

Good evening. My name is Tamra White and I am a veterinarian working in my own practice in Keystone Heights, the mother of two 8 year old girls currently in 3rd grade at Keystone Heights Elementary School, and a registered voter in Clay County. I would first off like to express my appreciation for being able to address the Board this evening concerning the Clay County School System, and especially as it exists and works in the area of Keystone Heights. My main concern is that in our area the High School and the Middle School are both housed in the same physical facility. To the best of my knowledge, Keystone Heights is the only place in Clay County where this is true. Everywhere else there are separate campuses for elementary, middle, and high schools, which I believe to be the best arrangement. Our current situation of middle schoolers and high schoolers being on the same campus and in the same buildings leads to many actual and potential problems. For most kids most of the time there is quite a bit of difference between middle schoolers and high schoolers as far as physical and social development goes. Generally speaking, 7th and 8th graders are not equipped to hold their own with 11th and 12th graders when it comes to such issues as dating, "peer" pressure, sexual relations, drug use, appropriate make-up and mode of dress, and dealing with hazing, bullies, and coercion. Most kids most of the time have enough to do dealing with these types of issues with other kids in their own grade without having to do so with kids 4 and 5 years older than themselves. I believe the co-mingling of kids from 12 years old to 18 years old to be counter-productive to a good environment for learning. Apparently I am not alone in this belief as I note that everywhere else in Clay County the Middle and High Schools are separate facilities and campuses.

I see where there are 3 elementary schools and 1 high school proposed for the Oakleaf Area at an estimated cost of \$106 million. I understand that there is a need for new school facilities in that area because of the huge number of new homes being built there, but The Keystone Heights area is growing also, albeit not as rapidly. I understand that expansion of educational facilities must be prioritized and that not everything can be done first or all at once, and that money has to be available. Having said that though, no one area or community in Clay County is more important or matters more than any other area or community. Keystone Heights is at the far end of Clay County relative to Orange Park, Middleburg, and so forth, and there is a perception, right or wrong, that we are of secondary importance or just don't matter as much as other parts of the County. I would certainly hope this perception is incorrect.

Given that Middle and High Schools are more expensive to build, why not hold off building a third Elementary School in Oakleaf, build a new Elementary School in Keystone Heights, and convert the current Keystone Heights Elementary School into a Middle School (it already has a gym). A new, properly planned Elementary School here would also eliminate the need for redistricting. I realize this may not be ideal for Oakleaf, and I realize we are not more important than that area, but, if it counts for anything, we were here before them.

My research into the Clay County demographics has shown that it is very difficult to get accurate statistics for the Keystone Heights area. Everything is geared to the incorporated City of Keystone Heights proper, yet a very sizable number of people and children in this area do not live inside the city limits. Those people seem to be lumped into all the rest of the unincorporated areas of the county as a whole. My suspicion is that the

demographic information available does not accurately reflect what is needed by way of educational facilities in the City of Keystone Heights and its surrounding area.

I have started a petition in hopes of showing there is wide-spread local support for our getting a Middle School. This petition has been signed by many concerned citizens (and voters), some of whom are currently teaching in the Keystone Heights schools. This shows that those in “the trenches” recognize the pressing need for separate facilities. I hope the Board will take note of this.

While it won't solve all problems, I believe putting a separate Middle School in Keystone Heights will reduce the severity and scope of the problems that remain. I believe those problems will be easier to deal with without having a wide age range in the student body.

If the Clay County Board of Education is not able, or not wanting, to grant a Middle School separate from the High School for our community in the near future, then perhaps the solution is a voucher system. That at least would provide for the members of our community, taxpayers and voters, to be able to send their children to a school that is age appropriate.

Again, thank you for the chance to express my views to the Board, and I formally ask that the Board take action on this matter.

PETITION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

This is a petition for Keystone Heights to have their own middle school. If you don't believe that we should be sending our 12 year olds to an environment where they are allowed to commingle with 18 year olds and be subjected to the sexual nature of older children then please sign this petition. If you believe that your 12 year old should not wonder the halls with pregnant teenagers and the belief that unwed pregnancy is acceptable then please sign this petition. If you believe that your children should not be subjected to the vulgar language and violent fighting that has become a daily part of the high school years then please sign this petition, and last but not least if you believe that Keystone Heights is a great community and are tired of being treated like second class citizens by the school board and county commissioners then let your voice be heard by signing this petition. Thank you.

NAME

ADDRESS

1. Judy Kew 6007 Klare Dr. Keystone Heights.
2. Sherry Fitch 4671 Kim Lane Keystone Heights, Fc 326
3. Theresa Huffman 8127 Gustafson Rd KH
4. Mr. Schuster (Alicia Schuster) 6737 CR 315C, K.H., Fc 32636
5. Sharon Johnson 6051 Woodland Dr. K.H. 32656
6. Steven D Truba 7593 Oak Forest Rd Keystone Hgts
7. Carl Bonard 8185 Forest Hills Rd Melrose, F/32666
8. Linda Williams 7593 Oak Forest Rd Keystone
9. Wendy Reynolds 5864 Indian Tr. Keystone
10. Nancy F. Hutto 6527 IMMORPIEE RD K.S.
11. ZORL 6412 CR 214 Keystone Heights
12. Bobbie Daise 6127 Klare Dr., Keystone Heights
13. Phil Daise 6127 Klare Dr Keystone Heights

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NAME	ADDRESS
1. Deborah Telford	16527 Ironhorse Rd
2. CLARENCE Kelsey	621 SW Susan Ave
3. LeeAnn Hawkins	0412 CR 214
4. Yolanda White	157 Hernando Dr. Ft. Lauderdale, FL
5. Theresa K. B.	7626 Oak Forest Rd. K.H.
6. Barbara Crawford	5465 CR 352 K.H.
7. Richard Hankins	6375 Little Lake Geneva Rd
8. Kimberly Hankins	6375 Little Lake Geneva Rd
9. Kim PITTE	PO Box 1734 K.H.
10. TAMMIE LANGTRY	PO Box 634 K.H.
11. Sam Ager	5851 White Sands Rd
12. Barbara Crawford	365 NW Bona K.H.
13. Vicki CONRAD	365 NW BEREA AVE K.H.

