



THE HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT: RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

A CONNECTED HIGH SCHOOL NETWORK

What is the recommendation?

Superintendent Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr. is recommending that ACPS formally adopt a connected high school network model. This means enhancing the campus approach we already use for our high school program, and developing and expanding it for delivering instruction in the future.

The Board is being asked to endorse continued planning for this connected high school network — otherwise known as a campus model — which would explore one or more locations to address high school capacity, including how to use Minnie Howard.

What is a connected high school network, otherwise known as a campus high school model?

A connected high school network, otherwise known as a campus model, is a model of delivering programming at one or more buildings linked to the home campus of T.C. Williams High School.

In a connected high school network, separate buildings can be used to house separate programs or co-located programs. Some programs may allow students to spend time on the main campus and continue to take courses there. Other programs in the model — such as the Early College and Satellite campuses — could operate independently of the main campus.

ACPS already has the foundation to expand to a connected high school network, through programs such as:

- T.C. Williams Satellite Campus, where students can learn primarily online with a flexible schedule and self-directed environment
- Chance for Change Academy, which provides students opportunities to be successful in a smaller setting
- Academies within the main campus such as the International Academy, the Governor's Health Sciences Academy, STEM Academy and Academy of Finance

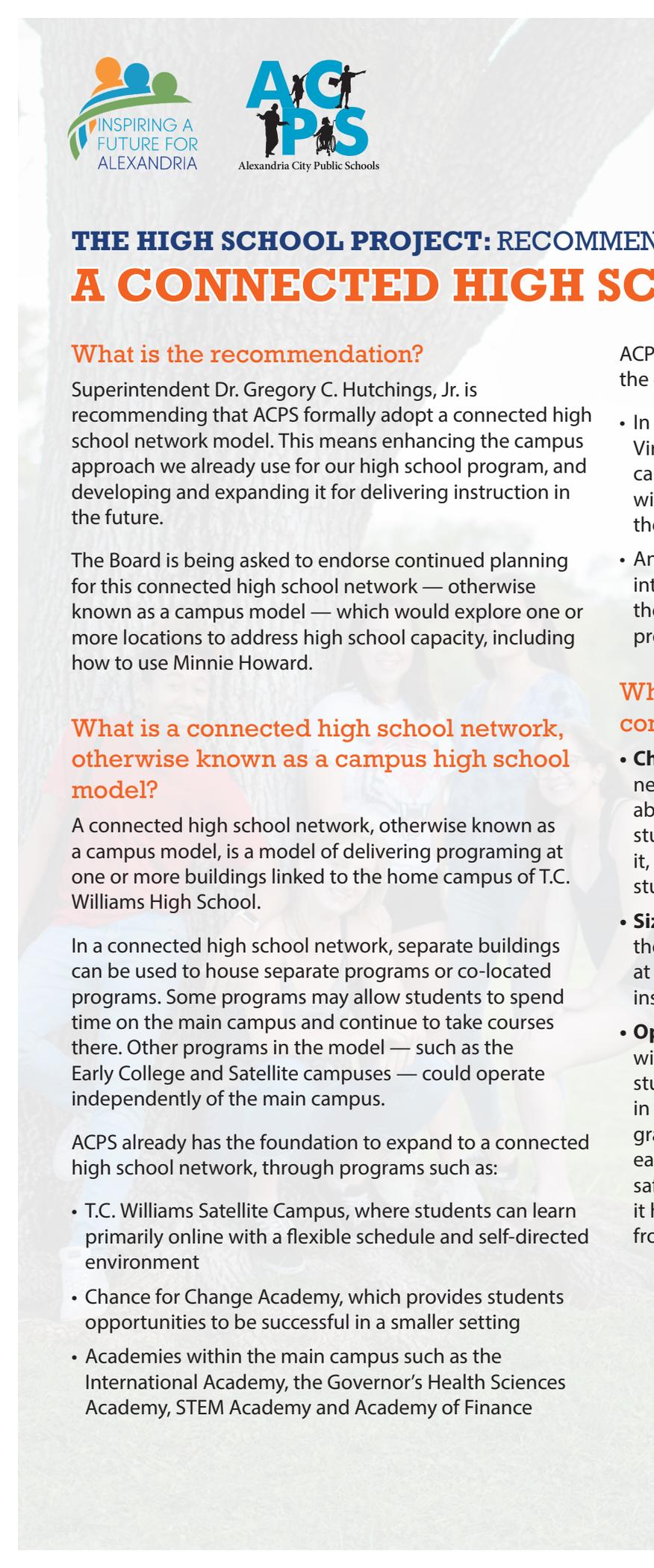
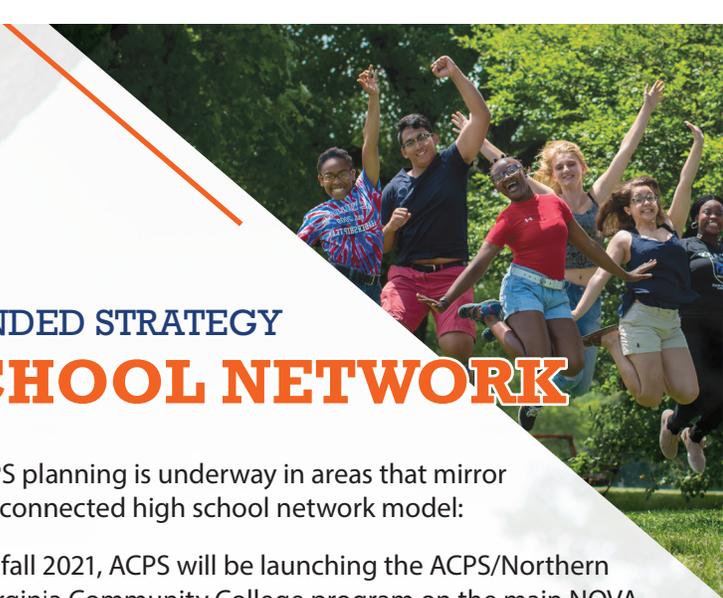
ACPS planning is underway in areas that mirror the connected high school network model:

- In fall 2021, ACPS will be launching the ACPS/Northern Virginia Community College program on the main NOVA campus, offering students the opportunity to graduate with an associate's degree or certification in addition to their high school diploma.
- An ACPS high school program will be incorporated into the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus — as part of the Amazon deal — to provide state-of-the-art tech programming for high school students.

What are the educational benefits of a connected high school network?

- **Choice:** Research shows us that high school students need choices. They learn better when they have choices about what to learn and about how to learn it. Not all students learn in the same way and, while some love it, a large comprehensive high school does not suit all students.
- **Size:** Students often do better in smaller settings where they are known and feel part of a community. Students at T.C. Williams reported that they often felt lost and insignificant at the school due to the size of the facility.
- **Option to explore different paths:** A campus model with different programs or academies often allows students the chance to study an area they are interested in and want to go on to study at college or after graduation. The benefit of taking specialty courses at this early age is that students are exploring options within a safe environment where they can make mistakes without it having an impact on their career or ability to graduate from college.

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What does the educational research say about a connected high school network?

Research shows that the connected high school or campus model, which offers smaller learning environments for students, tends to have:

- Better attendance rates
- Stronger academic achievement, especially for low-income students and students of color
- Lower dropout rates
- Personalization
- Continuous relationships

**Redesigning High Schools: What Matters and What Works, Linda Darling-Hammond*

What are the space benefits for the future of a connected high school network?

- **Flexibility:** This model allows ACPS to adapt its facilities in the future in line with increases or decreases in student enrollment or changes in program delivery.
- **Cost:** Although the project is not yet at the stage where detailed cost analysis is being performed, ACPS is confident that a campus model is the most cost-effective way to deliver state-of-the-art high school programming.
- **Land:** This model allows ACPS to approach new space(s) for high school growth in a number of ways such as lease, buy, build and retrofitting buildings given Alexandria's limited land availability.
- **Speed:** This model allows ACPS to resolve some of the capacity issues almost immediately to take some of the pressure off the current high school.

What impact would a delay in voting have?

- **Delay in resolving capacity issues:** A delay in voting for a strategy around a campus model would mean further delay in resolving the capacity crunch at the high school. The high school currently has about 4,000 students and this number is projected to increase to around 5,000 in the next five to ten years. Unless we take action now, ACPS will face increased space challenges in the not-so-distant future.
- **Potential loss of project funding:** The City Council, as part of their FY 2019-2028 Capital Improvement Program, allocated approximately \$15 million in FY 2020 to begin the design work for this project and approximately \$103 million in FY 2021 for construction.

As a reminder, through the work of the Ad-Hoc Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force, other facility needs in the City were displaced to accommodate the urgent high school need. Without timely endorsement from the School Board and a clear path forward, these funds are at risk. More importantly, the credibility of the project may come into question.

What doesn't this vote mean?

This is a vote for the strategy of a connected high school network, otherwise known as a campus model, that addresses the high school capacity issues.

- This vote does not include a selection of programming or options for programming.
- This vote does not eliminate the possibility of housing multiple programs in one large building.
- This vote does not prevent ACPS from trying to house the programs in as few locations as possible.
- This vote does not stop ACPS from looking at the availability of the largest possible land/space options across the city.
- This vote does not stop consideration of a rebuild and expansion of the Minnie Howard Campus.
- This vote does not eliminate the potential for a second high school in the future.

