



**Prince William County**  
**PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
*Providing A World-Class Education*

TO: Rita Goss, Associate Superintendent of Student Services  
FROM: Lillie G. Jessie, School Board Member, Occoquan District  
SUBJECT: Aviation Maintenance Program, Woodbridge High School  
DATE: August 14, 2019

It has been brought to my attention that portions of the Aviation Maintenance Program slated for Woodbridge High School will be shared with Stonewall Jackson High School. I am in opposition of this plan, as it will undermine the value of the program for students at Woodbridge High School, for which it was intended, and also opposed to the manner in which this program change was decided.

Woodbridge High School lost much of its specialty status when Colgan High School was built. The Aviation Maintenance Program is an important step for the future of Woodbridge High School and any attempt to remove or reduce the efficacy of a program slated for it will be met with public opposition. To be clear, reducing this program from four blocks of instruction to only two blocks is a disservice to Woodbridge students.

I have worked diligently for the past three years with Mrs. Marion Cohen, the education leader for Aviation Maintenance, to bring this program specifically to Woodbridge. In fact, when it became evident that transportation was going to be an issue, Mrs. Cohen shared a program with Mrs. Heather Abney, Principal of Woodbridge High, Mr. Douglas Wright and I on August 5 that minimized transportation needs by requesting that instructors go to the school site for 85% of the course requirements.

In addition, the way that changes to this program were made is not in compliance with Board rules and practice. The decision to share the program with Stonewall Jackson High School was made surreptitiously behind my back, without my input or knowledge. I only learned of the plan when checking the calendar to confirm a meeting slated for August 23. It was then that B Simpson, Deputy Clerk, explained to me that the date was not finalized because we had to confirm it on Mr. Trenum's calendar. I was shocked and dismayed.

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I learned later during our subsequent conversation that it was Dr. Lateef, the Board Chair, or as Mrs. Goss referred to him “the chair,” who requested that the program be shared with Stonewall. These plans were discussed with Mrs. Cohen but at no time did you discuss it with me or ask my opinion. As indicated in our conversation today, Dr. Lateef’s role as the chair does not give him the authority to modify a program in another Board member’s district. His only authority as chair is to approve the agenda. This Board remains a corporate structure. I am sure he is aware of this since he attended the Board Chair training offered by the Virginia School Boards Association earlier this summer. Members of the Superintendent’s staff should act accordingly.

I understand that Dr. Lateef and Mr. Trenum made a “deal” to provide Stonewall Jackson with more resources in return for increasing their minority and low-income enrollment. I did not support this plan because in my opinion it made this a segregated school. As an archived (Library of Congress) Civil Rights Leader and, more importantly, someone who grew up in a segregated elementary and high school and college, I believe that separate is not equal (Brown versus Board of Education) and have the educational scars to prove it. Additionally, Osbourn Park High school, an attendance school in *my district*, was forced to take more low income and minority students without input or support from its community. Therefore, I will not willingly participate in your plans to take a program that I have worked hard to deliver to my district and move portions of it to Stonewall to fulfill your obligations to the public.

Dr. Lateef and Mr. Trenum made a commitment to the Stonewall Jackson community. It should not be made on the back of a school in my district.

cc: Dr. Steven Walts, Superintendent  
Dr. Babur Lateef, Chairman, School Board  
Mr. Keith Imon, Deputy Superintendent