



April 30, 2023

Arlington County School Board  
2110 Washington Blvd  
Arlington, VA 22204

Re: Addressing Community Concerns over Oakridge Elementary School

Dear Board Members,

We, the Presidents of the three civic associations in the 22202 zip code (Arlington Ridge, Aurora Highlands, Crystal City), which constitute the Livability22202 coalition, are writing to express concern about the Oakridge Elementary School and request the Board immediately address the issues we raise.

Oakridge is the only elementary school in the 22202 zip code, home to Amazon HQ2 and the vibrant National Landing. Over the past several months, parents and community members have expressed evidence-based concerns regarding the downward performance trends of our neighborhood elementary school, Oakridge Elementary, through direct engagements with the School Board and APS Staff. The Livability22202 Schools Working Group, which represents an area that comprises a large portion of Oakridge attendees, actively follows all school issues. We, and the Working Group, believe schools are at the center of any vibrant and healthy community.

In the past ten years, Oakridge's academic performance has steadily declined in its Standard-of-Learning (SOL) pass rates, as shown in Appendix A. Its SOL pass rates are not only well below the County elementary school average, but also well below the pass rates for several other elementary schools in the County with similar ethnic and economic demographics. While all schools experienced a dip during the pandemic, Oakridge is one of just three schools that have shown no signs of improvement since. Similarly, the equity gap across racial/ethnic and socioeconomically diverse students continues to widen. Additionally, there are significant concerns about the high teacher turnover at Oakridge. According to APS data, Oakridge had the third highest percentage of inexperienced teachers in the 21-22 School Year. Before the start of the 22-23 School Year, most of the fourth and fifth grade staff resigned or retired, as well as the school librarian, music teacher and vice principal. Many chose to leave Oakridge for other schools within APS.

Parents and community members would like to see a roadmap for improvement that includes:

- A family and community engagement program, similar to Hoffman Boston's Family and Community Engagement (FACE) program, whose goal is to ensure all groups are engaged in order to build school behavioral expectations and reinforce academic learning.
- An academic improvement plan leveraging best practices from high-performing schools across APS, to include school-wide behavioral intervention to address non-academic challenges.
- A plan to determine the cause of teacher and staff hiring/retention challenges at Oakridge, so they may be addressed via development, mentorship, and/or monetary incentives.

- Short- and long-term facility, staffing, and resource planning for increased enrollment in 22202, to ensure staffing is adequate to cover higher than forecasted school year enrollments and population increases expected in the next five to ten years due to new family-oriented residential developments and demographic shifts.

APS promises academic excellence for all students, and currently, Oakridge Elementary School is not living up to that commitment. The school, already beyond its enrollment capacity, will add even more students next year according to APS projections. We request that these issues be immediately addressed, as they will only grow more acute with the wave of new residential development.

Respectfully,



Kateri Garcia, President  
Arlington Ridge CA



Cory Jacobbe, President  
Aurora Highlands CA



Eric Cassel, President  
Crystal City CA

CC: Arlington County Board Members  
Dr. Francisco Duran, APS Superintendent

Attachment: SOL Pass Rates for Oakridge Elementary School