

## BOARD BRIEF

Date: May 5, 2023

BOARD INFORMATION:   X    
MEETING PREPARATION: \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** Pierrette Finney, Ed.D., Executive Director of School Leadership  
Peter Balas, Executive Principal/Principal Lead, Alexandria City High School  
Michael Routhouska, Principal/Principal Lead, William Ramsay Elementary School  
Ingrid Bynum, Ed.D., Principal/Principal Lead, Patrick Henry K-8 School

**THROUGH:** Wendy González, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership  
Melanie Kay-Wyatt., Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Meagan L. Alderton, Chair, and  
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Elementary and Secondary Transition Programs

**ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:**

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

**SY 2022–2023 FOCUS AREA:**

Social Emotional and Academic Learning Recovery

Strategic Plan Implementation

**FY 2023 BUDGET PRIORITY:**

Social and Emotional Supports for Students

**SUMMARY:**

The transition to pre-K, elementary, and secondary learning can be exciting yet overwhelming for students and their families. Students face many adjustments: a more extended school day, new classmates, and new teachers. ACPS approaches the transition with a team approach to ensure that each child receives academic, social, and emotional learning support to make their transition successful. The transition programs that exist within ACPS are *Step Up To Kindergarten*, *Moving Up Day*, *Where Everyone Belongs (WEB)*, *Titan Rising: Hello High School Tour*, and *Rising 10th Grade Orientation*.

**BACKGROUND:**

**Step Up To Kindergarten - Elementary Schools**

*Step Up to Kindergarten* orientation is a half-day introduction to the school experience offered to rising Kindergarten students at their respective schools. It is an opportunity to orient the children to the school experience before the start of the school year.

*Step Up to Kindergarten* will achieve the following:

- Simulate a typical school day for Kindergarten with a compressed schedule
- Provide bus transportation for students eligible to ride the bus.
- Provide grab-and-go meals for the students

## BOARD BRIEF

- Utilize staff availability to assist/interact with students (school-based workday)
- Provide in-class staff support for Kindergarten teachers for student assessment

*Step Up to Kindergarten* will be held on Friday, August 18, 2023, from 8:00 a.m.–12 p.m. except for Samuel Tucker Elementary School on Friday, July 21, 2023. Elementary school families will also be welcomed at school-wide open houses on dates designated by each school.

### **Moving Up Day - Patrick Henry K-8 School and Jefferson-Houston PreK-8 IB School**

*Moving Up Day* is offered to rising sixth-grade students at Jefferson-Houston PreK-8 IB School (JH) and Patrick Henry K-8 School (PH). It is a middle-school orientation and transition program that welcomes our sixth-grade students, making them feel comfortable throughout their first year of middle school while supporting our rising seventh and eighth graders as they transition to their next grade level. It is tailored for the K-8 school environment as the students do not experience the traditional transition from elementary school to a separate middle school.

- Rising sixth-grade students remain in the same school building
- Rising seventh- and eighth-grade students also transition to their next grade level in the same building
- The *Moving Up Day* orientation provides a fun and energetic opportunity for rising sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students to meet the teachers and staff at their next grade level, learn about upcoming courses, and hear about the exciting opportunities that lie ahead
- *Moving Up Day* also provides strategies for success in middle school

Moving Up Day will occur this year on Friday, June 9, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. Middle school families are also welcomed at the school-wide open house during the week of August 14, 2023.

### **Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) - George Washington Middle School (GWMS) and Francis C. Hammond Middle School (FCHMS)**

WEB is a half-day introduction program for rising sixth graders and new students at GWMS and FCHMS. It is an opportunity to orient students to the middle-school experience before the start of the school year. WEB creates a sense of belonging, safety, and comfort for our new students. While the transition to middle school can be a significant event in a young person's life, WEB was developed to respond to this challenge. WEB begins with a fun and energetic orientation day that gets sixth graders and new students excited and proud to be attending their middle school. WEB is designed to:

- Help orient students to their new middle school
- Offer team-building activities for students
- Simulate a typical school day with a compressed schedule (bus transportation, grab-and-go meal)
- Provide an opportunity for students to build relationships with each other
- Share strategies for middle-school success
- Continue after orientation, providing various follow-up activities throughout the year

This year, WEB will occur on Friday, August 18, 2023, from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Each grade level will also host an evening open house for parents and students during the week of August 14, 2023.

