



Elementary Structure and Enrollment Growth October 2024

Current School Structure

Big A Elementary
PreK and
Kindergarten

Liberty
Elementary
1st and 2nd Grade

Toccoa
Elementary
3rd and 4th Grade

5th Grade
Academy
5th Grade

Stephens County
Middle School
6-8 Grades

Stephens County
High School
9-12 Grades

Note: Only two school systems out of 219 school systems in Georgia are currently set up using this structure.



Current Elementary School Structure

The decision to restructure the Stephens County elementary schools in 2015 from the traditional K-5 was based primarily on financial need.



Our Current Elementary Structure

- All students go to every school - eliminating families needing to or wanting to transfer between schools
- Staff at each school focuses on the curriculum and developmental needs of two grade levels
- Familiarity - Teachers and parents are familiar with the current structure



Current Elementary School Structure

Do our schools have the room to accommodate population growth in Stephens County?

Is our current model what is best for our students academically, socially, and developmentally?

Since we have a healthy SPLOST that can be used for new construction and renovations, is it time to review our model? The average monthly collection for the 2022 SPLOST is \$471,000 an increase over the 2018 SPLOST which was \$353,000.



Our Guiding Question:



What is best for students?

Why Consider a Change?

- To prepare for future growth in our school system
- 4 of 5 schools have no available classrooms



Stephens County Schools - Room for Growth

School and Current Enrollment	Number of Empty Classrooms
Big A - 408	3
Liberty - 572	0
Toccoa - 608	0
5th Grade Academy - 293	0
SCMS - 848	0



County Housing Growth

Since 7/1/22 - 9/25/24 Building Permits Issued

- Mobile Homes = 109 (30 since April 23, 2024)
- Housing Permits = 153 (45 since April 23, 2024)



County Housing Growth

Subdivisions and Multi Family in the works in Stephens County:

- Anderson Thomas Rd: 54 lots and over half already have homes on them. They have acreage to do more.
- Dortch Road: 30 lots subdivided - homes built or started. 164 acres there to continue subdividing and adding additional housing.
- Race Track Rd: 36 - 1 acre lots approved with the potential in Phase 2 of adding 20 more homes so 56 total planned.
- Planned Unit Development (PUD) on Mize Rd.: 90 multifamily units (Phase I) being approved by County to be constructed within 18 months. Total build out would add 320 multifamily units & 150 Residential Single Family Homes.
- Hayes Wilbanks Rd: 60 Multifamily Units to be built in next 2 years



City of Toccoa Housing Growth

- 53 permits for new construction issued in 2024
 - On Boulder Drive at complete Build out - **30** single family lots
 - On Creek View Drive at complete Build out - **23** single family lots
- Numerous Multi-Family Units in 2024
 - 14 Apartment Units
 - 28 Townhomes
 - 21 (42 units) Duplex approved by planning commission in September



Why Consider a Change?

Transportation: Currently, we have young elementary students on a bus for as long as two hours.

Example: Student A loads the bus at Big A Elementary at 2:35 pm, travels to the other elementary schools, then on his/her route, and arrives home at approximately 4:30 pm.



Why Consider a Change?

Transitions: According to research, frequent transitions have been shown to have negative effects on student outcomes.

- Academic decline or learning interruptions following transitions
- Frequent transitions impede the development of long-lasting peer relationships and connections with teachers
- Increased transitions, peer adjustments, and navigating a new school environment can lead to an uptick in disciplinary problems
- The lack of stability as a result of frequent transitions may contribute to a greater sense of social isolation and lower school engagement



Why Consider a Change?

Currently, our students transition in 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, and 9th grades. Our students currently have 5 transitions compared to the more typical 2 transitions in a traditional school system.



Why Consider a Change?

- Reduce anxiety for students caused by frequent transitions
- Provide consistent intervention for at risk learners and enrichment for advanced learners
- Increase vertical continuity between grade levels for purposes of curriculum and professional learning
- Continuity with IEPs, 504s, and other services
- Ensure consistency in medical/nursing services, food allergies, mental health issues, etc.



Why Consider a Change?

