

November 10, 2010

Dear Morris Brandon Community,

Given that there is a lot going on within the Atlanta Public Schools right now, the leadership of the PTA and the School Council would like to share with you a summary of what we know about the many issues making headlines and circulating around to hopefully clear the air and possibly ease your mind regarding: the investigation of the CRCT cheating scandal, the leadership struggle of the board, the negotiations surrounding a site for a new high school, the future overcrowding of Sutton, and lastly, yet most importantly to us, the capacity issues at five out of the six elementary schools in our cluster.

None of the schools in our northern cluster have been implicated in the CRCT cheating scandal. However, there are state and federal investigations currently underway looking into the cheating allegations across the district. While we are not directly impacted, it does cast a negative shadow over our school district and creates a distraction from other issues. With this said, we hope there is closure to the investigation very soon.

The current leadership struggle within the APS Board of Education as to whether the September replacement of the chair and vice-chair is "legal" is now in the hands of the court system (though all parties hope for a negotiated solution prior to the next court hearing on Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>). Regardless of what you've heard, what side you might take or how disappointed you may be, in the end we still have to work with our nine elected board members to achieve what we want to achieve. Therefore, and because we are neither privy to all the facts nor in a position to pass judgment on corporate governance issues, we have not taken a position, other than encouraging all board members to come to a resolution this month and focus on important matters at hand. We firmly believe this conflict will be resolved and that the threatened loss of accreditation and corporate grant money will not be pursued following the resolution.

The site for a new high school is supposed to be announced by the end of this calendar year. After the site is announced and the School Board votes to approve it, APS has indicated it will soon decide whether it is best to have two separate 6-8 grade middle schools or whether a 6<sup>th</sup> grade academy at the present Sutton campus and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at the North Atlanta H.S. campus is a better solution. There are many differing opinions about this and many pros and cons to each scenario. To learn more, visit [http://www.suttonmiddleschool.org/Documents/DOC093010.pdf?sms\\_ss=email](http://www.suttonmiddleschool.org/Documents/DOC093010.pdf?sms_ss=email). APS and the Board have clearly stated that they are open to varying approaches. We suggest sending an email to [suttonfeedback@atlantapublicschools.us](mailto:suttonfeedback@atlantapublicschools.us) to articulate your thoughts. APS appears to be reading these emails. They have received only 140 emails to date, but would like to hear from many, many more families.

The last issue to address, but of utmost importance to our school community is overcrowding. Brandon's capacity issue is the leading issue for our Brandon School Council members and Administration right now. Your Brandon School Council and PTA are actively engaged in working with APS to address capacity concerns at Morris Brandon and in our cluster. School Council met with APS representatives, including Sharron Pitts and APS demographers, in August, formed a Task Force in September to

lead review, communication and advocacy efforts, and continues to communicate with APS regarding developments on this issue. The current front-burner issue is that APS' commissioned demographic study indicates little new growth at Brandon after this school year. The School Council's analysis believes that to be unlikely and identified potential shortcomings in the study. To that end, School Council has recently sent letters to Ms. Pitts and to Dr. Beverly Hall, copied to the Atlanta Board of Education, regarding the current demographic study as it relates to Morris Brandon and is aggressively engaged. Please visit [www.morrisbrandon.com](http://www.morrisbrandon.com) to view these letters. **There is a community meeting on Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8:00 in the theater at Sutton Middle School to hear a presentation on the APS 2010 Demographic Study.**

Yesterday, all PTA Co-Presidents, a few Local School Council members and the President of North Atlanta Parents for Public Schools (NAPPS) met to become a unified voice for our northern cluster of schools. A letter will be sent and published soon to APS and the Board of Education from this united body voicing its concerns and needs. We are encouraged by the passion and dedication all of these leaders have to ensure our cluster continues to thrive.

What can YOU do? Stay informed and be vocal. Please offer your constructive suggestions and opinions to our school board members and APS (email addresses provided below). **The next meeting of NAPPS, to which anyone may attend, is scheduled for Wednesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> at noon at Jackson Elementary with Dr. Beverly Hall as guest speaker.**

Thank you, and, as always, please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

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