



August 8, 2016

Dear Board Member Byron Amos,

On behalf of WCAG, I would like thank you for attending our monthly meeting on July 21, 2016 and answering many unanswered questions from the community regarding our schools in the Washington Cluster. We are excited about the new academies within our cluster, as well as the opportunity to support the newly identified cluster GO Team members. As previously mentioned in the meeting, we have some requests that we ask both of our elected cluster representatives, your fellow Atlanta Board of Education members and Dr. Carstarphen. They are as follows:

- We request that you call a special meeting for the Board to take an official position for or against the Governor's Opportunity School District (OSD) plan.
- We request that WCAG be notified about all Washington Cluster School plans before they are released to the public. We would also like to schedule a tour of all of the remodeled schools within the cluster. (namely TAG Academy, Brown Middle School and Hollis Innovation Academy).
- We request an update to WCAG's requests from the correspondence dated June 28<sup>th</sup> considering the following items:

1. The M.R. Hollis Innovation Academy has been coined as a flagship STEM school. As noted in the first two bullets of WCAG's points of concern around equity issues within the cluster, there are a myriad of challenges that the community has around APS's decision to close Bethune (a school where of 88% of its students are directly certified to receive SNAP or TANF and/or also identified as homeless, unaccompanied youth, foster or immigrant) under the auspices of an un-repairable HVAC system and give it to Centennial to house its rising 6<sup>th</sup> grade class than to do the very thing that WCAG asked of APS, take the necessary time to design and construct a high quality campus. It was disappointing to learn that Centennial was allowed to move into Bethune without an actual vote being cast by the APS School Board, which is presumably apart of APS procedures. This lends itself to the persistent feeling that APS is not willing to be transparent nor is APS willing to address the equity issue noted in

Proudly serving the following Washington Cluster Schools:

M.A. Hollis Innovation Academy

M. Agnes Jones Elementary School

Tuskegee Airman Global Academy

Brown Middle School

Washington High School

its own equity report, particularly within our cluster. Why would APS and the Board allow a school to force one school out and move another school in without a vote or without ensuring that the previously underperforming school that was forced out was properly equipped on Day 1 to be considered a state of the art STEM? This decision only lends evidence to the perceived notion that the decision to extend a lease to Centennial for three years was made long before it was brought to the community's attention, thereby feeding the spirit of distrust. In the spirit of moving forward and not causing further damage to the relationship between APS and the communities supported by Washington cluster schools, WCAG has worked relentlessly to ensure that the cluster school based administrators have the resources they need to turn our schools around. Given the fact that Hollis Innovation Academy building (formerly known as Kennedy Middle School) needed and never received the \$10 Million dollars of building upgrades in 2010 (as noted in the budget for the previous SPLOST allocation) we are requesting an increase in the Hollis investments to upgrade the school's hardware, software and IT infrastructure so that it truly functions as a state of the art STEM school. We would like a list of all of the technology upgrades to date, as well as any pending investments to include the pool. Also, we would like to schedule a meeting with the cluster Go TEAMS and APS to discuss the aforementioned request, encourage transparency and ensure that all governing entities are supportive of the plans thereby precluding unintentional equitable disbursement of resources and community support within the cluster. We ask that the vote on Centennial's lease be tabled until this discussion has been scheduled and an agreement has been reached.

2. We request that Washington High School be added to the Cluster Turnaround plan for the reasons articulated during June's WCAG meeting.
3. We request that M.R. Hollis Innovation Academy attendance zone be redrawn to reflect Kennedy's old attendance zone for the rising 6-8 students.
4. In Superintendent Carstarphen's previous correspondence, she noted that "I want to be clear that the district does not have funding to commit to additional construction at Brown." We are unclear about the relevance of that statement. The funding for the entire basement renovation project was already approved. There should be dollars available to complete this proposed 3500+ whether apart of the basement or as a detached footprint because it was in the original proposed idea and budget calculations. As noted in previous communication, the proposed health center will not only serve as a potential service internship location for Washington's Sports Medicine pathway students, but also as a medical home for our parents who lack transportation and have moved to the extreme western parts of the attendance zone due to the extreme reduction of affordable housing options. We would like written confirmation about the status

of the previously approved project at Brown along with documentation that assesses where those pre-approved dollars have been spent

5. We also respectfully ask that when in a setting with APS Board Members and community members, that APS Board members and their surrogates address the community members in a courteous and professional manner at all times. This same expectation will continue to be articulated to and expected of the community members at the top of all of WCAG's meeting agendas.

I ask that you not mistaken our concerns as a lack of excitement within the cluster. I personally believe that difficult discussions are inherent to transitioning anything from ok to being considered GREAT. As an advocacy group, we are confident that together we will not only return the Washington Cluster schools to its former glory but make ALL of APS schools great! Should you have any questions regarding our request, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 214-870-4601 or by email at [wcagatl@gmail.com](mailto:wcagatl@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

*Erika Brown*

Erika Brown  
President, WCAG

EB/sg  
CC: Dr. Meria Carstarphen  
APS Board Members  
WCAG Membership  
Washington Cluster Elected Officials