

**MORRIS BRANDON SCHOOL COUNCIL
2741 HOWELL MILL ROAD
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30327
(404) 802-7250**

April 1, 2011

Dr. Beverly L. Hall
Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools
130 Trinity Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Re: Recommendation and Request for Immediate Action to Solve Overcrowding Problems at Morris Brandon Elementary and other Elementary Schools in the Northern Cluster

Dear Dr. Hall:

We want to thank you and your team for your support to date. Over the past year, our Task Force for Overcrowding Solutions has been able to collaborate with many team members within APS to comprehensively assess the overcrowding problems at Morris Brandon Elementary. A recap of those efforts has been included below, along with our recommendation and request for immediate action.

1. ***Seeking Input from and Dialogue with APS and BOE.*** Over the past year, in the interest of having 'good information' and seeking collaborative results, we formed a task force of the school council specific to this overcrowding issue. We have met multiple times with Board members Nancy Meister and Reuben McDaniel; have attended and spoken at BOE meetings, Buckhead Coalition of Neighborhood meetings and North Atlanta Parents for Public Schools meetings; and have met with Sharon Pitts, Ray Hart, Mikkal Hart Murunga, Larry Hoskins, the internal demography team and, most recently, CFO Chuck Burbridge. Further, we carefully digested the report of the external demography team, attended that community meeting and spoke at length with the external demographers.
2. ***Reviewing, Preparing, & Reconciling Enrollment Projections From Various Parties:*** Since we last updated you in writing on November 7, 2010, we met with your internal demographic team to go over our concerns about the enrollment projections included in the recent demographic study. *The APS internal team's Morris Brandon enrollment projection shared with us for the 2011-2012 school year actually exceeds even our third enrollment scenario – with the highest/worst-case enrollment projections – provided to you in our letter dated November 7,*

2010 (attached as Exhibit A). **APS's enrollment projection for Brandon in 2011-12 is 1,293 students, 120% higher than the total planning capacity of 1,080 for both campuses.**

3. **Gaining an Understanding of Potential Funding Sources:** We met with Chuck Burbridge, APS Chief Financial Officer, on February 25, 2011. We understand that funding for construction of new facilities ultimately has to come from one or more of the following three sources: (1) extension of SPLOST, (2) increased property taxes, or (3) a reduction in operating expenses. It is possible to accelerate the timeline by borrowing against future SPLOST and/or property tax proceeds (such as the upcoming bond issuance for acquisition of land for the new high school on Northside Parkway).
4. **Obtaining Formal Community Feedback on Potential Solutions:** In order to obtain community input on potential solutions to the overcrowding, we developed and distributed on March 9 a survey in which APS staff had input. We experienced a very high response rate and passionate and thoughtful replies. We will provide the full survey results to your team, but the key results include:
 - 93% of respondents said that the elementary school district was very important in their choice to buy/rent their current home (and 93% are homeowners)
 - Respondents overwhelmingly viewed expansion of facilities as the preferred solution with redistricting outside the cluster, larger class sizes or long-term portables being heavily rejected.
 - Assuming an expansion of the primary campus facility, respondents were split, largely based on neighborhood, as to whether they preferred a two-campus Morris Brandon with K-2 at the primary center or creation of a new elementary school at the current primary center.
 - Short-term use of portable classrooms is preferred to short-term redistricting to help alleviate short-term overcrowding.
 - Extension of SPLOST received strong support (82% "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable").
 - 51% of respondents said they were "very likely" or "likely" to send their children to private school if APS does not identify and implement a long-term solution to overcrowding in the near future.
5. **Identifying Potential Solutions to the Overcrowding:** As part of this process, we have learned that long-term solutions need to be formed at both the cluster level and at an individual school level. As such, our request for action encompasses solving overcrowding issues throughout the northern cluster of schools, not just Morris Brandon. It is clear that a long term solution involves the construction of significant additional capacity within the northern cluster. This could include expansion of existing facilities and/or construction of a new elementary school. Depending on the location of additional capacity, it is possible that some redistricting will need to accompany the new facilities.

