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The reassignment plan could send Melissa Green, 13, and her sister Katherine, 15, to different high schools this fall.
Staff Photo by Corey Lowenstein

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Plan would separate sisters and 'fracture our family'

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CARY - Katherine Green is in her first year at Apex High School. Her sister, Melissa, is in her last year at Lufkin Road Middle School. The younger sister was banking on Katherine showing her around campus, introducing her to friends, offering the lowdown on which teachers to run from and which to run after.

Now, though, the sisters -- just a year apart in school -- could attend different high schools in the Wake County school system's proposed reassignment plan.

"It would fracture our family," said their mother, Sandy Green.

About 100 students encompassing four neighborhoods -- Churchill Downs, MacGregor Downs, Royal Ridge and Woods of Kildaire -- are scheduled to be switched from Apex High to Athens Drive High School, a school inside the Beltline. The move is intended to relieve crowding at Apex High, fill empty seats at Athens Drive and boost diversity at both schools. Athens Drive has a higher percentage of low-income students than Apex High.

That's the school system's rationale. But parents of students earmarked to be moved have done their own number-crunching.

They contend that Athens Drive is considered under capacity only because it has a bunch of trailers. Apex, meanwhile, has gotten two new mobile units that have relieved overcrowded classes. School administrators say it will cost more to move the trailers to another school than to send students to Athens Drive to fill them.

Parents also take issue with the number of students ultimately affected. After grandfathering, they have counted only 23 -- not 104 -- students who will be reassigned to Athens Drive, which parents say undercuts any immediate relief for Apex High.

Parents and students from the affected neighborhoods will hold a rally protesting the reassignment plan on Monday before the school board's public hearing at Apex High.

Regardless of how the numbers fall, there is no question that the Green family is affected: two siblings at different high schools and attending different football games on Friday nights, parents driving different directions in the mornings and supporting two different PTAs.

"It's just not going to work," said the girls' father, Ed Green.

Sandy Green runs a small business, so her volunteer time is limited. Putting in time at Apex High means popping into the car and driving less than two miles; getting to Athens Drive High would take the better part of half an hour.

The Green family is awaiting the final decision, expected Feb. 3, on reassignment. The school system would likely allow students in the affected neighborhoods already attending Apex High to stay there.

If that happened, parents Ed and Sandy Green would at least broach with Katherine the contentious topic of moving her to Athens Drive along with Melissa. Katherine, at home at Apex High, is none too eager to make a change.

"I don't want to be uprooted," she said.

Melissa worries that if they attend different high schools, they won't have as much in common, won't be able to dish over shared experiences.

"We wouldn't have anything to talk about," Melissa said with the dramatic forthrightness of an almost-high schooler.

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