Figure 1: Current Redistricting Website with FAQ

Fulton County Schools
Where Students Come First

REPORT SAFETY CONCERNS | START YOUR CAREER! | RESET PASSWORD | I WANT TO... | Q

Home | Our District | Students & Families | Community | Departments | Board | News | Calendar

HOME > OPERATIONS > OPERATIONAL PLANNING > MAPPING AND REDISTRICTING > CURRENT REDISTRICTINGS

Current Redistrictings

Fall 2024

Fulton County Schools is conducting a series of community meetings in the fall of 2024 around proposed redistrictings in the South Fulton and Sandy Springs regions. For more information please click on the provided links below:

- [Sandy Springs elementary schools](#)
- [South Fulton elementary schools](#)

Operational Planning
6201 Powers Ferry Rd NW
Atlanta, GA 30339
Phone: 470-254-5540
planning@fultonschools.org

Change of School Assignment (COSA) Regarding Schools Potentially Impacted by a School Closure/Consolidation/Redistricting Plan

Per [FCBOE Policy JBCD](#), schools identified for redistricting will not be eligible as an "accepting school" for the Change of School Assignment process in the year in which they are being redistricted. However, if the School Board has not yet voted on the plan then the school(s) can be included on the list of accepting schools. Should the Board later vote to close/consolidate/redistrict the school(s), they will be removed from the list and families who selected the school(s) as a placement option will be assigned one of their other ranked choices. If the Board votes not to close/consolidate/redistrict, the schools will remain on the list and can be assigned as a placement option.

Map of All FCS Schools/Buildings

School Attendance Zones

Find Your School Using Your Home Address

School Feeder Patterns

Redistricting Process

Current Redistrictings

- Closure/Consolidation and Redistricting - Sandy Springs (Fall 2024)
- Closure/Consolidation and Redistricting - South Fulton (Fall 2024)

Previous Redistrictings

Figure 2: Redistricting Meeting 1 (October): Presented Classroom Need (Fall 2024), Slide 7. Equals CR Need -51

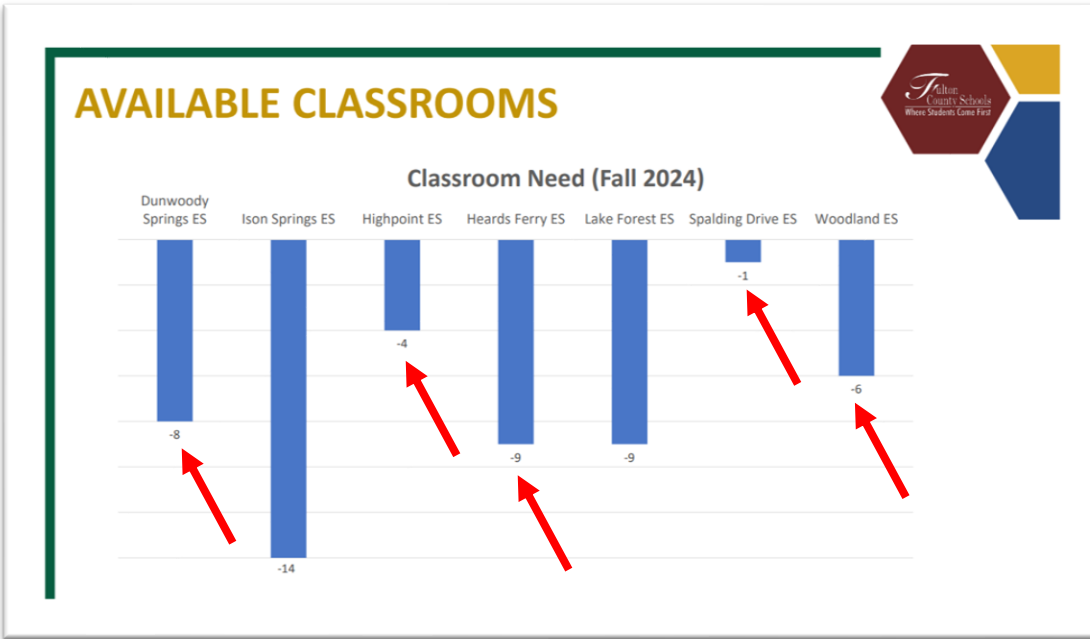


Figure 3: Redistricting Meeting 2 (November): Presented Classroom Need (Fall 2024), Slide 7. Equals CR Need -45

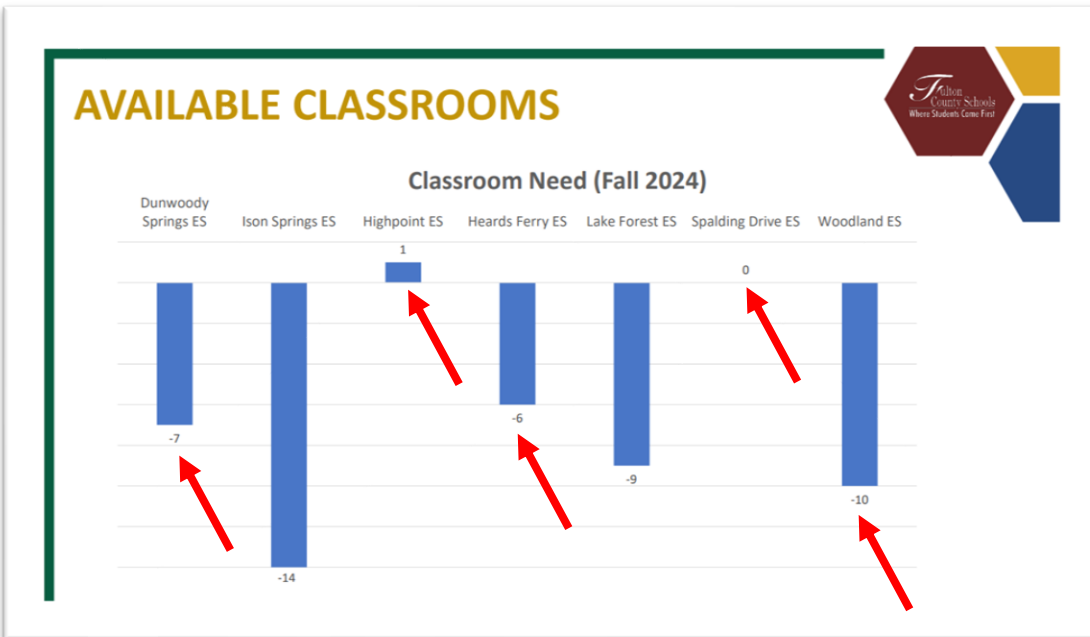


Figure 4: Redistricting Meeting 1: Presented FCA and EA Score, Slide 6

SPALDING DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL


- Opened in 1966, totaling 29,872 sq. ft.
- Classroom additions in 1967, 1988 & 1995, adding 53,290 sq. ft., currently 83,162 sq. ft.
- State capacity of 550 students and 37 full-size classrooms
- Rated “fair” in recent facility condition assessment
- Educational adequacy rated as “fair”

Figure 5: Redistricting Meeting 3: Presented FCA an EA Score, Slide 7

SPALDING DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Opened in 1966, totaling 29,872 sq. ft.
- Classroom additions in 1967, 1988 & 1995, adding 53,290 sq. ft., currently 83,162 sq. ft.
- State capacity of 550 students and 37 full-size classrooms
- Rated “poor” in recent facility condition assessment
- Educational adequacy rated as “excellent”

Figure 6: Redistricting Meeting 1: Requirements for School Closure, Slide 5



REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

- Instructional Program Impact
 - Student Placement (Attendance boundaries)
 - Special Programs/Course Offerings
- Facility Assessment
 - Condition and age of facilities
 - Energy conservation
 - Safety conditions
- Financial Impacts
 - Maintenance and plant operating costs
 - Transportation costs
 - Personnel costs
- Community Impact
 - Future use of school building and property