Formal Request for Immediate Action

While we understand that the second phase of the demographic study is not scheduled for completion until October of 2011, **it is clear to the community, APS, and the Atlanta Board of Education today that additional elementary school capacity is needed in the northern cluster of elementary schools and that the time for action is now.** Data from the 2010 U.S. Census data bears this out: Buckhead's population has increased by over 14%, a higher jump than any other area of Atlanta. In fact, Karen Evans, Principal, has requested 6 portable classrooms for the main campus at Morris Brandon for the 2011-2012 school year. Morris Brandon will need a 'permanent' solution in place for 2012-2013 to avoid degradation of the learning environment and teacher, parent and student morale, and E. Rivers is in even more immediate need. The additional phase of the demographic study is needed to determine the final details of the solutions (such as the drawing of district lines), but there are plenty of key tasks to move along in the interim. Specifically, we recommend and request that APS:

1. Immediately secure and allocate funding for the additional elementary school capacity needs within the northern cluster to facilitate start of design work and contracting by either (a) increasing the principal amount of the upcoming bond offering related to acquisition of property for the new high school (the "HS Bond Offering"), or (b) preparing a second bond offering for the elementary school capacity needs. While the timeline is quick, we recommend increasing the amount of the HS Bond Offering due to economies of scale in the transaction and removal of market risk for a future offering. Specifically, we recommend that the amount of the HS Bond Offering be increased by \$21,000,000 which is the amount proposed in the most recent SPLOST presentation related to (a) construction of a new elementary school in the northern cluster - \$16 million, and (b) an addition and renovation to E. Rivers Elementary School - \$5 million.
2. Confirm and elaborate on, via a detailed report, the viability and magnitude of the ability to increase capacity at existing elementary facilities, in particular but not limited to, the Morris Brandon Primary Center
3. Begin the search for land for a potential new elementary school in the northern cluster.

We believe it is critical that, in advance of the expiration of your contract, APS adopt a plan to solve the elementary school overcrowding problems in the northern cluster. Otherwise, any action would likely be materially delayed by the transition to a new administration.

This letter of recommendation and request is submitted in the spirit of seeking to continue building on the strong momentum of and interest in Morris Brandon, the northern cluster and the Atlanta Public School System. We further request specific consideration of these recommendations and request and a response to the same under O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86.

Sincerely,

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APS Officers & Staff

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Others:

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Cynthia Brown, NAPPS President

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Delana Holmes, School Council Chair E. Rivers

EXHIBIT A

MORRIS BRANDON SCHOOL COUNCIL
TASK FORCE FOR CAPACITY EXPANSION
2741 HOWELL MILL ROAD
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30327
(404) 802-7250

November 7, 2010

Dr. Beverly L. Hall
Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools
130 Trinity Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Re: Status Update on Urgent Need for Capacity Expansion at Morris Brandon Elementary

Dear Dr. Hall:

We had a very positive meeting in August with Sharron Pitts, Larry Hoskins, and APS demographers concerning the need for capacity expansion at Morris Brandon Elementary School along with the importance of a well executed communications plan with the Brandon community on this matter. You have a very capable team and we really appreciate you making them available to meet with us during a very busy time for APS. At the August meeting, we agreed that the updated demographic study would be the driver of an informed discussion of potential solutions. Now that the demographic study has been released, we've re-engaged with your team to address our concerns about the projections included in the study, and to define a timeline and community communications strategy for decision making and implementation. Because Morris Brandon is currently over capacity, we respectfully request that this capacity issue become an integral component of the middle school and high school expansion plans and we recommend (if not already done) that the feeder school solutions begin to get incorporated into the communications plan for the upcoming changes affecting the entire northern cluster.

As provided for under our School Council By-laws, we have formed a Task Force for Morris Brandon Capacity Expansion, consisting of some school council members and other interested parties. Whether or not they become official members of the Task Force, we consider Sharron Pitts and Larry Hoskins (or their designees) of APS as critical participants.

