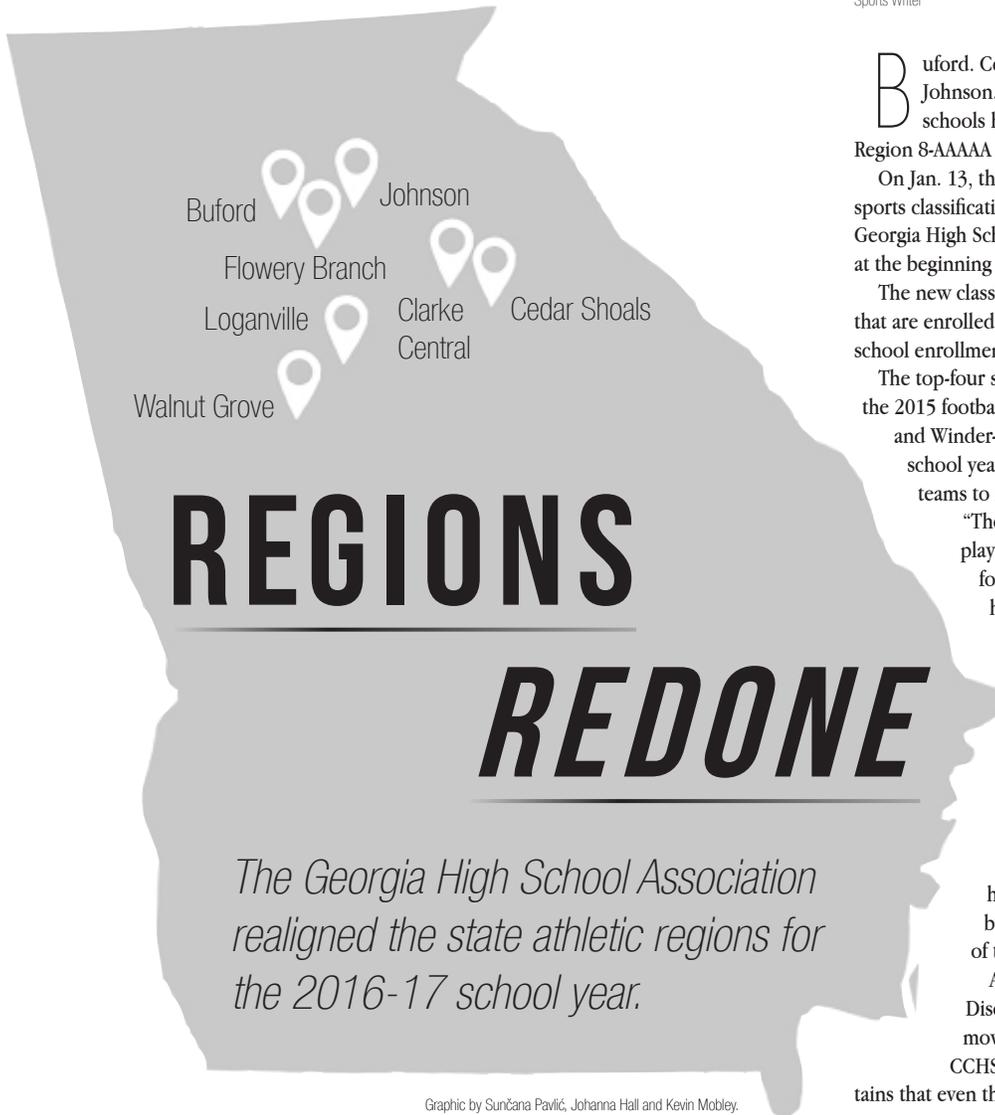


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Buford. Cedar Shoals. Clarke Central. Flowery Branch. Johnson. Loganville. Walnut Grove. What do all these schools have in common? They will form the new Region 8-AAAAA from 2016-18.

On Jan. 13, the final decision was made to change the sports classification regions in Georgia. According to the Georgia High School Association (GHSA), this will commence at the beginning of the 2016-17 school year.

The new classifications are based on the number of people that are enrolled in the school. In the AAAAA classification, school enrollment numbers range from 1,350-1,650 students.