Future Development in Sandy Springs

Figure 7: Housing Construction in the Area

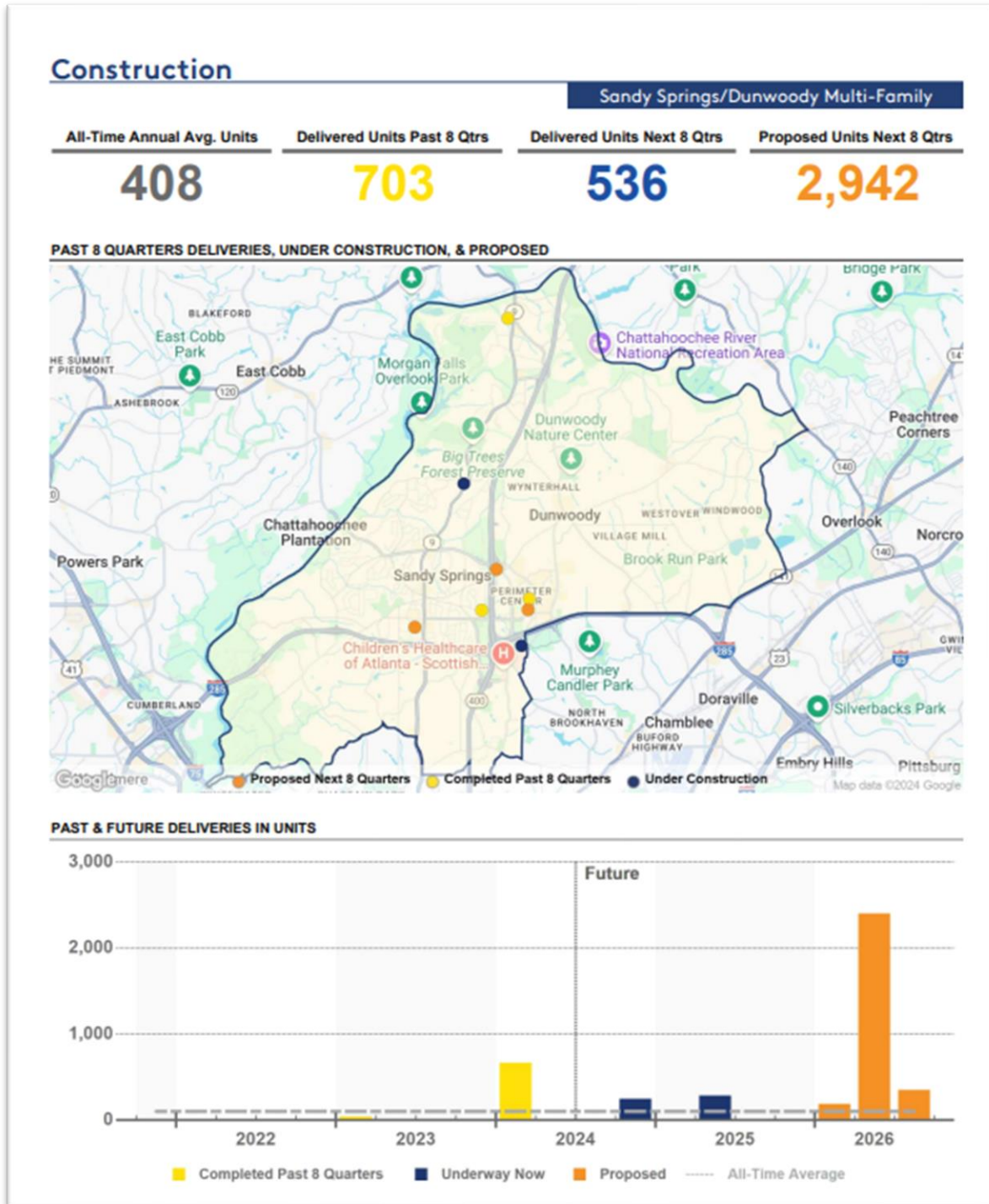


Figure 8: Housing Construction in the Area (cont'd)

Construction							Sandy Springs/Dunwoody Multi-Family
RECENT DELIVERIES							
Property Name/Address	Rating	Units	Stories	Start	Complete	Developer/Owner	
1 High Street Atlanta 101 High St	★★★★☆	598	6	Nov 2021	Jan 2024	GID Investment Advisors LLC GID Investment Advisors LLC	
2 Ellison Park 400 Hanover Park Rd	★★★★☆	67	3	Dec 2022	Jan 2024	- Fundrise	
3 WaterWalk Atlanta Perim... 6096 Barfield Rd	★★★☆☆	38	2	Mar 2022	Feb 2023	- WaterWalk Live Stay	
UNDER CONSTRUCTION							
Property Name/Address	Rating	Units	Stories	Start	Complete	Developer/Owner	
1 Wayfern Apartments 7260 Roswell Rd	★★★★☆	286	3	Jul 2023	Apr 2025	Fairfield Residential Fairfield Residential	
2 Altmore 5775 Peachtree Dunwood...	★★★★☆	250	5	Mar 2022	Dec 2024	The Simpson Organization The Simpson Organization	
PROPOSED							
Property Name/Address	Rating	Units	Stories	Start	Complete	Developer/Owner	
1 High Street Phase II & III 219 NE Perimeter Center...	★★★★☆	2,402	6	Jun 2025	Jun 2026	GID Urban Development Group GID Investment Advisors LLC	
2 Northpark 100-300 Peachtree Dunwoody Rd	★★★★★	350	26	Feb 2025	Aug 2026	- The Kessler Enterprise, Inc.	
3 Parkside Shops Apartme... 5920 Roswell Rd	★★★★☆	190	6	Jun 2025	Feb 2026	Jamestown LP Jamestown LP	

North River Shopping Center (Stars and Strikes)

- 8767-8911 Roswell Rd
- Plans for it be developed within the next 4-5 years.
- 81 townhomes
- 242 apartment units
- <https://roughdraftatlanta.com/2023/03/23/north-river-shopping-center-gets-mixed-use-rezoning-recommendation/> (News Article)

Altmore

- 5775 Peachtree Dunwoody Rd
- To be completed in December 2024
- 250 Units
- <https://whatnowatlanta.com/peachtree-dunwoody-pavilion-redo-althmore-sandy-springs/>

Enrollment Projections

Figure 9: FCS Historical and Projected Enrollment 2020-2028

Fulton County Schools Historical and Projected Enrollment 2020-2028													
School #	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	GADOE Capacity *	Portable CRs	Year 1 CR Need	Year 5 CR Need
Alpharetta HS	754	2,293	2,195	2,176	2,081	2,060	2,036	2,085	2,081	2,200	2		
Cambridge HS	743	2,038	1,831	1,746	1,654	1,592	1,530	1,535	1,565	1,925	0		
Centennial HS	866	1,932	1,809	1,778	1,734	1,688	1,716	1,656	1,660	1,975	4		
Chattahoochee HS	880	1,975	1,851	1,853	1,799	1,736	1,748	1,797	1,806	2,000	0		
Innovation Academy	782	--	869	1,144	1,450	1,472	1,472	1,472	1,472	1,500	0		
Johns Creek HS	741	2,118	1,969	1,923	1,864	1,786	1,785	1,771	1,781	1,950	0		
Milton HS	804	2,279	2,149	2,031	1,965	1,923	1,863	1,855	1,811	1,950	0		
Northview HS	751	1,807	1,744	1,664	1,593	1,575	1,541	1,536	1,614	1,900	0		
Roswell HS	862	2,248	2,170	2,140	2,037	1,960	1,884	1,893	1,865	2,025	4		
High Total	16,690	16,587	16,455	16,157	15,792	15,616	15,524	15,555	15,640	17,425	10		
Region Total	45,116	44,970	45,157	44,701	44,313	43,922	43,535	43,241	43,043	53,975	17		
SANDY SPRINGS													
Dunwoody Springs ES	981	534	535	531	539	529	535	509	503	850	0	-8	-9
Heards Ferry ES	216	708	673	708	690	683	698	703	712	925	0	-8	-9
High Point ES	228	604	679	678	674	665	670	665	678	850	0	-5	-4
Ison Springs ES	618	557	486	470	464	447	439	431	434	850	0	-14	-14
Lake Forest ES	444	694	649	631	572	552	549	550	529	850	0	-8	-8
Spalding Drive ES	980	342	341	360	355	353	359	356	357	550	0	0	0
Woodland ES	996	978	927	966	951	949	930	921	908	1,000	5	-3	-5
Elementary Total	4,417	4,290	4,344	4,246	4,207	4,154	4,161	4,105	4,110	5,875	5	-46	-49
Ridgeview MS	974	1,078	1,035	1,000	960	913	899	841	849	1,200	0	-4.5	-7.5
Sandy Springs MS	692	930	868	831	779	786	797	816	833	828	0	-15.5	-14.5
Middle Total	2,008	1,903	1,831	1,739	1,699	1,696	1,657	1,682	1,650	2,450	0	-20	-22
North Springs HS	816	1,488	1,344	1,278	1,308	1,261	1,217	1,181	1,136	1,148	0		
Riverwood HS	845	1,780	1,734	1,746	1,703	1,622	1,517	1,449	1,357	1,900	0		
High Total	3,268	3,078	3,024	3,011	2,883	2,734	2,630	2,493	2,461	3,675	0		
Region Total	9,693	9,271	9,199	8,996	8,789	8,584	8,448	8,280	8,221	12,000	5		

2020 Fulton State of Facilities Report Key Pages

The following are key pages from the Fulton State of Facilities Report. Available at:

https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1709590951/fultonschoolsorg/c2tozcmcuoo1uifr6pep/ea_fca_report_2020-21.pdf

DEFINITIONS, ASSUMPTIONS AND BUDGET MODELS

The following terms and definitions are used throughout this report and are included below for clarification. Key database setup options and variables that affect the outcome of prioritization, ranking and costing are identified for review and consideration for further adjustment.

Assessment Level

The 2020 FCA was a comprehensive systems-level general assessment of building systems and their life cycles to meet UNIFORMAT II Level 3 and 4 classifications. The work included on-site physical assessments conducted by architectural, engineering and construction management experts and "desktop" assessments for school campuses that are 10 years old or less. The objective was to verify existing building systems condition and their major system and component deficiencies. Data entry and analysis determined facility deficiency and capital renewal needs.

Database Facility Cost Variables

Database cost variables used in the assessment, such as city cost indexes which are used to estimate facility deficiencies and current replacement value of facilities, additional or soft costs which are costs incurred by an owner above a general contractor's hard costs, escalation factors which are set to reflect predicted annual per year cost escalation, and others, are described below.

Facility Condition Index (FCI)

The facility condition index (FCI) is a measure widely used in the building industry to represent the physical condition of a facility compared to its replacement value. The term FCI was originally used by the US Navy to aid in prioritizing repair funds. It has been adopted and refined by numerous national facility maintenance, trade and facility administrator associations and is generally used as a means of comparing relative facility conditions. The FCI measures the estimated cost of the current period repair and replacement deficiencies, including recommended modernization improvements and grandfathered code issues, divided by the projected replacement cost of the facility replaced to contemporary construction standards and design best practices. The result of this division is an index, generally expressed as a percentage, which is the FCI. The higher the FCI, the poorer the relative condition of the facility; that is, the more systems that have reached their end of expected life, or "expired," the higher the repair cost, thus a higher FCI.

$$FCI = \frac{\text{Repair and Renewal Needs}}{\text{Current Replacement Value}}$$

Although current industry "guidelines"¹ published by associations like the college and university organization NACUBO and the International Facility Management Association (IFMA), consider a building with an FCI of 0 to 5% Good; 6 to 10% Fair and 10% and above, Poor, in practice few if any, inventories of publicly-funded facilities ever achieve an overall rating of 10% or below. These FCI guidelines are general guidelines that are under almost constant debate within the building ownership communities because they do not take into account either modernization improvements, or expired systems capital renewal costs; they only address ordinary maintenance items that have been deferred through a normal funding cycle.

Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) Score

The general public is accustomed to the 100-point scale from their school days where scores are usually measured as: 100 to 90 equaled an "A" and 89 to 80 equaled a "B" and so on. MGT routinely grades suitability with the 100-point scale. In keeping with this familiarity with scoring and when working with MGT and suitability scoring, Parsons has adopted the practice of converting the industry standard decimal FCI to an "FCA Score" using the 100-point scale. This

¹ Sean C. Rush (1991). Managing the Facilities Portfolio, National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO)

means that an FCI of 0.10 or 10% equates to a 90 on the 100-point scale. So, for this project we have merged our scoring as described in the following table.

FCA and Adequacy Scoring Scale.

Excellent	> 90
Good	80 - 89
Fair	70 - 79
Poor	60 - 69
Very Poor	< 60

Cost Models

The database incorporates current replacement value (CRV) cost models to assign life cycle costs to the various systems within a building. Cost models are detailed to UNIFORMAT II – Levels 3 and 4 building systems and assigned costs-per-square-foot replacement values. Models are designed to represent a client specific facility that meets local standards and cost trends and are conceptual from a cost estimating point of view and not intended to be “bid quality” (i.e., use contingencies). Replacement costs include all client-identified “soft costs” needed to comply with institutional budgeting requirements for funding projects.

Current Replacement Value (CRV)

The Current Replacement Value represents the hypothetical cost of rebuilding or replacing an existing facility under today’s codes and construction standards, using its current configuration. For example, an existing building that currently does not have a fire sprinkler, but requires one under today’s codes, would include costs for this system as part of its replacement value. It is determined by multiplying the gross area of the facility by a square foot cost developed in that facility’s schedule of values cost model. Replacement cost includes construction costs (“hard” costs) and owner’s additional or “soft” costs for fees, permits, contingencies and other administrative expenses to reflect a total project cost.

Rough Order of Magnitude Repair Budgets

These are the budgeted costs to make partial or full replacement of expired systems, costs for out of cycle repair adjustments and costs for condition, suitability, and sufficiency deficiencies. Because budgeted repair costs typically include budget elements in addition to condition repair costs of a current facility, i.e., modernization upgrade items, area sufficiency items, etc., the total order of magnitude repair costs can exceed the current replacement cost. Order of magnitude repair costs are budget numbers, not actual project costs. The facility condition assessment data should not be considered specific scope of work descriptions for individual buildings; rather it is a repair-program budgeting tool that offers reference data for the repair planning process.

Within a construction project program, substantial cost differences may be recognized from the estimated cost figures provided in the database, depending on the method of repair procurement, the construction market at the time and the actual scope of work anticipated. Detailed engineering studies may also be required to fully determine costs associated with individual component failures that were beyond the scope of the assessment.

The scope of the assessment findings and the figures contained in the database do not include additional renovation costs and mark-ups that may be recommended as part of the project analysis or within the business units’ proposed comprehensive repair program, of which the facility assessment is one input component. The assessment also does not include information regarding the affordability of any potential repairs or replacements, nor does it prioritize the business units’ objectives that will become a major component of any facility repair plan.

Additional Costs – Soft Costs

Additional costs or “soft” costs are “non-bricks-and-mortar” expenses that are necessary to accomplish the corrective work. They are not directly attributable to the deficient system’s direct trade construction cost, and are not included in a general contractor estimate or bid number, often referred to as “hard cost”. Soft costs vary by owner budgeting rules but typically include architect and contractor fees, contingencies and other owner incurred costs necessary to fully develop and build a facility.

Life Cycles

The life-cycle durations for building systems is the key factor that allows the assessment process to predict when a system will reach the end of its expected useful life, its so-called “expiration date,” and should be budgeted for “capital renewal” or simply replacement. The process started by Parsons comparing expected life cycles of the assessed building and site systems using BOMA and the material and equipment manufacturers’ suggested life cycles, and FCS’ historical records. BOMA standards are a nationally recognized source of life cycle data (based on its member’s historical data) for various components and/or systems associated with facilities. The final values were ultimately set by FCS to reflect its local experience and desired objectives for renewal planning.

Renewal Factors

Renewal factors represent the difference in cost of renovating or replacing an existing system, rather than new construction of a building system. For example, installing a new built-up roof on an existing building would include the effort of removing and disposing of the old roof, a cost not associated with new construction. Typical renewal premiums assigned to account for demolition and other replacement preparation costs are about 10% of the system or component raw budget cost; however, each system or subsystem may have a different premium applied to it.

System Generated Deficiencies

The database software automatically develops system deficiencies based on system life cycles using the systems’ installation dates as the base year. By adjusting the Next Renewal date ahead or behind the predicted or stated life cycle date, a system cost will come due earlier or later than the originally installed life cycle date. This utility accounts for good maintenance conditions and a longer life, or early expiration of a system life due to any number of adverse factors such as poor installation, harsh environmental conditions, acts of god or force majeure, material defects, poor design applications and other factors that may shorten the life of a material or system.

Building Systems

The database incorporates UNIFORMAT II to organize building data into replacement cost models. UNIFORMAT II was originally developed by the General Services Administration and the American Institute of Architects in 1972 to delineate building costs by systems rather than by materials. UNIFORMAT II was formalized in an NIST standard, NISTIR 6389 in 1999. It has been further quantified and updated by ASTM standard 2005, E1557-05. The Construction Specifications Institute, CSI, has taken over the standard as part of their Master Format/MasterSpec system. The database cost models include Levels 3 and 4 UNIFORMAT II systems.

Critical Building Systems

Critical building systems include heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), roofing, fire alarm, and data communications. These systems, which keep students and staff safe, warm, and dry, have been given priority when evaluated as deficient by the assessment team. Highly considered during the evaluation is the fact that the District constructed a large number of schools between 1997 and 2005. The critical systems associated with these schools have exceeded or will exceed their expected lifecycle during the Current (2020-22) and Mid-program (2023-25) Periods. Also important is the fact that HVAC and communication demands, along with technology, have changed dramatically in the past 20 years and upgrades are also warranted.

The 2020-2022 current needs are combined with the forecasted life cycle needs through 2032 to create the Total Current and Forecast Period needs. The results are shown in the table below.

FORECAST PERIOD (2020-32) NEEDS BY FACILITY TYPE

Facility Name	Current Replacement Value	Current Needs 2020-2022	Life Cycle 2023-2027	Sub-Total 2020-2027	Life Cycle 2028-2032	Total 2020-2032
Fulton County Schools	\$3,147,261,418	\$395,563,717	\$414,045,571	\$809,609,288	\$572,845,765	\$1,382,455,053
Elementary Schools	\$1,444,027,203	\$191,457,373	\$164,281,203	\$355,738,576	\$235,116,340	\$590,854,916
Middle Schools	\$610,770,221	\$102,682,861	\$107,727,650	\$210,410,511	\$96,264,120	\$306,674,631
High Schools	\$1,010,323,900	\$89,601,508	\$134,370,206	\$223,971,714	\$234,586,574	\$458,558,288
Other Centers/Non-Instructional	\$82,140,094	\$11,821,975	\$7,666,512	\$19,488,487	\$6,878,731	\$26,367,218

Refer to Appendix B: Campus Condition Summary for tables showing current needs 2020-2022, replacement value, facility condition index, life cycle 2023-2027 (5 year), life cycle 2028-2032 (6-10 year) and life cycle 2023-2032 (10 year) a total of all life cycle costs for each campus.

Also refer to Appendix C: Building Condition Summary for tables containing condition information for the specific buildings located on the FCS campuses. These values are totaled at the campus level for the tables and data presented in this report. Note the totals for building condition summary do not include site deficiencies and will differ from campus condition summary.



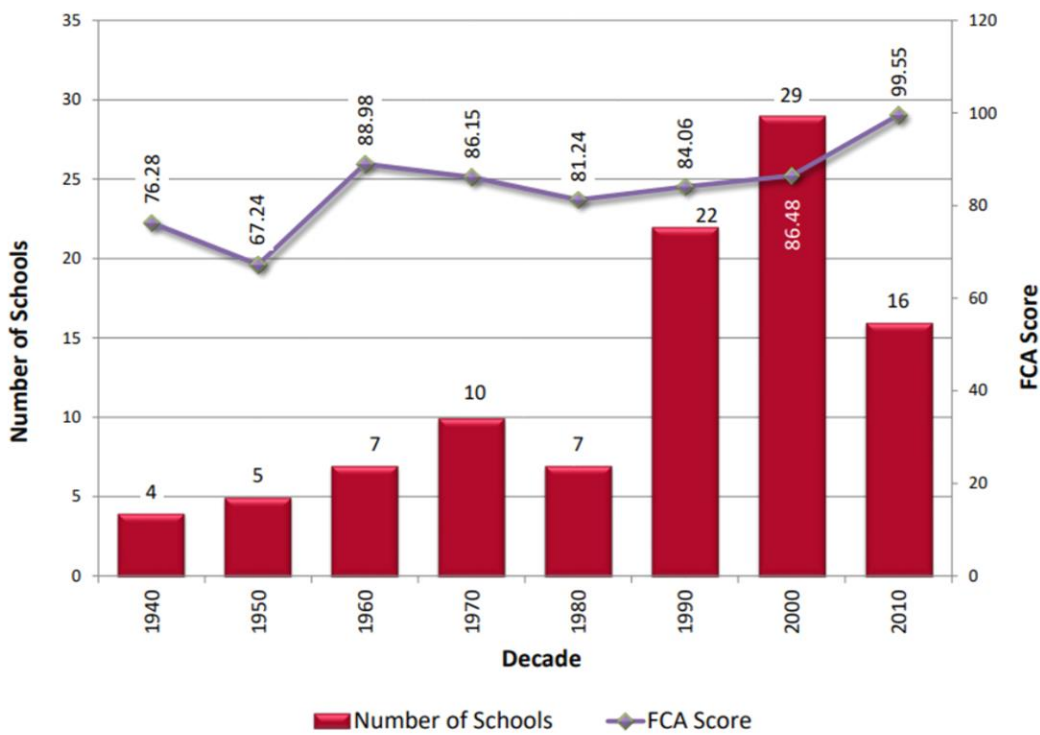
Manning Oaks Elementary School

Facility Age

The following table shows the distribution of FCS facility ages.