Based on our preliminary review of the Demographic Study, we have serious concerns about the accuracy of the enrollment projections for Morris Brandon. While the demographic study projects that enrollment peaks at 1,170 next year and then gradually declines to 1,096 by 2019-20, our revised Scenario 2 projection (our moderate case) indicates that enrollment peaks at 1,390 in 2015-2016 and remains at that level through the end of the study. Attached is our recent communication to Sharron

EXHIBIT A

Pitts outlining the basis of our concerns and the implications to the Brandon enrollment projections. The attachment also includes 3 enrollment projection scenarios for your review.

While the capacity issues are urgent for Brandon and the rest of SRT-4, it's also critical to ensure that the enrollment projections are as accurate as possible. Otherwise, we could be back in this position shortly after completion of the new facilities. Therefore, we request that you and/or the appropriate members of the APS staff, along with the demographers who prepared the study, address our concerns (along with those expressed by others in the community) in a timely fashion. This week's community meetings will be helpful, but inadequate to address questions for all schools in SRT-4. As soon as the demographers are prepared to address our concerns, we request a meeting or conference call to work through the revised Brandon enrollment projections (prior to finalizing the projections).

Unless you direct us otherwise, we will continue to consider Sharron Pitts as our primary point of contact for this project. Thanks again for your focus and commitment to this project during such a busy time for APS.

Sincerely,

Task Force For Morris Brandon Capacity Expansion

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Larry Hoskins, APS

Subject: Morris Brandon Task Force for Capacity Expansion - Initial Questions on Demographic Study

Sharron,

Based on our preliminary review of the study, we have serious concerns about the accuracy of the enrollment projections for Morris Brandon. Here are the key issues that we have identified so far:

Item	Study Ref	Issue	Implications
1	P. 57	Actual Morris Brandon enrollment for the 2006-07 school year reflected in the study is materially incorrect (actual was 691, and study shows 370). Actual enrollment by grade is attached.	Enrollment forecast for 2011-2020 is based in part on average survivor (see definition on p. 4 of study) rates for the previous 5 years. If the historical data is incorrect, then the forecast will be also. One needs to look no further than the projected drop in the 2010-2011 Kindergarten cohort (244) to the 2011-12 First Grade projection (212) to conclude that the average survivor rates are materially off.
2	P. 57	Redistricting took effect in the 2009-2010 school year for Morris Brandon. Were average survivor rates calculated on a pro forma basis (as if the redistricting had already occurred)?	Use of non-pro forma survivor rates for school years 2009-2010 and earlier are not necessarily accurate for the current district. An incorrect average survivor rate will result in an incorrect forecast.
3	P. 2 & P. 147	Total fertility rate (TFR) is assumed to be the same (1.78 births per lifetime) for Morris Brandon as it is for the rest of the entire APS district. The age specific fertility rate (ASFR) assumption also appears to be held constant across the entire APS district. Anecdotal data suggests that both the TFR (more children per female) and the ASFR (having children later than average) may differ materially in the Brandon area.	To the extent that the TFR and ASFR are understated, enrollment projections will be understated. If you look at the Brandon district female population in the 25-39 age range, it was at 2,430 in 2005, projected at 2,450 in 2010, and projected at 2,590 in 2015. That leads us to believe that the number of kindergartners will continue to grow through at least 2020. The current projection reflects a peak of 244 K students in 2010-11 that gradually declines to 201 K students in 2019-2020.
4	P.134	Even prior to any adjustment of the age-sex population forecast attributable to item 3 above, the projected decline in Kindergarten enrollment beginning in 2011-2012 is not consistent with the age-sex population forecast for 0-4 and 5-9 year olds in the Brandon district (P.134).	Understated Kindergarten enrollment projections for 2011-2012 and thereafter.
5	P.2, P.57, P.134, P.147	Migration: Population by age data (on p. 134) suggests that empty nesters who move out of the Brandon district are replaced by families with school age children (and/or of peak fertility age) seeking a quality public school. There are very few families with elementary age children who move out of the district.	Migration should be handled properly when accurate average survivor rates are re-calculated. However, we wanted to raise the issue in case there are any migration assumptions at the APS district level that were applied to the Brandon district level.
6	P. 19	Due to the high percentage of children in the Morris Brandon district that attend private school and the unlikelihood of an economic recovery in the near term, will the share of students who attend public school continue to increase?	Potential understatement of average survivor rates and projected Kindergarten enrollment.
7	P.19	As the SRT-4 district middle schools and high schools become stronger, it is likely that more parents will chose public elementary schools for their children. In the past many families would apply students to private schools during the elementary years to ensure admittance in the middle school and high school years.	Potential understatement of projected kindergarten enrollment, average survivor rates and projected enrollment for grades 1-5.

