

# The Identity Project: Report to the School Board Around Community Engagement for the Proposed Renaming of Schools

## Introduction

Many ACPS schools were named during a time in our city and in our country when vastly different attitudes and beliefs guided our decisions. In 2020, a spotlight has shone on the many inequities in today's society and a new determination to right the wrongs of history has swept the nation. To that end, the School Board answered a call to look again at the morality of naming our city's only high school after Thomas Chambliss Williams, a staunch segregationist whose views could not have been more inconsistent with the vibrant, diverse and inclusive place we know today. As that process began, questions were raised about the name of Matthew Maury Elementary School. Was it right to immortalize a commander of the Confederate Navy even though he was also a celebrated oceanographer and astronomer? And so began [The Identity Project](#), a wide-reaching community conversation that allowed for all voices to be heard as we look toward a more equitable future in Alexandria.

During the communications and engagement process, we actively engaged **6,777** via the virtual read-ins, students forums and community sessions. More than **10,366** visits to The Identity Project webpage and **14,000** to all pages within the webpage section over the course of just a few weeks, showed how important the issue was to our community. In addition, there were **7,644** total social media engagements (likes/reactions, retweets/shares, comments, clicks).

[Video of highlights of the engagement process](#)

## The Identity Project

Promotional URL: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/identityproject>

Overview webpage visits: 10,366

## Education and Information

To allow for a meaningful community conversation, it was important to first ensure an understanding of the history of our city, our school division and of the individuals our schools are

named after. We also worked with the curriculum and instruction team to create five lessons that could form the basis for in-class discussion, both in elementary and high school.

### 3 Read-ins

#### [Read-In #1: T.C Williams The Superintendent](#)

Videos:

- [Read-In #1: T.C. Williams the Superintendent](#) (English - YouTube)
- [Read-In #1: T.C. Williams the Superintendent VERSIÓN EN ESPAÑOL](#)
- [Read-In #1: T.C. Williams the Superintendent](#) (English - Facebook)
- [Read-In #1: Highlights](#)
- [Questions and chat](#)

#### [Read-In #2: Alexandria's Role in Massive Resistance and School Segregation](#)

Videos:

- [Read-In #2: Alexandria's Role in Massive Resistance and School Segregation](#) (English - YouTube)
- [Read-In #2: El papel de Alexandria en la resistencia masiva y la segregación escolar VERSIÓN EN ESPAÑOL](#)
- [Read-In #2: Alexandria's Role in Massive Resistance and School Segregation](#) (Facebook)
- [Read-In #2: Highlights](#)
- [Questions and chat](#)

#### [Read-In #3: The Real Story Behind "Remember the Titans"](#)

Videos:

- [Read-In #3: The Real Story Behind "Remember the Titans"](#) (YouTube - English)
- [Read-In #3: La verdadera historia detrás de "Remember the Titans" VERSIÓN EN ESPAÑOL](#)
- [Read-In #3: The Real Story Behind "Remember the Titans"](#) (Facebook)
- [Read-In #3: Highlights](#)
- [Questions and chat](#)

#### **Read-in Data**

2,888 webpage visits: Promotional URL: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/read-ins>  
2,510 total video views (1360 on Facebook, 324 on YouTube, 826 on Zoom)

### Lessons

Lessons for Maury

- [Sample lesson](#)
- [Video of Sample Lesson](#)

Lessons for T.C. Williams

- [Lesson Plan #1](#)
- [Lesson Plans #2-3](#)
- [Video of Sample Lesson](#)

### Content used to create lesson plans

- [Maury history video](#)
- [Secret Seven video](#)
- [Titans Talk Race video](#)
- [Should we change T.C.'s & Maury's Names? A Student's Perspective](#)
- [Content used in T.C. Williams and Matthew Maury history lessons and website histories](#)

## Website History Pages

### [T.C. Williams History Page](#)

Promotional URL: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/redefining-the-titans>

### [Matthew Maury History Page](#)

Promotional URL: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/redefining-matthew-maury>

## Student Engagement

One of the central tenets of The Identity Project was the desire to have our students lead the conversation. In particular, we wanted to hear the voices of our Black and Brown students. We were deliberate in handing over the reins, the direction and the parameters of the engagement with the adults taking a back seat.

Some of the tactics that were employed included:

- School Board student reps managing student engagement.
- Students involved in all planning meetings.
- School Board student reps involvement in the [naming and logo design](#) for the T.C. part of the campaign.
- A focus on ensuring Black and Hispanic student voices were involved.
- Three student-lead/student managed Student Forums.
- Student moderators for all 10 of the forums and discussions
- Student takeover of the superintendent's [Alexandria Times column](#).

## Student Conversations

Webpage: [Student Conversations](#)

133 webpage visits: Promotional URL: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/student-conversations>  
1,518 total video views (1,101 on Facebook, 164 on Youtube, 253 on Zoom)

### Student Conversation #1

Video:

- [The Identity Project: Student Conversation #1](#) (English - YouTube)
- [The Identity Project: Conversación estudiantil número 1. VERSIÓN EN ESPAÑOL](#)
- [The Identity Project: Student Conversation #1](#) (Facebook)
- [Chat](#)

### **Student Conversation #2**

Video:

- [The Identity Project: Student Conversation #2](#) (English/Spanish subtitles - YouTube)
- [The Identity Project: Student Conversation #2](#) (Facebook)
- [Chat](#)

### **Student Conversation #3**

Video:

- [The Identity Project: Student Conversation #3](#) (English/Spanish subtitles - YouTube)
- [The Identity Project: Student Conversation #3](#) (Facebook)
- [Chat](#)

## **Community Engagement**

This encompassed three community discussions on the name changes in general and one Family Forum for the Maury community. These were hosted by key representatives from our community.