### **Hello High School Tour**

Rising ninth-grade students will participate in the *Hello High School Rising 9th Grade Tours* at Alexandria City High School (ACHS)-Minnie Howard (MH) campus. These events focus on providing incoming ninth graders and their families with the necessary information for enrollment through ACHS. Topics will include graduation requirements, behavioral and academic expectations, and student life. All ACHS-MH school support staff and class leaders from the class of 2026 will participate in the following events:

## BOARD BRIEF

- GWMS, FCHMS, JH, and PH students visited ACHS-MH for *Hello High School* orientations on April 25-28, 2023
- Topics presented during the orientation: (1) Student life, i.e. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), student activities, and clubs; (2) school-wide expectations, i.e. Titan lunch and the Code of Student Conduct; and (3) An overview of the high school's academic program, i.e. graduation requirements and special programs, such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) and CTE Career and Technical Education (CTE) course offerings (grades 9-12)
- Presentations were led by ACHS-MH administrators, student support team (SST) members, and student leaders
- Rising ninth graders reported to their local middle/K-8 schools and accessed ACPS transportation to ACHS-MH for the *Hello High School* orientation
- Students returned to their middle/K-8 school for lunch and the remainder of the school day. Student transportation to the orientation departed at 8:45 a.m. and returned at 11:30 a.m. The orientation was scheduled from 9:30 a.m.–11:00 a.m.

### **In-Person and Virtual Tours for Rising Ninth Graders at ACHS Minnie Howard Campus (ACHS-MH)**

Families interested in learning more about the ACHS-MH ninth grade experience can also attend a guided tour of the campus with an ACHS-MH SST member. Please see more details by reviewing the attachment *Hello High School Guided Tour Flier*. Please note that private school families are welcome to attend an in-person tour. For each tour date identified below, families will meet at door #21 (auditorium entrance) and participate in a 45-minute tour. The schedule of summer tours is below:

- Wednesday, June 14, 5:30–6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, June 21, 5:30–6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, June 28, 5:30–6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, July 8, 12:00–1:00 p.m.

A virtual tour is available for students and families at the ACHS-MH website. The video provides families with a virtual tour and overview of the high school's academic and behavioral expectations. Please see the Minnie Howard Virtual Open House attachment for links.

### **Rising 10th Grade Orientation**

All students transitioning to the King Street Campus from Minnie Howard Campus and FCHMS International Academy will have in-person orientations in August. Students will tour the campus, receive new schedules, discuss the high-school curriculum, and be introduced to King Street campus expectations.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Interim Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the elementary and secondary transition information within this brief.

### **IMPACT:**

*Step Up To Kindergarten, Moving Up Day, Where Everyone Belongs (WEB), Hello High School, and Rising Tenth Grade Orientation* are engaging ways to welcome, transition, and orient rising elementary, middle, and high school students and families to their new school setting.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. *Hello High School* Guided Tour Flyer
2. Minnie Howard Virtual Open House

## BOARD BRIEF

### CONTACT:

Pierrette Finney, Ed.D., [Pierrette.Finney@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Pierrette.Finney@acps.k12.va.us)

Peter Balas, [Peter.Balas@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Peter.Balas@acps.k12.va.us)

Michael Routhouska, [Michael.Routhouska@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Michael.Routhouska@acps.k12.va.us)

Ingrid Bynum, Ed.D., [Ingrid.Bynum@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Ingrid.Bynum@acps.k12.va.us)