Attached is a spreadsheet that contains the historical and projected enrollment numbers included in the study, the actual historical enrollment numbers, recalculated average cohort survivor rates based on a four year average (excluding 2009-2010 due to redistricting) and the following 3 scenarios of projected enrollment:

Scenario 1: Applies recalculated average survivor rates and uses Kindergarten enrollment projections consistent with demographic study.

Scenario 2: Applies recalculated average survivor rates and uses Kindergarten enrollment projections that are constant at the 2010-11 level.

Scenario 3: Applies recalculated average survivor rates and uses Kindergarten enrollment projections reflecting a growth rate of 50% of the 4 year historical average (excluding 2009-10 redistricting year).

While the demographic study projects that enrollment peaks at 1170 next year and then gradually declines to 1,096 by 2019-20, our revised Scenario 2 projection indicates that enrollment peaks at 1,390 in 2015-2016 and remains at that level through the end of the study.

Let us know how you would like to proceed with addressing the issues. We recognize that the 11/11 meeting is for the entire SRT-4 district and that our questions may be too detailed to cover in that forum. We suggest a 30 minute meeting or conference call with the demographers. Please give it some consideration and let us know your thoughts.

Best regards,

Lee

On behalf of the Morris Brandon Task Force for Capacity Expansion

Morris Brandon Elementary School
Enrollment Projections
2010 Demographic Study

Grade	Enrollment Per Demographic Study																			
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020					
PK	-	2	3	5	1	-	-	240	223	221	216	211	207	204	201					
K	139	74	158	173	208	244	240	228	209	207	203	200	197	195	192					
1	119	77	168	166	205	197	212	209	195	192	190	191	188	185	183					
2	111	67	145	157	195	197	190	181	185	182	182	185	183	180	178					
3	106	54	117	134	166	191	187	181	185	176	175	175	178	176	173					
4	90	46	96	94	147	164	185	181	176	172	167	168	168	171	169					
5	98	50	89	85	98	140	156	176	172	167	172	168	168	171	169					
Total	663	370	776	815	1,020	1,143	1,170	1,170	1,155	1,144	1,141	1,130	1,121	1,111	1,096					
Change	n/a	(293)	406	39	205	123	27	0.00%	(15)	(11)	(3)	(11)	(9)	(10)	(15)					
% Change	n/a	-44.19%	109.73%	5.03%	25.15%	12.06%	2.36%	0.00%	-1.28%	-0.95%	-0.26%	-0.96%	-0.80%	-0.89%	-1.35%					

Grade	Enrollment Per Demographic Study, With Adjustments to Actual for 2006-07 and 2010-2011																			
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020					
PK	-	2	3	5	1	-	-	240	223	221	216	211	207	204	201					
K	139	74	158	173	208	244	240	228	209	207	203	200	197	195	192					
1	119	77	168	166	205	197	212	209	195	192	190	191	188	185	183					
2	111	67	145	157	195	197	190	181	185	182	182	185	183	180	178					
3	106	54	117	134	166	191	187	181	185	176	175	175	178	176	173					
4	90	46	96	94	147	164	185	181	176	172	167	168	168	171	169					
5	98	50	89	85	98	140	156	176	172	167	172	168	168	171	169					
Total	663	370	776	815	1,020	1,143	1,170	1,170	1,155	1,144	1,141	1,130	1,121	1,111	1,096					
Change	n/a	(293)	406	39	205	123	27	0.00%	(15)	(11)	(3)	(11)	(9)	(10)	(15)					
% Change	n/a	-44.22%	12.30%	5.03%	25.15%	11.08%	3.27%	0.00%	-1.28%	-0.95%	-0.26%	-0.96%	-0.80%	-0.89%	-1.35%					