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NAME	ADDRESS
1. Lorie Dwyer	10708 Bedford Oak Dr
2. Barbara Pierce	6708 Bedford Oak Dr.
3. Susan Milroy	6044 Hillcrest Rd
4. Shane Mark	6072 Hillcrest TWIN LK Rd KH
5. Vanessa Fay	7580 Stonecove Ct L.H.
6. Kathryn Odom	7465 Caribbean Cir KH
7. Brandy Kuntian	2507 Angelica Ave Indog. Fl.
8. Linda Crouch	540 S.E. 4 2nd St. Keystone Heights
9. Bob Byrnes	6813 Fannokalee Rd
10. SMILLY LINTON	5854 Silver Sands Circle
11. Pam Dalziel	4960 M Lake Rd Keystone Heights
12. Christina D. Kelce	6775 Doe Trail Ct. Keystone Hts
13. John S. Hill	8185 Forest Hills Rd Melrose. Fl 32666

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NAME	ADDRESS
1. Laura White	7400 SR 21 N Keystone Heights
2. Jennie Marshall	6672 S. Twin Lakes Rd KTH
3. Britney Thompson	5935 Jones Creek Rd. KH
4. April Widmer	7199 CL 315C KH
5. Mary Shaker	7536 Golf St. KH, FL
6. Mike A. Johnson	1051 Bellamy Rd Melrose FL 32666
7. Lisa Hancock	6768 Doe Trail Keystone Hgts. 32656
8. Mark Youngblood	SE 61 st Av. Hampton, FL
9. Lucille White	110 SW Jasmine Av. Keystone Hgts.
10. Kathy Seefeld	7479 Hilltop St. Keystone Hgts FL 32656
11. Fatty Aldridge	6335 Cardinal Dr Keystone
12. Mark Moore	155 Jasmine ave Keystone Hgts
13. Judith Stiles	6347 CR 214 Keystone

As a recent graduate from Keystone Heights High School, I have seen firsthand what happens behind closed doors. More often than not, you see junior high girls walking hand in hand with upperclassmen. It has become an acceptable behavior in this small town of ours. It's as though we have our own little world that we live in. High school is no longer a high school, one meant for older kids, more mature and capable of handling what goes with age. It's a junior/senior high school. 7th and 8th graders run around campus being shoved into lockers and trash cans. You rarely see 10-12th graders walking around pregnant, instead it's more prevalent among the younger grades. The classes are intermingled and you have middle school aged kids in classes with seniors. In fact, my freshman year I was in, not one, but two classes composed of at least 80% juniors and seniors.

On a different note, having to share the school with middle school aged children is not fair for the upperclassmen who have worked so hard to get where they are. Anything the "highschoolers" get has to be shared with the "junior highers." A perfect example would be the Yearbook from last year. Because the teacher in charge of putting it all together had a son in the 8th grade, the junior high students were found in the majority of the yearbook, a book meant for the upperclassmen. The ones who have been in school for as long as they have.

It's a big enough jump from elementary school to middle school that these children don't need to be subjected to what goes on in high school. It's meant to be a gradual introduction into maturity from elementary to middle then from middle to high school. These kids have been ripped of that and are expected to immediately be able to adapt and completely pass by the phase where you find yourself. Instead they try to do what the big

kids are doing, dress like the older kids, act like the older kids, have sex like the older kids, party like the older kids, it's just not right. My sisters are in the 3rd grade and I cannot see them plunging into high school, which is what's expected. They are not nearly mature enough to handle it.

While our administrators try their best to do what's in the best interest of the students, they are asked too much. There are enough disciplinary problems among the two age groups, that combined it's overwhelming. There is no other way to correctly regulate the safety and lives of young students. It's as simple as that. Keystone Heights needs a middle school. No more overlooking, no more excuses, no more anything. The population is constantly increasing, and children are constantly being crammed into classrooms. The high school campus isn't large enough to accommodate 6 grade levels for another 11-20 years.

I am a tenth grader at Keystone Heights High School. I walk around the halls everyday seeing seventh and eighth graders constantly getting them into trouble; our principals are more like babysitters for these kids. High school is not a place where they need to be. They are exposed to many things such as drugs, sex, and alcohol. Many of them have not matured enough to handle the extreme peer pressure dealt out in a high school atmosphere leaving them more likely to give into these things. That is why today you see more and more kids getting pregnant and/or dropping out of this school.

When I walk around the halls I always see them getting shoved into the wall or getting into a fight with one another and sometimes you even see the younger kids picking a fight with the older kids. I know that if I had children I would not like them to go to a school where they are exposed to kids 6 years older than them. Therefore I do not think it is an idea to be putting twelve and thirteen year olds with seventeen and eighteen year olds