

Date: October 12, 2017

For ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

For INFORMATION   x  

Board Agenda: Yes   x    
No \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** Erika Gulick, Facilities Planner/GIS Specialist  
Clinton Page, Chief Accountability Officer  
Terri Mazingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer

**THROUGH:** Lois Berlin, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Ramee A. Gentry, Chair, and Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** Grade Level Feasibility Study Update

**BACKGROUND:**

As part of the FY 2017 Capital Improvement Program Budget, the School Board approved funds to conduct a study of grade level configurations to determine whether a reconfiguration at ACPS could provide additional capacity while improving the academic achievement of students.

UPDATE

In the fall of 2016, ACPS contracted Hanover Research Group (HRG) to conduct the study. HRG has completed the Benchmarking Study (Attachment 1), which looks at several different school districts and their approach to solving capacity constraints and reconfiguring grade levels. HRG has also completed the Analysis of Elementary and Secondary Grade Span Configurations (Attachment 2), which includes research on grade level configurations impacts to academic achievement and capacity.

It is important to note that each school district or division is unique and will be impacted differently by different grade span configurations and that academic achievement is most greatly impacted by classroom quality and social environment. A common theme of the research indicates that, though there is no industry recognized standard for the amount of transitions that is appropriate, minimizing transitions results higher levels of academic achievement. The following key findings related to grade span configurations are outlined in the analysis:

- Isolated pre-K centers do not benefit students academically; however they have been used by other school systems to the extent that they can improve access or provide capacity.
- Alignment from pre-K through 3 is critical to academic success in later years for students.
- Pre-K – 5 is the most prevalent elementary grade level configuration; however, studies show that 6<sup>th</sup> graders benefit from being in an elementary setting academically and behaviorally.
- Research on K-8 schools and their effects on academic achievement appear to be inconclusive.

- Research on 9<sup>th</sup> grade academies is limited; HRG is in the process of doing a study specific to ACPS on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy model.
- Comprehensive grades 9-12 high schools are the most prevalent grade level configuration and research on other high school grade spans is limited.

HRG also offered several considerations for grade space reconfigurations that need to be considered should an adjustment be pursued which may have financial, operational and programmatic implications.

#### NEXT STEPS

HRG is developing an interview protocol to study ACPS's high school grade level configuration in more detail and will be conducting the study this fall. Following this study, the executive summary of findings will be finalized and a survey will be administered to gauge public opinion on grade level configuration.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Erika Gulick, (703) 619-8298

**ATTACHMENTS:**  
1 – Benchmarking Study of Grade-Level Feasibility  
2 – Analysis of Elementary and Secondary Grade Span Configurations