Grade	Cohort Year to Year Survival Rates (2010 Forward are rates currently reflected in the study)														
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	
K-1	1.44%	6.33%	5.06%	18.50%	-	-	-12.92%	-8.02%	-8.07%	-8.14%	-7.41%	-6.84%	-5.80%	-5.88%	
First - Second	-5.04%	2.84%	-6.55%	17.47%	-	-	-8.13%	-4.74%	-8.21%	-5.85%	-5.91%	-6.00%	-6.09%	-6.15%	
Second-Third	-10.81%	3.54%	-7.59%	5.73%	-	-	-5.13%	-3.21%	-5.21%	-4.21%	-4.15%	-4.19%	-4.26%	-3.78%	
Third - Fourth	-8.49%	-3.03%	-19.66%	9.70%	-	-	-2.76%	-3.21%	-3.24%	-3.85%	-3.85%	-3.78%	-3.83%	-3.89%	
Fourth - Fifth	-10.00%	-8.25%	-10.42%	4.26%	-	-	-4.86%	-4.86%	-5.11%	-3.91%	-4.00%	-4.00%	-3.93%	-3.98%	

**4 year average including 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2010-11. 2009-10 is excluded due to redistricting. A more accurate method would be a pro forma approach to 2009-2010 and prior (as if redistricting had occurred).

Scenario #1 - Enrollment Projections Using Revised Average Cohort Size and Retaining Study Forecast for Kids Enrolled															
Grade	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
PK	-	2	3	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K	139	158	158	173	208	246	240	228	223	221	216	211	207	204	201
1	119	141	168	166	205	208	254	248	235	230	228	223	218	214	211
2	111	113	145	157	195	193	200	245	239	227	222	220	215	210	206
3	106	99	117	134	166	192	185	192	235	229	217	213	211	206	201
4	90	97	96	94	147	169	178	171	178	217	212	201	197	195	191
5	98	81	89	86	98	125	151	158	153	159	194	189	179	176	174
Total	563	691	776	815	1,020	1,133	1,208	1,243	1,262	1,263	1,289	1,257	1,227	1,204	1,183
Difference From Study Projection															
% Over (Under) Study Projection															
					3.24%	6.20%	9.30%	12.13%	12.97%	11.22%	9.44%	8.40%	7.98%		

Scenario #2 - Enrollment Projections Using Revised Average Cohort Size and Retaining Study Forecast for Kids Enrolled															
Grade	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
PK	-	2	3	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K	139	158	158	173	208	246	246	246	246	246	246	246	246	246	246
1	119	141	168	166	205	208	254	254	254	254	254	254	254	254	254
2	111	113	145	157	195	193	200	245	245	245	245	245	245	245	245
3	106	99	117	134	166	192	185	192	235	235	235	235	235	235	235
4	90	97	96	94	147	169	178	171	178	217	217	217	217	217	217
5	98	81	89	86	98	125	151	158	153	159	194	194	194	194	194
Total	563	691	776	815	1,020	1,133	1,214	1,267	1,310	1,355	1,390	1,390	1,390	1,390	1,390
Difference From Study Projection															
% Over (Under) Study Projection															
					3.75%	8.26%	13.42%	18.46%	21.83%	23.02%	24.01%	25.12%	26.84%		

Scenario #3 - Enrollment Projections Using Revised Average Cohort Size and Retaining Study Forecast for Kids Enrolled															
Grade	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
PK	-	2	3	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K	139	158	158	173	208	246	259	272	286	301	317	317	317	317	317
1	119	141	168	166	205	208	254	267	281	295	311	327	327	327	327
2	111	113	145	157	195	193	200	245	257	271	285	299	315	315	315
3	106	99	117	134	166	192	185	192	235	247	260	273	287	302	302
4	90	97	96	94	147	169	178	171	178	217	229	240	253	266	280
5	98	81	89	86	98	125	151	158	153	159	194	204	214	225	237
Total	563	691	776	815	1,020	1,133	1,227	1,306	1,390	1,490	1,594	1,660	1,713	1,752	1,777
Difference From Study Projection															
% Over (Under) Study Projection															
					4.84%	11.62%	20.33%	39.68%	46.90%	52.77%	57.66%	62.14%			