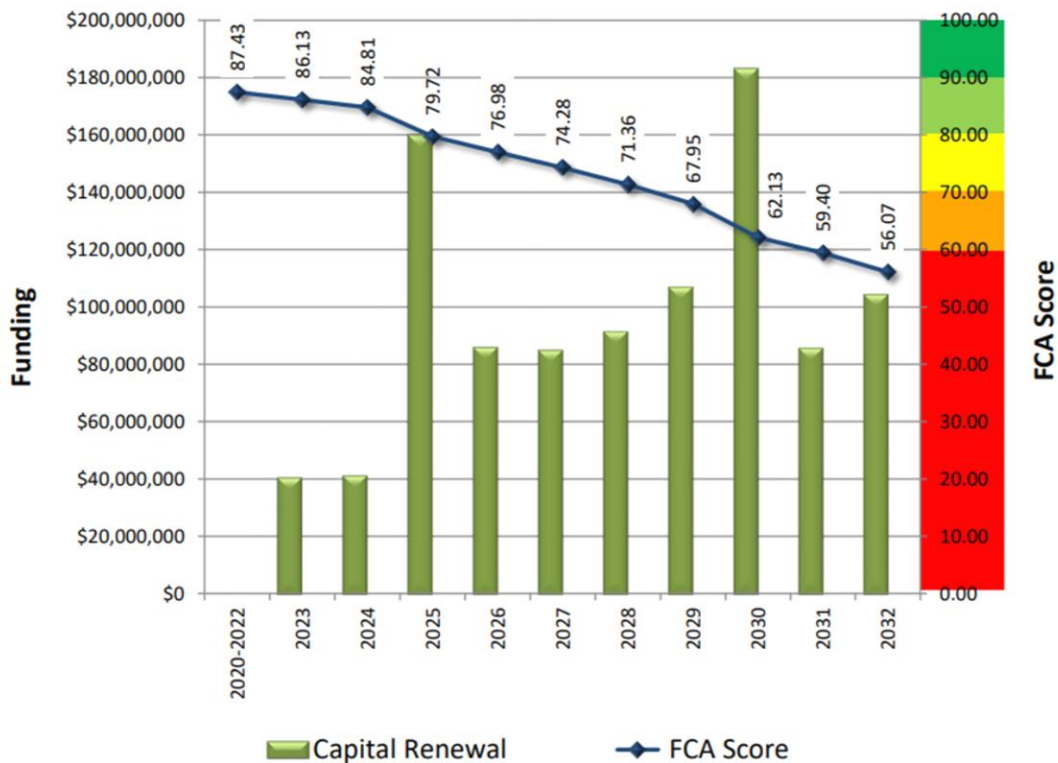
School Characteristics	Fulton County Schools
Average Age	28
Median Date Built	1997
Built 1977 or before	24%
Built between 1978 and 1997	27%
Built between 1998 and 2007	29%
Built 2008 or later	20%

The following chart illustrates the number of facilities built per decade and the calculated FCA Score per decade.



WHY DO WE NEED TO INVEST?

With requirements prioritized and the assessment data in place, Parsons identified both short- and long-term budget requirements by developing the impact of inaction on the condition of the designated FCS real estate portfolio. Referring to the facility assessment summary, the total Current Period (2020-2022) and 10-Year Forecast Period (2023-2032) funding needs are about \$1,382,455,053 (including escalation). In the analysis shown below, the facility condition data developed during the condition assessment were used to produce the following Inaction Scenario. The Inaction Scenario assumes that funding needed to address the current facility condition deficiencies and system renewals over the forecast period 2023-2032 plan is unaddressed. The blue curve indicates the annual FCA over the funding cycle based on the funding provided each year. The green columns represent system renewal costs for each year, while the orange columns (not shown in this example) represent the payments (zero in this example) that would offset the accumulating system renewal needs. Under this scenario, the current FCA score of 87.43 will decrease to 56.07, a level considered to be "Very Poor" condition.



FACILITIES CONDITION AND EDUCATIONAL SUITABILITY FINDINGS

This section of the report presents a summary of scores based on the physical condition and educational suitability assessment findings. Because the assessment methods and approach to condition assessment and the educational suitability assessment are different, MGT utilizes a process for combining the rating and scoring information into one common format. The Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) scores are derived through Parsons' Condition Estimation Management Technology (eCOMET) software which stores the data and produced the assessment information for each school. The eCOMET score is the FCA score which is based on a 100-point scale, and the higher the score, the better the condition of the school. The educational suitability scores are derived from MGT's BASYS software and the score is also based on a 100-point scale, where a high score represents a facility that provides a highly supportive environment for the educational programs in the school.

FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
 CONDITION AND SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT SCORES
 FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (2020-2022)

Facility Name	FCA Score	Suitability Score
Fulton County Schools	87	94
Elementary Schools	87	94
Abbotts Hill Elementary School	73	89
Alpharetta Elementary School	84	91
Asa Hilliard Elementary School	100	99
Barnwell Elementary School	87	87
Birmingham Falls Elementary School	100	99
Brookview Elementary School	85	83
Campbell Elementary School	96	97
Cliftondale Elementary School	100	99
Cogburn Woods Elementary School	91	99
College Park Elementary School	100	99
Conley Hills Elementary School	56	86
Crabapple Crossing Elementary School	84	96
Creek View Elementary School	68	99
Dolvin Elementary School	86	92
Dunwoody Springs Charter School	68	99
Esther Jackson Elementary School	100	99
Evoline C. West Elementary School	86	84
Feldwood Elementary School	99	99
Findley Oaks Elementary School	79	96
Gullatt Elementary School	100	99
Hamilton E. Holmes Elementary School	97	89
Hapeville Elementary School	92	87
Heards Ferry Elementary School	100	99
Hembree Springs Elementary School	72	99

Figure 10 2020 FCA and Suitability Scores. 2020 State of Facilities Report. Page 37.

Facility Name	FCA Score	Suitability Score
Heritage Elementary School	72	90
High Point Elementary School	83	87
Hillside Elementary School	68	99
Ison Springs Elementary School	100	99
Lake Forest Elementary School	99	99
Lake Windward Elementary School	79	96
Liberty Point Elementary School	65	99
Love T. Nolan Elementary School	91	91
Manning Oaks Elementary School	67	89
Mary M. Bethune Elementary School	83	91
Medlock Bridge Elementary School	85	96
Mimosa Elementary School	88	98
Mountain Park Elementary School	84	97
New Prospect Elementary School	94	96
Northwood Elementary School	90	96
Oakley Elementary School	96	97
Ocee Elementary School	73	99
Palmetto Elementary School	87	84
Parklane Elementary School	63	96
Randolph Elementary School	86	97
Renaissance Elementary School	99	99
River Eves Elementary School	98	96
Roswell North Elementary School	89	94
S. L. Lewis Elementary School	59	95
Seaborn Lee Elementary School	84	93
Shakerag Elementary School	66	89
Spalding Drive Elementary School	89	79
State Bridge Crossing Elementary School	86	96
Stonewall Tell Elementary School	97	89
Summit Hill Elementary School	82	89
Sweet Apple Elementary School	70	89
Vickery Mill Elementary School	100	99
Wilson Creek Elementary School	96	99
Wolf Creek Elementary School	100	97
Woodland Charter Elementary School	93	98

Figure 11 Campus Condition Summary (FCA Scoring). 2020 State of Facilities Report. Page 41.

The following table provides a summary for each campus showing current needs 2020-2022, replacement value, facility condition index, life cycle 2023-2025 (5 year), life cycle 2028-2032 (6-10 year) and life cycle 2023-2032 (10 year) a total of all life cycle costs for each campus.