- To allow long-term relationships to be built between students, parents, and teachers
- Increase parent involvement (difficult to have a PTO or buy-in under the current set-up)
- Provide 4th & 5th grade positive role models for younger students
- Reduce students leaving for home school and private school
- Prevent teacher burnout by teachers being able to change grade levels within their home school

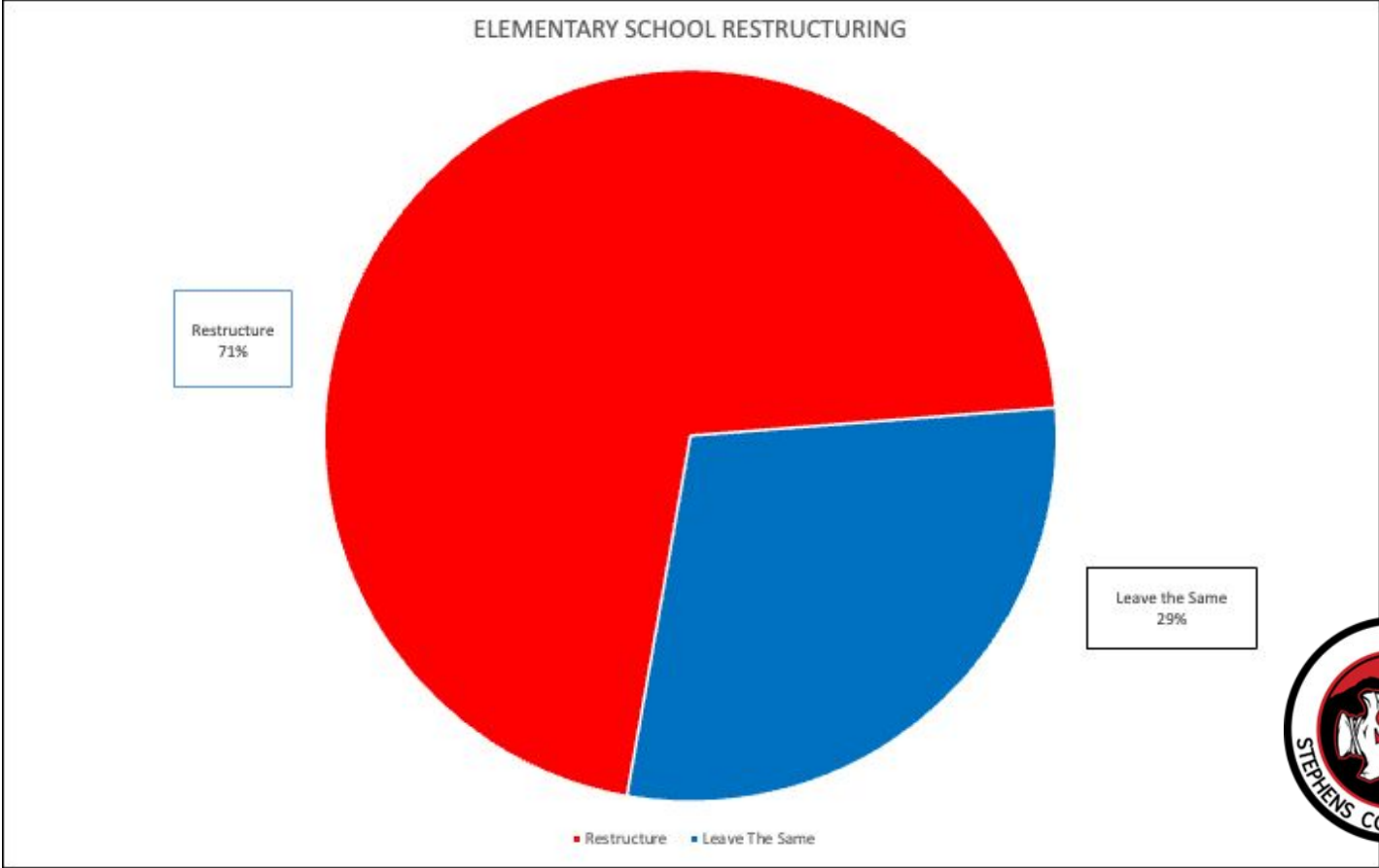


Research Phase

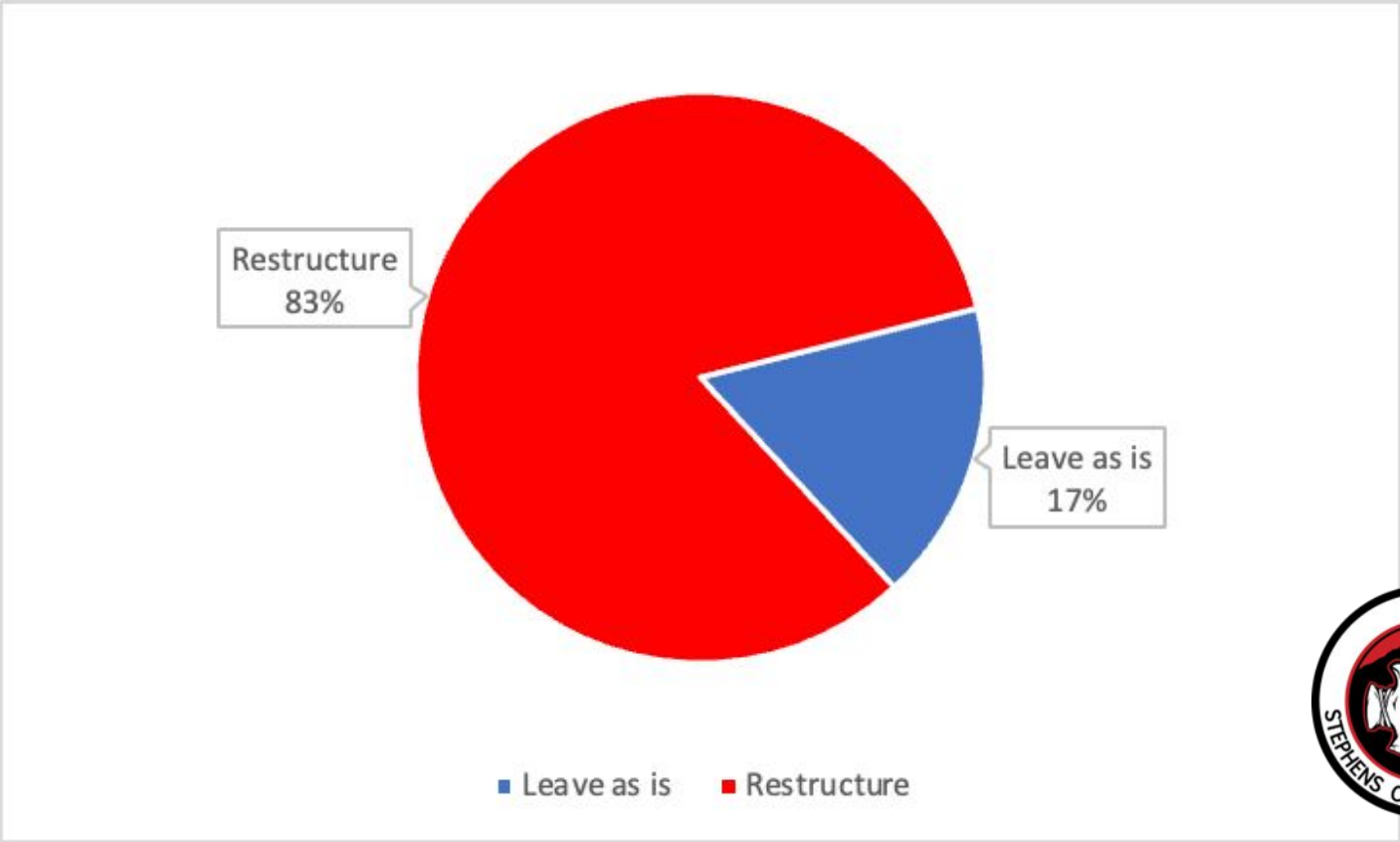
- Met with faculty and staff at each school
- Met with the School Governance Team from each school
- Surveyed all Stephens County Schools faculty and staff
- Surveyed all School Governance Team (SGT) members
- Surveyed all parents and guardians of Stephens County Schools students
- Reviewed housing and industry growth in Stephens County
- Received cost projections from architect, construction management firm, district directors, etc.
- Reviewed current research information about the impact of transitions on student outcomes