## **Community Conversations**

Webpage: [Community Conversations](#)

198 webpage visits: Promotional URL: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/community-conversations>  
1,871 total video views (1244 on Facebook, 175 on Youtube, 452 on Zoom)

### **Community Conversation #1**

Video:

- [The Identity Project: Community Conversation #1](#) (English/Spanish subtitles - YouTube)
- [The Identity Project: Community Conversation #1](#) (Facebook)
- [Chat](#)

### **Community Conversation #2**

Video:

- [The Identity Project: Community Conversation #2](#) (English/Spanish subtitles - YouTube)
- [Conversación comunitaria NÚMERO 2: Secret Seven EN ESPAÑOL](#)
- [The Identity Project: Community Conversation #2](#) (Facebook)
- [Chat](#)

### **Community Conversation #3**

Video:

- [The Identity Project: Community Conversation #3](#)
- [El Proyecto Identidad: Conversación comunitaria NÚMERO 3](#)
- [The Identity Project: Community Conversation #3 \(Facebook\)](#)
- [Chat](#)

### **Matthew Maury Family Forum**

Video:

- [The Identity Project: Maury Family Forum](#)
- [El Proyecto Identidad: Foro Familia Maury EN ESPAÑOL](#)
- [The Identity Project: Maury Family Forum \(Facebook\)](#)
- [Questions and chat](#)

### **Full Engagement Data Report**

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DdJYQ5Ez37EyrB\\_UeWj1I7Vz0Q5PPIZlxePUnXzpmUs/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DdJYQ5Ez37EyrB_UeWj1I7Vz0Q5PPIZlxePUnXzpmUs/edit#gid=0)

## **Key Stakeholder Input**

We invited key community leaders to lead our community discussions. These included:

- All nine School Board members
- Head of the Black History Museum
- CEO - League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
- Former Police Chief
- Former principal of T.C. Williams
- NAACP
- High profile African Americans from the era of segregation
- Students of all backgrounds
- PTA involvement
- '71 Titans

Student panelists included:

- Peter Rizkallah
- Fina Owusu
- Karam Burjas
- Helen (Reese) Du Pont
- Sarah Davenport (Rename T.C. Now Club)
- Lorraine Johnson (School Board Student Rep)
- Ashley Sanchez-Viafara (School Board Student Rep)
- Giselle Hughes (School Board Middle School Student Rep)

# Media Engagement

When the community began to call for a name change for T.C. Williams High School, our local media jumped on the story. These are some examples of the coverage breadth of the coverage - from the lessons, to promotion and coverage of the read-ins and student forums to promotion of the survey.

- [ALXNow- Promotion of ACPS Survey](#)
- [The Zebra- A Name Change is in Process at T.C. Williams High school](#)
- [Alexandria Times- Vocal Advocates for Change In Renaming Process](#)
- [Alexandria Times-Student and Residents Putting Daily Cover Over T.C. Williams Name](#)
- [Washington Post- Don't rename T.C. Williams High, of 'Remember the Titans' fame](#)
- [Alexandria Times- Media Letter: Don't rename T.C. Williams](#)
- [Alexandria Times- Meaning of T.C. Williams has changed](#)
- [Alexandria Gazette- T.C. name change with Greg Paspatis](#)
- [The Zebra- The Identity Project - Lesson 1: What's In a Name?](#)
- [Alexandria Gazette- Community Engagement Process](#)
- [Alexandria Living- Read-In Process](#)
- [WJLA News- Next Steps Proposal Rename Promotion](#)
- [WJLA News- Virtual Read-In Promotion](#)
- [AlxNow - Read-In reveals racist actions Thomas Chambliss Williams](#)
- [ABC7- Earl Cook Community Conversation](#)
- [Alexandria Times- T.C. Student Op-Ed](#)
- [WJLA- Student Forum Promotion](#)
- [WTOP- Students Speak Up](#)
- [WDVM - "The Identity Project": renaming Matthew Maury Elementary School](#)

## Survey Results

<https://research.k12insight.com/zRMx/ParticipationReport.aspx?share=G9ZXR2Y9G&sid=210>

## Public Hearing

[Watch the public hearing portion of the School Board meeting held on Oct. 29, 2020](#)

[Read the comments made in the Oct. 29 Public Hearing](#)

Download the public hearing segment [here](#).

## Next Steps

- The Identity Project (Phase II): DRAFT Working Communications and Engagement Plan  
- Selection of a Name  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/12beVMKAWYEW6GRG\\_Nxm3ZOv1V3ldcl10ZGKfr\\_NxNis/edit#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12beVMKAWYEW6GRG_Nxm3ZOv1V3ldcl10ZGKfr_NxNis/edit#)