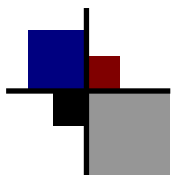
Campus Name	Built Year	Gross Area (S.F.)	Current Needs 2020-2022	Replacement Value	FCI %	FCA Score	Life Cycle 2023-2027	Life Cycle 2028-2032	Life Cycle 2023-2032	Educational Adequacy Score
Elementary Schools										
Abbotts Hill Elementary School	2000	102,973	\$ 6,029,009	\$ 22,212,007	27.14	72.86	\$ 2,542,718	\$ 6,248,554	\$ 8,786,272	89
Alpharetta Elementary School	1956	116,761	\$ 3,869,291	\$ 23,755,268	16.29	83.71	\$ 967,998	\$ 4,753,214	\$ 5,721,212	91
Barnwell Elementary School	1985	121,862	\$ 3,416,829	\$ 25,531,755	13.38	86.62	\$ 2,359,930	\$ 2,323,580	\$ 4,683,510	87
Bethune, Mary M. Elementary School	1968	107,066	\$ 4,008,558	\$ 23,917,214	17.19	82.81	\$ 4,262,306	\$ 4,209,705	\$ 8,472,011	91
Birmingham Falls Elementary School	2010	117,277	\$ 54,519	\$ 26,807,395	0.20	99.80	\$ 610,801	\$ 11,673,605	\$ 12,284,406	99
Brookview Elementary School	1972	78,993	\$ 2,605,729	\$ 17,099,521	15.24	84.76	\$ 195,680	\$ 6,451,047	\$ 6,646,727	83
Campbell Elementary School	1996	130,445	\$ 683,539	\$ 28,045,309	2.44	97.56	\$ 2,823,721	\$ -	\$ 2,823,721	97
Cliftondale Elementary School	2010	110,165	\$ 60,743	\$ 25,290,518	0.24	99.76	\$ 571,688	\$ 10,908,376	\$ 11,480,064	99
Cogburn Woods Elementary School	2004	109,312	\$ 1,927,220	\$ 23,358,872	8.25	91.75	\$ 7,931,918	\$ 908,929	\$ 8,840,847	99
College Park Elementary School	2010	124,527	\$ 67,903	\$ 27,836,753	0.24	99.76	\$ 359,717	\$ 12,670,860	\$ 13,030,577	99
Conley Hills Elementary School	1953	98,662	\$ 9,768,623	\$ 22,181,278	44.04	55.96	\$ 772,451	\$ 2,376,263	\$ 3,148,714	86
Crabapple Crossing Elementary School	1992	107,021	\$ 3,627,196	\$ 23,121,455	15.69	84.31	\$ 1,161,319	\$ 7,796,157	\$ 8,957,476	96
Creek View Elementary School	2001	107,500	\$ 7,515,853	\$ 23,125,521	32.50	67.50	\$ 1,442,281	\$ 6,574,573	\$ 8,016,854	99
Dolvin Elementary School	1979	133,994	\$ 3,890,853	\$ 28,424,716	13.69	86.31	\$ 1,876,686	\$ 3,179,427	\$ 5,056,113	92
Dunwoody Springs Charter School	2000	107,600	\$ 7,265,364	\$ 22,945,909	31.66	68.34	\$ 1,078,585	\$ 7,283,109	\$ 8,361,694	99
Fieldwood Elementary School	2011	110,165	\$ 140,146	\$ 25,402,771	0.55	99.45	\$ 251,123	\$ 11,946,699	\$ 12,197,816	99
Findley Oaks Elementary School	1994	118,270	\$ 5,107,741	\$ 24,698,143	20.68	79.32	\$ 6,460,716	\$ 329,213	\$ 6,789,929	96
Gulllett, C. H. Elementary School	2018	118,911	\$ -	\$ 25,781,643	0.00	100.00	\$ 82,973	\$ 381,948	\$ 464,921	99
Hapeville Elementary School	1949	121,516	\$ 2,187,476	\$ 25,858,322	8.46	91.54	\$ 650,305	\$ 3,657,982	\$ 4,308,287	87
Heards Ferry Elementary School	2016	134,561	\$ 39,016	\$ 31,068,174	0.13	99.87	\$ 497,129	\$ 482,384	\$ 979,513	99
Hemree Springs Elementary School	2001	107,750	\$ 6,455,762	\$ 23,382,679	27.61	72.39	\$ 2,280,385	\$ 7,426,008	\$ 9,706,393	99
Heritage Elementary School	2000	105,513	\$ 6,443,398	\$ 22,673,252	28.42	71.58	\$ 2,360,752	\$ 6,938,618	\$ 9,299,370	90
High Point Elementary School	1964	108,015	\$ 3,734,664	\$ 22,050,292	16.94	83.06	\$ 3,481,495	\$ 592,643	\$ 4,074,138	87
Hilliard, Asa Elementary School	2016	128,485	\$ 29,964	\$ 28,051,944	0.11	99.89	\$ 479,914	\$ 462,061	\$ 941,975	99
Hillside Elementary School	2001	107,730	\$ 7,409,723	\$ 22,899,080	32.36	67.64	\$ 1,229,693	\$ 6,710,945	\$ 7,940,638	99
Holmes, Hamilton E. Elementary School	2003	118,493	\$ 698,514	\$ 26,057,166	2.68	97.32	\$ 9,149,462	\$ 1,348,936	\$ 10,498,398	89
Ison Springs Elementary School	2010	123,612	\$ 85,925	\$ 27,999,169	0.31	99.69	\$ 1,909,275	\$ 9,771,338	\$ 11,680,613	99
Jackson, Esther Elementary School	2016	134,561	\$ -	\$ 30,436,386	0.00	100.00	\$ 479,593	\$ 504,101	\$ 983,694	99
Lake Forest Elementary School	2008	126,320	\$ 209,034	\$ 27,044,797	0.77	99.23	\$ 318,075	\$ 11,990,231	\$ 12,308,306	99
Lake Windward Elementary School	1990	114,404	\$ 5,163,407	\$ 24,939,734	20.70	79.30	\$ 3,671,812	\$ 484,712	\$ 4,156,524	96
Lee, Seaborn Elementary School	1970	80,469	\$ 2,718,566	\$ 16,898,548	16.09	83.91	\$ 1,023,587	\$ 2,158,658	\$ 3,182,245	93
Lewis, S. L. Elementary School	1973	88,810	\$ 7,777,235	\$ 18,903,958	41.14	58.86	\$ 1,047,184	\$ 2,404,833	\$ 3,452,017	95
Liberty Point Elementary School	2002	107,500	\$ 8,140,029	\$ 23,484,824	34.66	65.34	\$ 1,316,548	\$ 7,004,775	\$ 8,321,323	99
Manning Oaks Elementary School	1998	102,973	\$ 7,330,521	\$ 22,164,219	33.07	66.93	\$ 596,580	\$ 5,646,131	\$ 6,242,711	89
Medlock Bridge Elementary School	1991	107,108	\$ 3,390,986	\$ 22,721,534	14.92	85.08	\$ 866,142	\$ 10,203,660	\$ 11,069,802	96
Mimosa Elementary School	1968	133,652	\$ 3,026,466	\$ 26,025,362	11.63	88.37	\$ 2,902,055	\$ 5,278,106	\$ 8,180,161	98
Mountain Park Elementary School	1973	119,675	\$ 3,878,290	\$ 24,880,707	15.59	84.41	\$ 3,369,499	\$ 3,372,906	\$ 6,742,405	97
New Prospect Elementary School	1994	111,127	\$ 1,400,814	\$ 23,970,862	5.84	94.16	\$ 5,862,608	\$ 349,084	\$ 6,211,692	96
Nolan, Love T. Elementary School	1975	106,651	\$ 2,092,121	\$ 22,885,597	9.14	90.86	\$ 2,448,711	\$ 5,855,003	\$ 8,303,714	91
Northwood Elementary School	1996	109,621	\$ 2,300,309	\$ 23,826,003	9.65	90.35	\$ 7,380,266	\$ 27,570	\$ 7,407,836	96
Oakley Elementary School	2007	122,250	\$ 1,044,987	\$ 27,930,345	3.74	96.26	\$ 10,361,279	\$ 1,268,638	\$ 11,629,917	97
Ocee Elementary School	2000	107,500	\$ 6,347,470	\$ 23,491,338	27.02	72.98	\$ 2,765,692	\$ 6,656,897	\$ 9,422,589	99
Palmetto Elementary School	1971	147,770	\$ 4,275,339	\$ 31,972,892	13.37	86.63	\$ 1,123,597	\$ 2,927,667	\$ 4,051,264	84
Parklane Elementary School	1953	87,450	\$ 6,855,997	\$ 18,438,005	37.18	62.82	\$ 161,997	\$ 724,242	\$ 886,239	96
Randolph Elementary School	1991	97,640	\$ 3,049,396	\$ 21,196,846	14.39	85.61	\$ 595,822	\$ 964,824	\$ 1,560,646	97
Renaissance Elementary School	2006	109,312	\$ 211,164	\$ 24,848,059	0.85	99.15	\$ 9,625,033	\$ 1,333,838	\$ 10,958,871	99
River Eves Elementary School	1996	109,621	\$ 426,354	\$ 23,357,247	1.83	98.17	\$ 4,458,393	\$ 808,453	\$ 5,266,846	96
Roswell North Elementary School	1960	125,587	\$ 2,739,212	\$ 26,516,277	10.33	89.67	\$ 1,406,423	\$ 6,291,686	\$ 7,698,109	94
Shake Rag Elementary School	1997	109,468	\$ 7,958,759	\$ 23,434,569	33.96	66.04	\$ 6,064,713	\$ 437,905	\$ 6,502,618	89
Spalding Drive Elementary School	1966	83,162	\$ 1,963,375	\$ 18,114,053	10.84	89.16	\$ 2,942,570	\$ 2,133,950	\$ 5,076,520	79
State Bridge Crossing Elementary School	1996	109,621	\$ 3,304,510	\$ 23,391,288	14.13	85.87	\$ 6,306,816	\$ 149,321	\$ 6,456,137	96
Stonewall Te II Elementary School	1998	102,973	\$ 547,546	\$ 21,576,727	2.54	97.46	\$ 662,003	\$ 4,990,004	\$ 5,652,007	89
Summit Hill Elementary School	1999	102,973	\$ 4,080,278	\$ 22,234,429	18.35	81.65	\$ 2,996,689	\$ 7,083,085	\$ 10,079,774	89
Sweet Apple Elementary School	1997	122,448	\$ 7,536,122	\$ 25,198,228	29.91	70.09	\$ 8,776,972	\$ 718,480	\$ 9,495,452	89
Vickey Mill Elementary School	2016	129,999	\$ 1,034	\$ 28,128,300	0.00	100.00	\$ 525,700	\$ 471,720	\$ 997,420	99
West, Evoline C. Elementary School	1970	112,690	\$ 3,744,395	\$ 25,976,080	14.41	85.59	\$ 1,618,229	\$ 2,529,554	\$ 4,147,783	84
Wilson Creek Elementary School	2004	116,284	\$ 647,351	\$ 24,807,984	2.61	97.39	\$ 8,584,849	\$ 879,141	\$ 9,463,990	99
Wolf Creek Elementary School	2016	123,500	\$ 30,040	\$ 26,871,339	0.11	99.89	\$ 492,674	\$ 577,271	\$ 1,069,945	97
Woodland Charter Elementary School	1971	135,657	\$ 2,142,707	\$ 29,399,600	7.29	92.71	\$ 5,738,071	\$ 1,488,726	\$ 7,226,797	98
Sub-total:		6,675,955	\$ 191,457,373	\$ 1,444,027,203	13.26	86.74	\$ 164,281,203	\$ 235,116,340	\$ 399,397,543	

FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS | 2020 STATE OF FACILITIES REPORT
FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Campus Name	Built Year	Gross Area (S.F.)	Current Needs 2020-2022	Replacement Value	FCI %	FCA Score	Life Cycle 2023-2027	Life Cycle 2028-2032	Life Cycle 2033-2037	Educational Adequacy Score
Middle Schools										
Austrey Mill Middle School	2003	213,048	\$ 670,520	\$ 44,850,254	1.50	98.50	\$ 14,533,848	\$ 2,045,467	\$ 16,579,315	94
Bear Creek Middle School	1989	157,488	\$ 1,624,145	\$ 31,554,935	5.15	94.85	\$ 345,208	\$ 498,986	\$ 844,194	97
Camp Creek Middle School	1985	119,632	\$ 8,828,362	\$ 22,965,755	38.44	61.56	\$ 3,272,407	\$ 901,895	\$ 4,174,302	81
Elkins Pointe Middle School	2001	177,651	\$ 12,294,796	\$ 33,939,443	36.23	63.77	\$ 2,433,264	\$ 9,705,074	\$ 12,138,338	97
Haynes Bridge Middle School	1983	126,432	\$ 6,823,206	\$ 23,953,814	28.48	71.52	\$ 6,013,945	\$ 2,567,574	\$ 8,581,519	82
Holcomb Bridge Middle School	1983	121,542	\$ 10,441,101	\$ 23,500,718	44.43	55.57	\$ 2,935,550	\$ 253,443	\$ 3,188,993	88
Hopewell Middle School	2005	201,471	\$ 232,777	\$ 38,456,718	0.61	99.39	\$ 14,820,761	\$ 1,728,668	\$ 16,549,429	97
McNair, R.T. Middle School	2016	189,682	\$ -	\$ 40,232,638	0.00	100.00	\$ 1,678,645	\$ 1,470,013	\$ 3,148,658	94
Northwestern Middle School	1996	173,375	\$ 4,451,057	\$ 32,956,105	13.51	86.49	\$ 9,670,361	\$ 322,629	\$ 9,992,990	97
Renaissance Middle School	2008	180,500	\$ 1,929,383	\$ 34,715,249	5.56	94.44	\$ 1,949,379	\$ 15,475,338	\$ 17,424,717	97
Ridgeview Charter School	1968	180,848	\$ 1,832,716	\$ 36,635,337	5.00	95.00	\$ 715,935	\$ 15,725,218	\$ 16,441,153	100
River Trail Middle School	2001	177,651	\$ 14,417,986	\$ 33,666,432	42.83	57.17	\$ 1,500,151	\$ 10,952,873	\$ 12,453,024	97
Sandtown Middle School	2005	179,783	\$ 523,046	\$ 34,711,442	1.51	98.49	\$ 11,598,286	\$ 6,440,052	\$ 18,038,338	97
Sandy Springs Middle School	2002	190,408	\$ 13,133,214	\$ 37,043,799	35.45	64.55	\$ 2,085,087	\$ 10,486,123	\$ 12,571,210	97
Taylor Road Middle School	1991	189,614	\$ 8,791,254	\$ 36,059,798	24.38	75.62	\$ 2,457,618	\$ 4,002,241	\$ 6,459,859	97
Webb Bridge Middle School	1997	173,375	\$ 2,500,374	\$ 35,195,406	7.10	92.90	\$ 13,284,385	\$ 690,094	\$ 13,974,479	97
West, Paul D. Middle School	2002	177,651	\$ 13,241,607	\$ 34,886,915	37.96	62.04	\$ 2,212,951	\$ 11,147,065	\$ 13,360,016	97
Woodland Middle School	2007	177,651	\$ 947,316	\$ 35,445,463	2.67	97.33	\$ 16,219,869	\$ 1,851,367	\$ 18,071,236	94
Sub-total:		3,107,802	\$ 102,682,861	\$ 610,770,221	16.81	83.19	\$ 107,727,650	\$ 96,264,120	\$ 203,991,770	
High Schools										
Alpharetta High School	2005	362,857	\$ 603,595	\$ 75,829,785	0.80	99.20	\$ 25,764,871	\$ 3,523,995	\$ 29,288,866	96
Banneker + CTAE & Learning Center	2012	390,813	\$ 1,908,757	\$ 84,234,234	2.27	97.73	\$ 702,469	\$ 41,506,270	\$ 42,208,739	98
Cambridge High School	2013	363,951	\$ 113,963	\$ 75,683,845	0.15	99.85	\$ 1,519,628	\$ 623,018	\$ 2,142,646	99
Centennial High School	1997	309,014	\$ 10,921,054	\$ 63,507,520	17.20	82.80	\$ 16,601,020	\$ 2,892,278	\$ 19,493,298	93
Chattahoochee High School	1991	307,731	\$ 10,634,369	\$ 61,657,080	17.25	82.75	\$ 7,863,254	\$ 9,892,332	\$ 17,755,586	95
Creekside High School	1990	271,045	\$ 7,571,145	\$ 55,668,594	13.60	86.40	\$ 9,486,201	\$ 13,204,549	\$ 22,690,750	92
Independence (shared with teaching museum north)	1949	39,877	\$ 307,863	\$ 7,916,456	3.89	96.11	\$ 227,137	\$ 129,192	\$ 356,329	N/A
Johns Creek High School	2010	348,324	\$ 89,247	\$ 75,046,683	0.12	99.88	\$ 2,344,338	\$ 34,198,539	\$ 36,542,877	100
Langston Hughes High School	2009	387,948	\$ 1,273,631	\$ 80,370,112	1.58	98.42	\$ 1,428,311	\$ 37,518,887	\$ 38,947,198	94
McClarin, Frank High School	1943	95,205	\$ 10,498,265	\$ 18,525,442	56.67	43.33	\$ 3,377,399	\$ 76,914	\$ 3,454,313	N/A
Milton High School	2006	376,305	\$ 660,593	\$ 74,227,894	0.89	99.11	\$ 29,208,604	\$ 3,384,548	\$ 32,593,152	97
North Springs High School	1963	329,418	\$ 7,129,982	\$ 69,112,997	10.32	89.68	\$ 14,072,039	\$ 1,472,040	\$ 15,544,079	77
Northview High School	2002	325,913	\$ 20,343,314	\$ 67,548,110	30.12	69.88	\$ 4,922,023	\$ 19,156,705	\$ 24,078,728	98
Roswell High School	1989	307,115	\$ 9,924,776	\$ 62,187,097	15.96	84.04	\$ 12,809,591	\$ 5,954,859	\$ 18,764,450	86
Tri-Cities High School	1988	309,755	\$ 6,787,680	\$ 65,347,242	10.39	89.61	\$ 2,815,679	\$ 26,662,021	\$ 29,477,700	91
Westlake High School	2009	351,161	\$ 833,273	\$ 73,460,809	1.13	98.87	\$ 1,227,642	\$ 34,390,427	\$ 35,618,069	86
Sub-total:		4,876,432	\$ 89,601,508	\$ 1,010,323,900	8.87	91.13	\$ 134,370,206	\$ 234,586,574	\$ 368,956,780	
Other Centers/Non-Instructional										
Administrative Building	1979	124,083	\$ 1,496,655	\$ 33,546,468	4.46	95.54	\$ 3,959,854	\$ 995,241	\$ 4,955,095	N/A
North Learning Center	2000	82,800	\$ 226,220	\$ 10,466,523	2.16	97.84	\$ 450,315	\$ 845,028	\$ 1,295,343	N/A
North Transportation Center	1998	67,836	\$ 2,880,521	\$ 11,354,487	25.37	74.63	\$ 1,112,738	\$ 3,133,369	\$ 4,246,107	N/A
South Learning Center	2016	20,391	\$ -	\$ 4,026,055	0.00	100.00	\$ 132,627	\$ 171,269	\$ 303,896	N/A
Teaching Museum North (shared with teaching museum south)	1949	17,736	\$ 57,623	\$ 2,716,919	2.12	97.88	\$ 572,032	\$ 256,599	\$ 828,631	N/A
Teaching Museum South	1950	40,350	\$ 3,462,287	\$ 7,626,701	45.40	54.60	\$ -	\$ 980,441	\$ 980,441	N/A
Warehouse	1954	86,428	\$ 3,698,669	\$ 12,402,941	29.82	70.18	\$ 1,438,946	\$ 496,784	\$ 1,935,730	N/A
Sub-total:		439,624	\$ 11,821,975	\$ 82,140,094	14.39	85.61	\$ 7,666,512	\$ 6,878,731	\$ 14,545,243	
Total:		15,099,813	\$ 395,563,717	\$ 3,147,261,418	12.57	87.43	\$ 414,045,571	\$ 572,845,765	\$ 986,891,336	

Economic Impact Study (full study)

The Economic Impact Study Is Attached Following This Page



Economic Impact Study- Spalding Drive Elementary School

Conducted by:

Dr. Greg George, Director
Center for Economic Analysis
School of Business
Middle Georgia State University

December 17, 2024

Forward:

The purpose of this report is to present an unbiased assessment of the economic impacts resulting from Spalding Road Elementary School in Fulton County, Georgia. This report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the School of Business, Middle Georgia State University, or the University System of Georgia. Any errors or omissions are the strict responsibility of the author. Additionally, any errors or questions should be addressed to Dr. Greg George at greg.george@mga.edu. The assessment is based on a review of operating budgets, financial statements and meetings with key personnel. Any deviations from the reported budget numbers will change the estimated impacts and should be forwarded to the author to make appropriate adjustments.