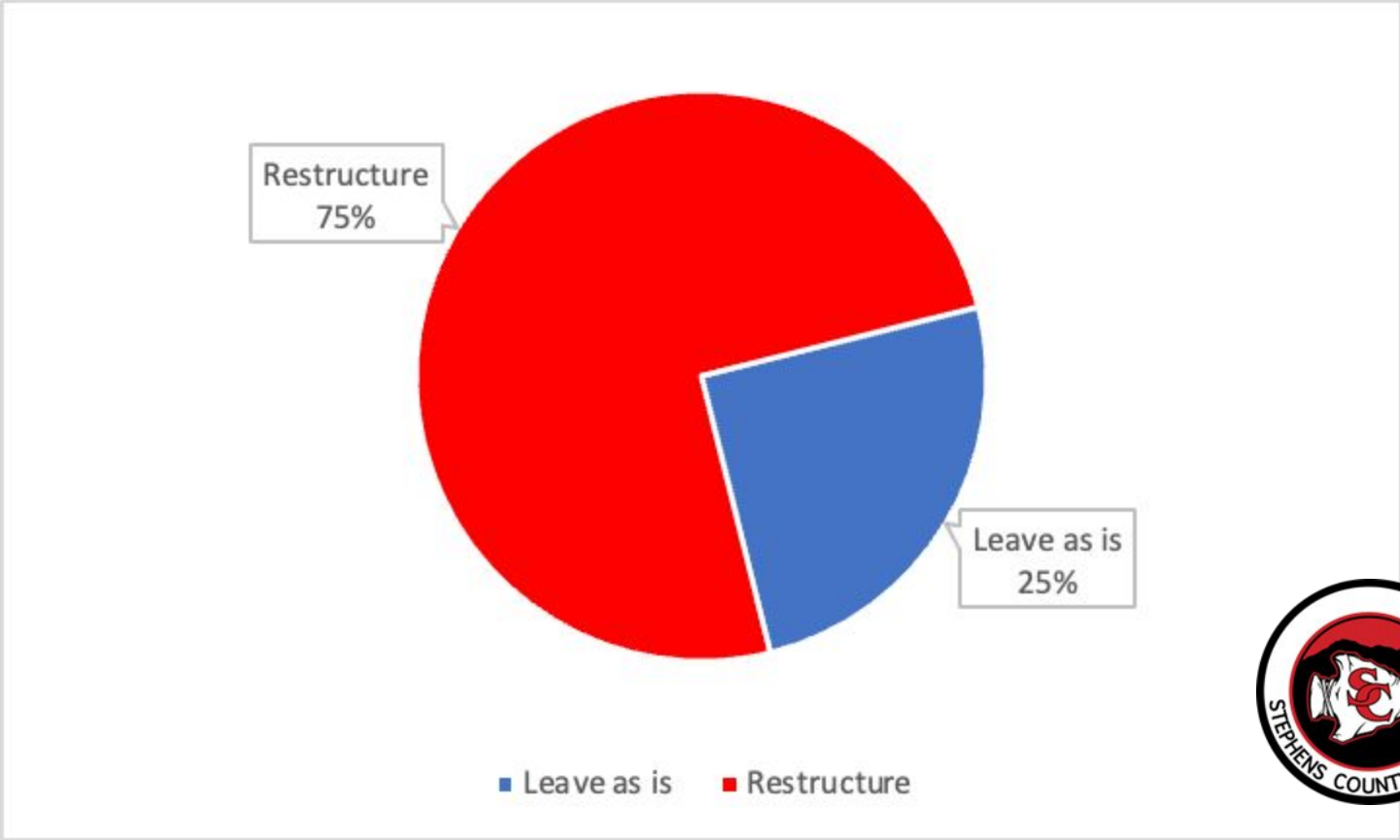
Results of Faculty and Staff Survey



Results of School Governance Teams Survey



Results of Parent/Guardian Survey



Projected Cost of Renovations

- The cost of building a new school in a neighboring county is currently \$28,000,000 for a school with a capacity of 750 students.
- The cost of building an additional wing with 10 classrooms onto a current school building in a neighboring county is currently \$11,000,000.



Projected Cost of Renovations

- Projected cost of renovating Eastanollee Elementary School to reopen as an elementary school is \$10,500,000.
- # of classrooms = 35+ which could hold approximately 600 students
- Renovations to include new roof, HVAC, plumbing, and septic system repairs, painting, flooring, kitchen, parking lot, playground, fire alarm system, etc.



Proposed Staffing

- We will earn positions for principal, assistant principal, counselor, media specialist, and receptionist.
- All teaching staff is based on student enrollment.
 - Current elementary staff would have an opportunity to turn in their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice of grade level/school. We would do our best to accommodate 1st & 2nd choices.
- Activity Teachers (art, PE, and music)



School System Redistricting

- Due to the increased growth in SC over the last 10 years, we would not return to the district lines prior to 2015.
- New school district lines would be established to accommodate the growth.
- **We would be intentional to ensure each school's demographics would be equitable.**



Proposed School Structure

Big A Elementary

PreK-5

**Liberty
Elementary**

PreK-5

**Toccoa
Elementary**

PreK-5

**Eastanollee
Elementary**

PreK-5

**Stephens County
Middle School**

6-8 Grades

**Stephens County
High School**

9-12 Grades



Committed to Growing Greatness

I believe the outstanding faculty and staff of Stephens County Schools is committed to Growing Greatness in all students and we will continue to serve our students and families to the best of our ability regardless of our structure.



Remarks from Principals



Public Participation



Next Steps and Timeline:

- BOE to review the information presented tonight along with any public input or feedback. This presentation is located on our website with a form for public feedback.
- At a called BOE meeting on October 29, 2024, the BOE will further discuss the possible restructuring of the elementary schools and may vote on this proposal.
- If approved, the **SOONEST** the planning and renovations would be complete would be for the 26-27 school year.





**Share your comments by clicking on the QR code or
by visiting our website by Oct. 25 at 5 p.m.**

**[www.stephenscountyschools.com/district/
boardofeducation/elementarystructure](http://www.stephenscountyschools.com/district/boardofeducation/elementarystructure)**