The top-four standing teams in the Region 8-AAAAA during the 2015 football season were Lanier, Gainesville, Loganville and Winder-Barrow. However, at the start of the 2016-17 school year, Loganville will be the only one of these teams to remain in the region.

“There will be less teams fighting for the four playoff spots. Before, we had 11 (teams) fighting for the (four) spots, but next year we will only have seven teams competing. Statistically, schools will have a better chance,” CCHS Athletic Director Dr. Jon Ward said.

However, with Buford High School in the region, which is at the top of its current region’s standings, competition could be just as fierce next school year.

“We do have a true football powerhouse moving into the region (Buford), which will help fill the gap (of schools that are leaving), but Buford High School is only one spot out of three,” Ward said.

Along with LHS, GHS and WBHS, Apalachee, Discovery, Heritage and Salem will also be moving out of Region 8-AAAAA. Andre McIntyre, CCHS head boys varsity basketball coach, maintains that even though the region is changing, his team will continue to encounter strong rivals.

“It’s going to be competitive so regardless we are going to have to face those tough teams,” McIntyre said.

Varsity girls soccer player Jazmine Jimenez, a junior, reflects on the tradition of playing teams that have changed regions.

“I guess I am excited for the region changing, but I am just not sure what quite to expect of the new schools,” Jimenez said. “Playing a new team always creates new experiences, which helps one get better so I would say it’s a positive thing for Clarke Central to see some new teams in the region.”

After having the same region assignment the entire time Jimenez has been in high school, she is not sure what to anticipate in the region next school year.

“Over the years, our teams have created rivalries and not having those rivalries will probably feel like something is missing,” Jimenez said. “It will be weird not playing teams like Gainesville, because they are always good competition.”

While Jimenez may miss playing GHS, Gainesville junior

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--DR. JON WARD,  
CCHS Athletic Director

and varsity golf player Arianna Lunsford believes the change is bittersweet.

"I do think it is sad that we will not be playing with old teams and not continuing with old rivalries, but I am excited about playing with new teams, meeting new people and creating new friendly rivalries," Lunsford said. "Change is always a good and playing with new competitors will keep us on our toes as well as it will help us keep our game sharp."

Not all schools move up a classification due to population growth. According to the GHSA website, if more than 3 percent of a school's study body consists of students from out of their county, that school must move up a region classification.

Discovery High School will be placed in Region 6-AAAAAA in the new 7A classification next school year due to this rule.

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--JAZMINE JIMENEZ,  
CCHS junior and varsity soccer player

Tamara Brooks, head girls varsity basketball coach at DHS, feels that the regions were not wisely selected.

"I wish more had been taken into consideration when creating the regions for the next four years," Brooks said.

Buford High School is being moved into the region 8-AAAAA classification because more than 3 percent of their student body is from another county. Though they only have 1,299 students, they will be playing in a region with school populations ranging from 1,350 to 1,650 students.

Though their numbers are smaller, Ward thinks they will be just as competitive as the bigger schools.

"I think that Buford would be considered one of the top football programs in the state regardless of classification and going into (next year), they are definitely a team to beat," Ward said. "Nothing has stopped them yet because of their numbers."

Varsity tennis player Christopher Dellaria, a sophomore, is already prepared and excited for the next year's season.

"I think that it would still be interesting to play some of the teams we used to play, but I think we should focus more on the new region once we are in it," Dellaria said.

According to McIntyre, no matter who is in Clarke Central's region next school year, the athletic teams will continue to fight to the top of the region.

"Every year, our expectation is to win in the region and go to the state playoffs. That isn't going to change at all," McIntyre said. "We are looking forward to the new region. There are three new teams coming into our region, but those four schools that are staying; our competition will be just as fierce."

# GHSA

REGION 8-AAAAA

Illustration by Phineas Alexander.  
Infographic by Johanna Hall.



Buford High School  
Buford, Georgia



Cedar Shoals High School  
Athens, Georgia



Clarke Central High School  
Athens, Georgia

Flowery Branch High School  
Flowery Branch, Georgia



Johnson High School  
Gainesville, Georgia

Loganville High School  
Loganville, Georgia



Walnut Grove High School  
Loganville, Georgia