Table of Contents

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2.	INTRODUCTION.....	6
3.	METHODOLOGY.....	6
3.1.	TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT	7
3.2.	EARNINGS IMPACT	8
3.3.	EMPLOYMENT (JOBS) EFFECTS.....	9
4.	OTHER IMPACTS	10
5.	RESULTS	12

Tables and Figures

Table 1—Summary of Impacts	4
Table 2—Total Economic Impact	8
Table 3—Earnings Impact.....	9
Table 4—Employment (Jobs) Impact	10

References

001	US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis <i>RIMS II Multipliers (2012/2020 annual data)</i> <i>Table 2.5 Total Multipliers for Output, Earnings, Employment, and Value Added by Industry – (Atlanta Region - Includes Sandy Springs) (Type II).</i>
002	US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis <i>REGIONAL MULTIPLIERS</i> <i>RIMS II: An Essential Tool for Regional Developers and Planners</i> December 2013.
003	Wayne P. Miller <i>Economic Multipliers: How Communities Can Use Them for Planning</i> University of Arkansas.
004	PPI Inflation Index; https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PCU444220444220
005	Black and Machin. Housing Valuations of School Performance. Handbook of the Economics of Education. April 2010.
006	2022/23 Fulton County Schools Budget Report (pp 216).
007	Fulton Count Schools. FY2025 Budget (Proposed). September 2024
008	RKG Associates, Inc. Strategic Economic Development Plan. City of Sandy Springs, Georgia. November 2020.

Qualifications – About the Author

As founder and director of the Center for Economic Analysis and through extensive consulting, Dr. Greg George has over 20 years of experience in applied economic research and is the Oliner Professor in Free Market Economics. Additionally, Dr. George has conducted damage assessments and has generated numerous economic reports, impact studies and lost earnings calculations used in litigation, mediation, and by government agencies throughout the US and Canada. Furthermore, the author has produced economic studies for private firms, non-profit groups, municipal, state and Federal agencies, as well as the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report estimates the economic impacts of Spalding Drive Elementary School (SDES, hereafter) in the Sandy Springs area over the next five years. Overall, SDES will generate an inflation-adjusted **\$58,743,652** of economic activity over a 5-year time frame in the region. This includes **\$50,766,264** in increased regional earnings and supports a total of **151** total jobs (direct and induced). In addition to the above impacts, the present report summarizes the extensive qualitative benefits that accrue to the local community and the SDES community because of their presence. An emphasis is placed on qualitative impacts, efficiency considerations and tax revenue impacts.

Table 1 summarizes the economic output, earnings, and employment impacts generated by the school over ten years (to simplify, only the first three years and the total for five years are shown). Total economic impacts are identified above and illustrated separately in Tables 2-4.

Table 1: Summary of Impacts								
Year	Expenditures (2024 Dollars)	Output Multiplier	Local Output (2024 Dollars)	Output Adjusted for Inflation (Industry PPI. Current Year)	Earnings Multiplier	Adjusted Earnings (Industry PPI)	Employment Multiplier	Employees
Based on Fulton County Budgeted Estimates								
2023	\$5,022,742	2.017	\$10,130,871	\$10,130,871	0.8642	\$8,755,099	30.0517	151
2024	\$5,247,353	2.017	\$10,583,912	\$10,583,912	0.8642	\$9,146,617	30.0517	151
2025	\$5,247,353	2.017	\$10,583,912	\$11,136,689	0.8642	\$9,624,327	30.0517	151
5-Year Operations*	\$26,236,767	2.017	\$52,919,559	\$58,743,652	0.8642	\$50,766,264	30.0517	151
*Output and Earnings estimates are cumulative over the 5-year period (2024-2028). Jobs are stated on a per-year basis. The years between 2026 and 2028 (the end of the 5-year period) are excluded from the table, but follow the same trends as illustrated in the included years.								

2. INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared at the request of the SDES Parent Teacher Association to estimate the economic impact on the local economy due to the on-going operations of SDES. Dr. Greg George, Director of the Center for Economic Analysis, conducted the economic impact study, which is based on current budget estimates and RIMS II multipliers provided by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Ongoing budget expenditures during the operation of SDES were a reported \$4,773,435 for FY2022/2023. I was also able to obtain the updated budget numbers for 2024 which totalled \$5,247,742. This analysis assumes a 5-year operations horizon, although assuming the school will operate beyond the five-year window under review, on-going operations will generating positive economic impacts indefinitely. Adjusted for inflation, the FY2022/2023 budget comes to \$5,022,742 in 2024 dollars.

The relevant dollar figures considered in this analysis, in conjunction with Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) RIMS II multipliers for the region, were used to estimate the economic impact of SDES on the local economy. Additionally, future dollar amounts were adjusted for inflation using the Producer Price Index by Commodity: Educational Services and the GDP implicit deflator. The inflation index is published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and can be found online at: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org>. For the purposes of adjusting 2023 values for the past year's inflation, I utilized the PPI for education (5.223%). This rate was also used to adjust future budgets for inflation.

3. METHODOLOGY

The BEA provides five sets of multipliers for industries in the region. The ongoing operations of the project fall under the industry designation: *Educational Services*.

The BEA divides RIMS II multipliers into five categories, three Final Demand categories and two Direct Effect categories.

The Final Demand multipliers utilized in economic impact studies are the:

Output Multiplier—shows the total dollar change that occurs in all industries in the region for each additional dollar of output produced by a company in a given industry. In layman's terms, this multiplier shows the total economic impact on the state of each dollar earned and eventually spent by a company in a given industry.

Earnings Multiplier—shows the total dollar change in earnings of households in the region employed by all industries for each additional dollar of output produced by a company in a given industry.

Employment Multiplier—shows the total change in jobs that occurs in all industries in the region for each additional 1 million dollars of output produced by a company in a given industry.

The Direct Effect multipliers utilized in economic impact studies are the:

Earnings multiplier—shows the total change in earnings of households in the region employed by all industries for each additional dollar of earnings paid directly to the households employed by a company in a given industry.

Employment Multiplier—shows the total change in the number of jobs in all industries in the region for each additional job in a given industry.

Following the methodology set forth in the BEA’s publication *RIMS II: An essential tool for regional developers and planners*, and the methodology described in *Economic Multipliers: How Communities Can Use Them for Planning*, I use the final demand output multiplier for output, earnings and employment effects for ongoing operational activities. I describe the meaning of multipliers and associated calculations in greater detail in the following sections. Data on revenues, earnings, and employment were taken from the Fulton County Budget for 2022/23, and multipliers were provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Long run inflation projections were provided the Bureau of Labor Statistics and The St. Louis Federal Reserve Economic Data website (FRED).

3.1 TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

The total economic impact of an enterprise represents the total new spending generated within the community as a result of a given facility’s expenditures. In the context of economic impact modelling, “export sales” refers to revenues derived from outside of the studied region, not only international sales. When the majority of revenues are derived from export sales, the more generous Type II multipliers are used. Revenues within the region must be accounted for differently, to avoid double-counting. For example, consider the economic impact of a new restaurant: it would be inappropriate to count all of the sales of the new restaurant as new economic activity, as it is quite feasible (indeed probable) that some of the sales of the new restaurant would come at the expense of sales from existing restaurants. The relevant number for analysis would be (revenues/expenditures) that are either in excess of existing restaurant revenues, or revenue from sales to customers outside of the region.

Once the expenditures are distributed, a certain percentage will be spent within the area under study on labor, supplies, local contractors, utilities, etc. The recipients of those funds also spend a certain portion locally creating further economic activity, and the process continues until the funds are exhausted. The total output multiplier generated by RIMS II shows how much economic activity is generated by an additional \$1 of revenue initially generated by the activities of SDES. Once the multipliers are known, the calculation is straightforward:

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT = REVENUE (FINAL DEMAND) * OUTPUT MULTIPLIER

For this project, the relevant output multiplier for SDES is 2.0170, which means that every expenditure of \$1 will result in \$2.0170 of economic activity in the region: \$1 spent initially (direct effects), and an additional \$1.0170 generated by other businesses in the region (indirect and induced effects). Table 2 shows the total economic activity that will be generated as a result of on-going operations. The total economic impact of **\$58,743,652** is adjusted for inflation using the appropriate PPI over the 5-year period (2024-2028).

Table 2: Total Local Economic Impact			
	A	B	C=A*B
Impact	Expenditures (2024 Dollars)	Multiplier	Total Impact*
\$5,022,742	2.017	\$10,130,871	\$10,130,871
\$5,247,353	2.017	\$10,583,912	\$10,583,912
\$5,247,353	2.017	\$10,583,912	\$11,136,689
\$26,236,767	2.017	\$52,919,559	\$58,743,652

*Adjusted for inflation.

3.2 EARNINGS IMPACT

As operations take place, the school pays compensation to the faculty and staff. Employees spend part of their compensation locally, boosting the revenues of local businesses. Increased revenues of local businesses lead to higher earnings for their employees; those employees will spend portions of this increase locally, generating additional increases in revenue and related increases in earnings, and so on. As a result of the earnings related to this project, total earnings in the region will increase more than the initial amount provided by operations of the school.

