

5/19/2015  
Benjamin Fiore-Walker

## New Patrick Henry School Building Considerations

Good evening members of the School Board, Mr. Superintendent and the Alexandria community. I am Benjamin Fiore-Walker the Patrick Henry PTA Vice President. I come to speak to you tonight to highlight some of the concerns parents of Patrick Henry Elementary School students have as you begin your considerations for the Patrick Henry project.

We are all aware that construction is disruptive to the status quo of life within and around the project, regardless of the design option selected. However, please consider that some options are more disruptive to the learning environment of **current** students more than others. I received my doctorate in Developmental Neuroscience and have studied the effect of the early environment on brain and cognitive development, and can tell you that a high distraction-filled environment is detrimental to the processing and assimilation of new information, i.e. learning, in our youngest children. Therefore, as you review the plans for the new school construction, please be mindful of the conditions to which our students and children will be subjected as the process moves forward. Options that include the use of temporary "learning module trailers," or expose the children to active building remodeling should **not** be considered.

My concerns about this issue are not merely academic. I am the proud father of two fantastic PHES students, who have truly blossomed academically under the tutelage of the dedicated faculty and staff at Patrick Henry. While the minimization of distractions is a concern for all parents and children of Patrick Henry, I am motivated to speak for the students, like my son, who have IEP's and would be particularly impacted by these distractions. My son has made tremendous progress with staying on task and focusing on his studies in the two years he has been at Patrick Henry thanks primarily to the continuity of the learning environment and the professional and **personal** attention of his teachers and IEP team. I am concerned that his progress will be slowed, halted or even reversed if he is subjected to an active construction zone or excessive use of swing space. I am sure parents whose children face even greater academic challenges than my son share this concern. Therefore, please consider building options that reduce instructional time loss and the need to re-center and constantly refocus due to the distractions of moving in and out of trailers or around the work zone during the academic year.

I thank you for your time and for allowing me to speak to you this evening on an issue that is academically and personally important to me. These children are the future of our city and our community, and I am sure that if we all work together we can ensure that they will continue to "Work Harder to get even Smarter." Our children, their teachers and administrators do their **jobs** every day to come together to create an outstanding learning environment. It is now our turn to do **ours** to make sure that this environment continues throughout the building of the New Patrick Henry Elementary School.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Benjamin Fiore-Walker

Patrick Henry PTA Vice President and Proud Father of two Great PHES Students