

8-14-17
 Committee of the Whole Meeting

8-28-17
 Board of Trustees Meeting

Action Item
 Information Only

Open Session
 Executive Session

Section: Strategic Education Committee

Title: Grade Configuration for Lucy Beckham High School

Originator/Department: Kim Wilson, Secondary Learning Community
 Anna Dassing, Lucy Beckham High School

Agenda Item Number: 10.1A

Background/Discussion: Lucy G. Beckham High School is scheduled to open in the fall of 2020. Since this is a new school for the district and is not simply replacing an existing school, opening grade configuration and zoning need to be considered. Please see attached for full discussion of opening grade configuration and zoning considerations.

Goals & Budget:

Recommendation:
 Open Lucy G. Beckham High School with 9th and 10th grade, adding 11th and 12th as students move up, with full enrollment (9-12) set for 2022; and request that the District 2 Constituent Board create an attendance zone for Lucy G. Beckham High School in accordance with CCSD policy.

Person(s) Responsible for Implementation: Kim Wilson and Anna Dassing

Superintendent's Approval: *Herrita Postlewait*

Board Member(s) Approval:

Attachment(s): Yes No

Lucy G. Beckham High School Opening and Zoning
Anna Dassing, Principal
Kim Wilson, Executive Director of the Secondary Learning Community
August 2017

Opening Grade Configuration Discussion:

Charleston County School District has not opened a new public comprehensive 9-12 high school since the opening of Wando High School in 1972. Other public comprehensive high school facilities in the district have been renovated or replaced; examples: St. John's High School in 2003; R. B. Stall in 2010. Since most schools have simply shifted from one location to another, the question of what grades to include as the school opens has not been an issue. Little in the way of formal research is available. Staff surveyed other school districts and formed a Transition Focus Group made up of middle and high school educators and parents of students who will likely attend Beckham.

A survey of principals in CCSD and across the state as well as a show a slight preference for phasing in grades. Preference for opening all grades, 9-12, was shown only for rebuilding and in cases where multiple school groups were converging. The Transition Focus Group supports the grades 9-10 phase-in approach.

As a counterpoint, some sentiment among a few in the community is that Wando is too big and that Beckham should open with grades 9-12 to immediately relieve overcrowding and accommodate for continued growth in the Mt. Pleasant community. While opening 9-12 would create greater reduction of Wando's enrollment in 2020, we recommend the grade phase-in approach as outlined below.

Recommendations:

1. Grade Configuration: Open Beckham with 9th and 10th grade, adding 11th and 12th as students move up, with full enrollment (9-12) set for 2022.

- *Academics:* This plan would allow Beckham to gradually build CTE and AP programs that would have high enough enrollment to sustain the programs. It would allow Beckham to establish fine arts and athletic programs beginning at a JV level and grow these into highly successful and competitive programs.
- *Culture:* Student input in developing school culture is important. A gradual opening would allow Beckham to establish a strong positive culture and climate as well as establish policies and standard operating procedures with a smaller student population.
- *Student Transition:* Transition is a challenge for any school with students entering and leaving, but even more critical in the opening of a new school. We are working closely with all East Cooper feeder middle schools to "Build Beckham" by providing input on mascots, colors, alma mater, and building high school traditions. Mrs. Dassing will be visiting middle schools and attending PTO, and SIC meetings to develop relationships and build culture within the community. Parents, students,

and staff at Wando will need to be included in building transition processes for the one class of students who go to Wando as freshmen and then matriculate to Beckham for their sophomore year.

- *Impact on Wando:* Dr. Sherry Eppelsheimer, principal of Wando, supports the plan outlined above. This proposal will allow 11th and 12th grade students to finish completer CTE and AP programs, graduate with the students they started with, and minimize the impact to fine arts and athletic programs at Wando.

2. Zoning

The District 2 Constituent Board should, in accordance with policies and procedures of CCSD, create an attendance zone for Lucy G. Beckham High School.

Zoned enrollment allows district officials and school leaders to adequately prepare for and project needs for students and programs. Properly allocating resources, hiring staff, and preparing schools for students takes a solid understanding of the student populations and schools they are coming from. Zoning will allow high schools to develop strong articulated predictable feeder patterns with middle and elementary schools and prepare better for student needs. In addition, stronger positive cultures can be developed within neighborhoods and feeder pattern communities.

Some community members have advocated for open enrollment, creating an open "choice" district at the high school level for District 1 and 2 students. This approach is not viable. It is not used in any other area of CCSD; it would result in escalated transportation costs and complicate teacher allocation and program continuity at both schools.

We recommend that the D2 Constituent Board create an attendance zone for Beckham taking into consideration the rezoning of middle and elementary schools as necessary to create a balanced and positive enrollment for all East Cooper schools.