There are two methods for calculating the earnings effect. One is to use total expenditures as a base and multiply them by the final demand earnings multiplier. Another method is to use the direct effects multipliers when actual payroll data are available. For the purposes of calculating the total earnings impact, I used the following formula:

TOTAL EARNINGS IMPACT = TOTAL EXPENDITURES * FINAL DEMAND EARNINGS MULTIPLIER

The relevant multiplier for FPD is 0.8642. This means that every \$1 spent on total expenditures, \$0.8642 of total earnings accrues to employees in the region (inclusive of the earnings that occur directly from the school's payroll). Table 3 shows the total earnings that will be generated in the region as a result of SDES's operations. Adjusting for CPI inflation over the total 5-year period brings the total Earnings Impact to **\$50,766,264**.

Table 3: Total Earnings Impact			
	A	B	C=A*B
Long-Term Impact	Expenditures	Multiplier	Total Earnings Impact
2023	\$10,130,871	0.8642	\$8,755,099
2024	\$10,583,912	0.8642	\$9,146,617
2025	\$11,136,689	0.8642	\$9,624,327
2024-2028	\$58,743,652	0.8642	\$50,766,264

3.3 EMPLOYMENT (JOBS) EFFECTS

All the activity mentioned above ultimately leads to the creation of jobs. First, the school directly employs workers to conduct operations. As these employees spend their earnings locally, other businesses face increased demand and have to hire additional employees. Hence, jobs are created in other local businesses as the funds are spent - first by their employees, and subsequently by businesses and employees benefiting from increased revenues from indirect and induced effects. Hence, the total number of jobs created in the region will exceed the number of employees that are hired by the initial firm.

As with earnings, there are two methods for calculating total job creation. The first method involves using total expenditures as a base and multiplying it by the final-demand employment multiplier. As with the final-demand earnings multiplier, this method is based on national averages and used when the actual jobs data are not available. The other method simply multiplies the number of employees directly hired by the school and multiplies it by the direct effects jobs multiplier.

The calculation use herein is as follows:

TOTAL JOBS CREATED = TOTAL EXPENDITURES/\$1,000,000 * FINAL DEMAND EMPLOYMENT MULTIPLIER

The relevant multiplier for SDES is 30.0517, which means that for million dollars of expenditures, slightly over thirty jobs are created in the area.

Table 4 shows the total number of jobs that are generated in the region as a result of the on-going operations at SDES.

Table 4: Total Employment Impact (Regional)			
	A	B	C=A*B/1,000,000
Long-Term Impact (Operations)	Expenditures/\$1,000,000	Multiplier	Total Impact
Year 1	\$5,022,742	30.0517	151
Year 2	\$5,247,353	30.0517	151
Year 3	\$5,247,353	30.0517	151
Each Additional Year	\$5,247,353	30.0517	151

4. OTHER IMPACTS

The economic impacts calculated above are those derived solely from the operations at SDES and should be considered conservative since they do not include qualitative impacts that SDES has on its local community. Additionally, it does not include other quantitative impacts that are more difficult to quantify. While the qualitative impacts are difficult to place a monetary value on, economists have developed a host of methodologies for estimating a dollar value for impacts that traditionally defied quantization. It is important to remember that these impacts are subjective and rely on many assumptions. I therefore excluded them from the above calculations but outline them below. Additionally, I include two important considerations – efficiency and property tax implications (see below).

- Education creates positive externalities – benefits that accrue to the local community, as opposed to the economic benefits going to those directly receiving the education. It is obvious that quality education provides economic benefits directly to students who receive the education. Lifetime earnings and employment opportunities are enhanced, and there are even well-established generational effects to the descendants of graduates. In addition to these direct benefits, the extended local community benefits from an educated population. However, due to the number of variables involved in tracking these benefits, they are generally categorized as qualitative in nature and left out of the quantitative impacts.
- Examples of positive economic externalities associated with highly successful elementary school education (which leads to greater success rates in secondary and higher education), include an increase in productivity, a reduction in crime and poverty, and an improvement in overall economic growth. A well-educated workforce can lead to the development of new technologies and businesses, which can create jobs and boost economic activity. Furthermore, individuals with higher levels of education tend to have better health and are more likely to be engaged citizens, which can lead to a more stable and prosperous communities.
- Overall community well-being from having an active elementary school should not be underestimated either. If the intent were to cause a community to deteriorate and suffer, closing an effective and well-run elementary school is a one way to achieve such an obviously absurd goal. As identified below, everything from tax revenue, to property values are negatively impacted when schools are shut down.

Efficiency Arguments:

The decision to retain or close Spalding Drive Elementary School has significant economic, operational, and community implications. Based on the Fulton County Schools "State of Facilities Report" and additional district data, the analysis demonstrates that maintaining Spalding Drive is a financially prudent choice that aligns with the district's long-term objectives of cost efficiency, optimal resource utilization, and high academic performance.

Spalding Drive Elementary is not only high performing, but also forecasted to reach full classroom utilization in the coming years. Other schools considered for consolidation scenarios, while projected to have similar enrolment numbers, would remain saddled with large numbers of unused classrooms if chosen over Spalding Drive. In this context, closing Spalding Drive would yield only a marginal reduction in district-wide overcapacity, freeing up far fewer classrooms than what is truly needed to address the excess. This minimal improvement in capacity, combined with higher operating and maintenance costs associated with larger, underutilized schools, underscores the economic inefficiency of closing a fully enrolled, top-performing institution.

When viewed from a financial standpoint, the rationale for retaining Spalding Drive becomes even clearer. Although facility maintenance and capital investment vary across the district, the relative per-pupil cost of maintaining Spalding Drive remains more favorable than that of larger schools, which often carry substantially higher expenditures per student. These higher-cost scenarios stem from maintaining unused space, increased operational burdens, and facility expenses spread over fewer enrolled students. By comparison, Spalding Drive's steadier enrolment and more proportional resource allocation help ensure that expenditures directly benefit those in the classrooms rather than being absorbed by unused capacity. In essence, preserving Spalding Drive avoids saddling the district with long-term financial inefficiencies and prevents unnecessary strain on the district's budgetary resources.

Beyond operational considerations, Spalding Drive stands out as a model of both fiscal and academic efficiency. With a consistently strong record of academic performance and effective utilization of taxpayer funds, it provides a clear demonstration of how educational quality and prudent financial management can go hand in hand. Its location within a location poised for future growth further solidifies its strategic value: removing Spalding Drive from the district's portfolio would risk lowering the quality to cost ratio, which is the very definition of efficiency. Retaining Spalding Drive also preserves the district's ability to accommodate future demand without incurring additional capital costs down the road.

Recent demographic shifts driven by declining birthrates have led many school systems to make reactive decisions, such as school closures, based on the presumption that these trends are permanent. However, my current research suggests that we are at a demographic inflection point, and such myopic decisions risk exacerbating long-term funding challenges if these trends reverse. Preliminary evidence indicates that declining birthrates are not solely the result of a fundamental shift in societal attitudes toward family size but are largely driven by families delaying childbirth. This delay, rather than a structural decline, suggests a short-term demographic recovery. Furthermore, consultation with local and state tax authorities highlights that policymakers are implementing targeted tax policy initiatives at both state and federal levels to address youth population growth. These pro-family policies are beginning to yield measurable impacts, facilitating a reversal of the declining birthrate trend. Recognizing this inflection point is critical to ensuring that policy and infrastructure decisions align with the evolving demographic landscape and do not inadvertently constrain future educational and economic opportunities.

Property Value Impact:

High-performing schools like Spalding Drive Elementary play a critical role in shaping neighborhood attractiveness, stabilizing property values, and ultimately bolstering the local tax base. Research on the relationship between school quality and housing markets, such as findings from Black and Machin (2011), consistently shows that families are willing to pay a premium for proximity to academically successful schools. This translates into stronger property values, more robust housing demand, and a healthy pipeline of future buyers—a dynamic that benefits not only homeowners but also the broader community through enhanced tax revenues. Specifically, high-performing schools have been shown to increase property values significantly, with a one standard deviation improvement in test scores raising house prices by approximately 3%. Spalding Drive's continued operation supports stable property values, enhances the area's attractiveness to families, and strengthens the local tax base.

Closing a top-tier public school can trigger a downward spiral in local property values. As a once-desirable educational amenity disappears, the neighborhood may become less appealing to potential buyers, softening demand and potentially lowering home prices. Over time, these diminished property values reduce the overall property tax base. In turn, the county could face reduced tax revenues, placing financial pressure on local services and infrastructure. This scenario has long-term implications: weakened school quality perceptions and declining housing market conditions often reinforce each other, leading to a cycle of diminished investment and community vitality.

In short, keeping Spalding Drive Elementary in operation is more than just a matter of educational resource allocation; it is also an investment in the long-term economic health and stability of the surrounding area. By maintaining a high-quality public school option, the district preserves community cohesion, safeguards property values, and supports the local revenue streams that sustain public services.

5. RESULTS

Based on the information provided, SDES is projected to generate **\$58,743,652** in total, economic impacts over a 5-year time horizon. The projected earnings impact is **\$50,766,264** during this time, and the combined direct and indirect new jobs in the region over is **151** jobs full time equivalent positions for the life of the school. As mentioned above, these impacts are to be considered extremely conservative since they do not include the aforementioned qualitative benefits.

Respectfully submitted on December 17, 2024 by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg George', written in a cursive style.

Greg George, Ph.D. in Economics
Professor of Economics, and
Director of the Center for Economic Analysis
School of Business, Middle Georgia State University
100 University Parkway
Macon, GA 31206
Email: Greg.George@Mga.edu
Voice: (478)731-7134