

Morris Brandon School Council North Atlanta Middle School Changes

Most of us have heard by now of a recommendation generated by Atlanta Public Schools in January to relieve current and future overcrowding at Sutton Middle School. The full document can be accessed at <http://srt4.atlantapublicschools.us/sutton/site/default.asp> and an AJC article on the subject is at <http://www.ajc.com/news/atlanta/more-kids-stick-with-370576.html>. In summary, APS states that overcrowding at Sutton is bad and getting worse, that other alternatives have been considered (expansion, annex, etc.) and that the most practical and beneficial solution is to relocate North Atlanta High School to a new location and open a second IB middle school at the existing North Atlanta High School site. So long as the site for a new high school is secured prior to the end of 2010, APS currently projects that the new high school and middle school would open for the 2012-2013 school year. The Sutton PTA, without specifically objecting to the APS proposal, has suggested an alternative for consideration: a two-campus middle school solution, with sixth graders to attend the current Sutton facility and 7th & 8th graders to attend a facility located at the current North Atlanta site.

While APS issued its initial recommendation in January, there are a number of open issues that APS is considering before making a final decision on the project, including, but not limited to (1) undertaking a comprehensive demographic study to ensure that the final decision is based on good data, (2) soliciting feedback from stakeholders, and (3) attempting to get the new high school site under contract.

We've had a number of inquiries from our community concerning what position the Morris Brandon School Council is taking on the Sutton proposal. At this point, insufficient data exists on which to base a position. However, we are committed to fostering information sharing and dialogue between parents, teachers, administration and the school system. Our primary focus this year has been to address overcrowding concerns at Brandon. In connection with that effort, we requested that APS conduct an updated demographic study for our area. APS has undertaken a comprehensive demographic study for all the north side schools and has indicated that solving the Brandon and Sutton overcrowding issues will receive first priority. When the demographic study and other key information are complete, the Council will encourage APS to hold public meetings on a schedule that allows input from the community in advance of final decisions. If appropriate, the Council will issue a position statement on the Sutton proposal after sufficient data is available and we have adequately surveyed the Brandon community for its views on the various alternatives. While the Council has not received any formal communications from APS, we have requested a timeline that sets for key milestones and dates in the decision making process. We understand that the earliest likely date for any final decision regarding the middle school(s) would be the end of this calendar year.

In the interim, parents should feel free to address their concerns or questions directly to APS at suttonfeedback@atlantapublicschools.us, with a copy to brandonschoolcouncil@gmail.com.