

Fact Check of Final Recommendation

Board Members,

As an immediate follow-up to the staff's recommendation, the Committee is presenting critical fact-checked points for your consideration before making a decision. While we understand that consolidation of schools throughout Fulton County may eventually be necessary, the data provided by staff is consistently inaccurate and does not support consolidation of Spalding Drive at this moment.

The Save SDE Committee, and the community, have worked diligently, including over the holiday weekend, to identify and correct significant errors and misleading statements in the staff's presentation. We've taken on this work to save you time and ensure you have accurate information.

These inaccuracies make it impossible for you to make informed decisions. We respectfully urge the Board to delay the consolidation process and address these issues collaboratively to ensure a fair and transparent decision-making process:

- **Statement:** *"We're spending about \$7,000 [more] on average per student than in the other elementary schools..." – Dr. Looney.*
Counterpoint: Spalding's **per-student cost** is \$3,542 above average¹, primarily due to Spalding's higher concentration of special needs and TAG students. Much of these costs will follow the students, and will not be eliminated, if these students are moved to other schools.
- **Statement:** *The Staff's Final Recommendation for Closure continually lists Spalding's FCA Score as Fair.*
Counterpoint: The 2020 Facilities Assessment Report shows that Spalding's last FCA published score was an 89², which is Good. Page 18 of the [Case to Save SDE](#) goes into detail showing that Spalding's score is Good. Importantly, the campus has recently undergone \$2.2MM in renovations, keeping on track to maintain a Good FCA score as projected in the 2020 assessment. The Save Spalding Committee has continuously identified staff's misstatement to Operations without correction in their presentations.
- **Statement:** *"Spalding Drive Elementary...currently enrolls 347 students, and enrollment is projected to remain at a slow rate of decline over the coming years." -Tarika Peeks.*
Counterpoint: **Spalding's enrollment is projected to grow by over 12% over the next 3 years using the staff provided data on Tuesday, January 14³.** This staff-provided data shows that Spalding's enrollment is projected to go from 367 in 2025, 386 in 2026, and to 391 in 2027. Importantly, this does not even account for Open Enrollment.

¹ [Average Per Pupil Allocations - Fulton County School System](#) shows Spalding ES per student of \$17,184, with county ES average of \$13,642. <https://www.fultonschools.org/fcs-board-of-education/balanced-scorecard/finance/average-per-pupil-allocations>

² State of School Facilities Report 2020, Page 37 and 41.

https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1709590951/fultonschoolsorg/c2tozcmcuoo1uifr6pep/eea_fca_report_2020-21.pdf

³ Final Presentation Zone 4 Packet:

<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=36031609&AID=1736274&MID=122484>

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- **Statement:** *Declining Enrollment and High repair costs are the reason for consolidation.*
Counterpoint: Policy FDB, section 4, states that a school may be considered for consolidation if it is in need of “extensive renovation to meet current ... standards” AND that per student cost not exceed 135% of district average. It is now apparent why Operations did not cite this portion during their presentation: if you calculate Spalding’s per student cost using publicly available data, Spalding is 126%, which falls below the 135% threshold required by Fulton Policy to close Spalding as shown above. Neither of these conditions are met. Further, the staff has not identified any “extensive renovation” needed for Spalding Drive. **Staff may not use this as a reason for consolidation.**
- **Statement:** *“This board has done, and your predecessors have done, a marvelous job in that we’ve been living off a “savings account”. Each year we’re spending more money than we’re taking in revenue...”*
Counterpoint: The **board voted for a reduced millage rate** of 17.08 from the proposed 17.13 by staff on 8/6/2024⁴. Board members commented there was a tax surplus and that reserves were in “great shape”. It was noted on 12/10/2024 revenues were increasing by \$4MM and expenses decreasing by \$12MM.
- **Statement:** *“Three community meetings were held...to ensure stakeholders had ample opportunity to provide feedback...designed with a specific focus and centered on school closure...” – Tarika Peeks*
Counterpoint: Policy FDB requires that staff “gather information necessary to prepare any recommendation including data necessary for student placement and revision to attendance boundaries in accordance with policy FDB, and **to answer questions from the public relevant to any closure proposal.**” Instead, **Staff admitted to accepting feedback only on redistricting maps, refusing questions related to** Spalding’s closure. Operations wrongly cited “board-approved criteria” to justify this, again ignoring explicit Board Policy, as with Policy FDB Section 4.

As always, we appreciate your support and partnership. Email contact@savesde.com with any questions. We are glad to discuss it at your convenience.

-The Save Spalding Committee

1/20/2025

⁴ Board Meeting 8/6/2024, Link to recording: <http://ec4.cc/a4eab62ca>