November 9, 2021

Dear Franklin Square Families, Students, and Community Members,

City Schools is committed to making sure that every school across the city provides our students with high-quality educational experiences that enables students to thrive, supports their learning and encourages their personal growth.

Part of our work in reaching this goal includes an annual review of the district’s schools and programs that looks at a broad range of considerations, including academic performance, school climate, school programming, enrollment trends, conditions of school facilities, the range and balance of school options in different parts of the city, and the 21st Century School Buildings Plan.

Your school, Franklin Square, has had low enrollment for several years and is located near another school, Steuart Hill Academic Academy, with similar enrollment challenges housed in a facility with many issues. The size of the school populations impacts our ability to provide your student(s) with strong academic programming because schools are funded on a per student basis.

Franklin Square is in a building that has had more recent renovations and has space to safely accommodate additional students. Increasing the zone for Franklin Square to have the ability to serve more students not only helps additional students and families to access programming and resources afforded to the school community; it would also help increase the capacity of Franklin Square to offer more academic programming that would also benefit existing families through additional per-student funding.

Steuart Hill is also located near Frederick Elementary School, which is housed in its 21st century school building and it also has space to house additional students.

Therefore, tonight, based on the results of this year’s review, I am recommending that the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners consider closing Steuart Hill Academic Academy at the end of this school year, in June 2022, and splitting the zone between Franklin Square Elementary/Middle and Frederick Elementary. I believe this will increase student and family access to schools in better buildings with the capacity to have increased per-student funding to sustain rich, robust, and varied educational programs less than a mile from students’ homes.

If the closure is approved, the school communities would combine starting in the 2022-2023 school year. The Franklin Square zone would be expanded to include the portion of the Steuart Hill zone east of Gilmor Street, and the Frederick zone would be expanded to include the portion of the Steuart Hill zone west of Gilmor.

I am also recommending that the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners consider returning the Steuart Hill building to the city of Baltimore in summer 2022.

As a member of the Franklin Square community, your feedback on this recommendation is critical. A meeting will take place at your school on Monday, December 13 at 5:00 p.m. where you can learn more and get answers to your questions.

In addition to attending meetings to better understand the reasons for the recommendation, you can also view the report that has been provided to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (“Board”). The report is titled Annual Review of Schools: Review and Recommendations, 2021-22 (“Report”). The Report outlines the recommendations and the factors the Board must consider in this process. The Report is available on the district’s website (www.baltimorecityschools.org) and upon request can be reviewed at your school.

You can provide written feedback to the Board from now through 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 7, 2022. Written
comments must include full identification of the sender and should be directed to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, 200 E. North Ave., Room 406, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, or sent by email to portfoliorecommendations@bcps.k12.md.us.

In addition, there are two opportunities where you can give oral commentary to the Board on the recommendations.

- Public hearing: Thursday, December 2, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
- Special work session: Wednesday, December 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, all Board meetings are being held remotely. Please check the Board calendar or BoardDocs on the City Schools website for call-in information to observe the meetings which can be found here: https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/board-meetings. The opportunity for oral testimony will be closed after completion of the December 15 special session.

After consideration of all of the factors, other information learned through the process including public feedback, the Board will vote on these recommendations at a meeting on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. If the Board votes to approve the recommendations, district office staff will be available to meet with you to ensure that the transition process is smooth and meets students’ and families’ needs.

Thank you for supporting our schools and students. We look forward to working in partnership with students, families, and school communities to create a district of high-quality school programs that meets the needs of every student in Baltimore.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer