

# FAQ

## **What is the School Community Advocacy Coalition (SCAC)?**

Previously named the Growth Task Force, the **School Community Advocacy Coalition (SCAC)** is comprised of members of the Highland Creek Elementary School Leadership Team and PTA, as well as, parents of HCES students and Highland Creek Homeowners' Association Board Members. Created by concerned parents after the last Ridge Road Middle School boundary meeting, the purpose of the SCAC is to facilitate communication with CMS staff on issues that affect the children in our community.

## **What is the current status of the new Johnston-Oehler Elementary School (JOES)?**

Although the Board of County Commissioners has put the issuance of the bonds to build the new school on hold, there is still a possibility the school will open for the 2010-2011 school year as planned if CMS receives federal stimulus money for school construction. CMS Planning is committed to moving forward with the boundary discussions unless otherwise directed. JOES is very high on the school construction priority list.

## **When are the CMS Boundary Meetings and what will happen at them?**

The boundary meetings are going to be held on **April 13<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> from 6:30-8:30pm**, Highland Creek Elementary School (HCES)

CMS will present [three discussion options](#). In addition to HCES, the Johnston-Oehler Elementary School (JOES) boundaries include students attending Mallard Creek Elementary School (MCES) and David Cox Elementary School. CMS has a responsibility to ensure fairness by listening to the entire community impacted by the boundary changes; therefore, it will present options it believes balances the needs of all three schools.

## **What is the SCAC doing?**

An open line of communication exists between CMS and the SCAC leading up to the April meetings. We are advising CMS of the position and feedback we are receiving in preparation for a productive, fact-based and positive set of Planning Services Workshops in April.

Based on feedback the SCAC has received and discussed from parents, residents, etc., the current CMS discussion options were deemed undesirable due to their inherently divisive nature to the school and community. As a result, the SCAC discussed the three community options as more viable alternatives. These options are in alignment with parents', residents', taxpayers' desires as well as CMS goals and objectives.

## **What were the community options that SCAC considered?**

### **JOES Magnet/Highland Creek Community Plan**

In this option, the boundaries for HCES are drawn as tightly as reasonable to allow all of the HC Community to remain at HCES. HCES would be at approximately 102% capacity based on current enrollment and not allowing for future growth within the HCE Community. JOES reduced enrollment would allow CMS the option of attracting students via a Magnet program and accommodating potential growth surrounding the future I-485 corridor.

#### Pros

- Could provide a partial magnet in this area
- Keeps the Highland Creek community together
- Could provide a partial-magnet in this area (some HC may opt to go to JOE magnet which would help with HCE capacity)
- Precedent: CMS allowed Croft Community School to open under capacity and David Cox Elementary School to remain over-capacity to keep the Davis Lake community together
- Maintain integrity of school culture
- JOES being under capacity initially would accommodate I-485 corridor growth
- Highland Creek is built out (less than 19 single family homes left per Hawthorne Management Company out of the 3262 Mecklenburg County lots.)

#### Cons

- Magnet schools can be a divisive issue
- At 102% capacity using 2008-2009 20-day numbers
- JOES would be under capacity
- Not inclusive of surrounding neighborhoods
- Even if we are successful in keeping the community together short-term, boundary issues for future elementary schools may come up in the future.

#### Issues for consideration:

Do CMS future growth calculations take into consideration that Highland Creek is almost built out? What other items factor into growth projections?

### **HCE/MCE Expansion**

In this option JOES is not built and the capital funding is used to expand HCES and MCES for the partial cost of a new school. In addition to additional classroom space, this would include expanding food service and gym.

#### Pros

- Requires less capital to improve both schools than to build a new school
- Ongoing operating expenses would be lower
- Keeps the Highland Creek community together
- Current economic situation calls for creative ways to save money

#### Cons

- CMS facilities staff have indicated they are not in favor of this option

- Could take away current play areas (areas are not useable now due to learning cottages)
- Could lose out on brick and mortar seats down the line if new school is not built
- Does not provide many more expansion options for these impacted schools
- CMS does not promote elementary schools with more than 800 seats
- I-485 growth could increase student population

Issues for consideration:

- Would County Commissioners support this option given the current financial situation?

**K-2 / 3-5 Split**

In this option the HCES/JOES attendance zones would be merged. K-2 students would attend JOES while 3-5 students would attend HCES.

Pros

- CMS facilities staff have indicated they may be in favor of this option
- Mooresville has this system and it is considered one of the best school systems in the state
- Keeps the Highland Creek community together
- CMS precedent: This was an option in Cornelius
- Splitting allows activities to cater more directly to specific age group
- Equitable to all HC residents

Cons

- Siblings could be at multiple schools
- Could be difficult to keep track of activities at two elementary schools
- Volunteering would be impacted due to: parents may be have children at two elementary schools (this is not perceived as an issue when siblings are split between elementary and middle school as middle schools tend to have a lower need for parental time commitment).
- Volunteering would be impacted because parents of K-2 students volunteer more than parents of 3-5 students
- Donations could be impacted by having to be split between schools
- Community support split between two schools

Issues for consideration:

- What would the start times for the two schools be? How will that impact families getting young children to multiple schools?

**What community option is SCAC recommending?**

While all three community options keep all Highland Creek residents at HCES, the JOES Magnet/Highland Creek Community Plan surfaced as the prevailing recommended option.

## **What if I don't agree with the SCAC recommendation?**

We realize this is a difficult situation and no solution will please everyone. While the SCAC does not discourage anyone from contacting CMS directly, we do urge everyone who does to **keep feedback fact-based, constructive, productive and positive**. Much effort has gone into establishing an amicable relationship with CMS. This foundation provides the best opportunity to influence not only CMS Planning to make the most desirable recommendation but the Board of Education who must approve it. It is important that we remember to represent the character and integrity of this great community. Anything short of that would be detrimental to positively influence the outcome.

## **How do I get in contact with SCAC?**

If you have a question, comment, suggestion or would like to be added to our email list please contact us at [SCAC@carolina.rr.com](mailto:SCAC@carolina.rr.com).