



THE HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT

Community Engagement Summary

August – September 2019

The High School Project began in the summer of 2018 and has progressed steadily throughout the past year. On January 24, 2019, the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) School Board passed a motion empowering the Superintendent to move forward with planning for a Connected High School Network that includes the modernization of T.C. Williams King Street, Minnie Howard and satellite campuses. The Board's motion also required a cost-benefit analysis of both a connected high school network and a second high school be conducted.

From its inception, The High School Project team has actively engaged the general public, ACPS teachers and students, neighborhood based civic associations, and business organizations. Over the past two months, as part of the cost benefit analysis, The High School Project team put forth an extensive effort to engage and inform ACPS teachers, students and impacted community members on the options presented in the draft report prior to the September 26, 2019 School Board vote.

Our community engagement activities combined a robust communications effort including community meetings, weekly updates to The High School Project webpage, and updates to the Frequently Asked Questions webpage. To enhance our outreach objectives, the Team contacted city-wide civic and neighborhood based organizations and scheduled High School Project presentations to inform stakeholders and raise awareness of the project and upcoming School Board vote.

Community Meetings

On September 11, 14 and 17, community meetings were held at George Washington Middle School, Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School, and T.C. Williams King Street Campus. These presentations shared the results of the work developing educational program design options for the future high school experience along with the analysis of potential building sites in Alexandria. After each presentation and brief Q&A session, the attendees engaged in one-on-one conversations about educational design options and the potential sites for each model with ACPS experts.

ACPS Family and Community Engagement Center (FACE) outreach efforts were instrumental in notifying Alexandria's diverse families of the community meetings and encouraging their attendance. FACE emailed 7,461 event invitations in English, Spanish, Amharic and Arabic and made 351 outreach calls, including 180 phone calls to Spanish speaking residents and 47 phone calls to Arabic speaking families. Face-to-face outreach and event flyers were also distributed at the following community meetings: Francis C. Hammond Middle School PTA Meeting, Francis C. Hammond Middle School Parent Coffee, Ruby Tucker Family Center and Brent Place.

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ACPS Communications Department emailed 11,000 event notifications to ACPS staff, students and community residents and posted the invitation in various newsletters such as ACPS Express and T.C. Williams’ town crier. Event invitation flyers were distributed through the project email to 42 civic associations, asking them to share the notification with their members. A total of 152 community members attended the three September community meetings. Community feedback was collected through the use of comment cards, ACPS website and the project email (*See Appendix A*).

The following chart highlights the community engagement activities following the publication of The High School Project draft summary report.

| August 2019 | | |
|------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Date | Name | Exposure/ Attendance |
| Fri, August 16 | Email Request for Presentation sent to all Alexandria Civic Associations | 42 |
| Wed, August 21 | Informational Table at New Teacher Orientation | 213 |
| Thurs, August 22 | ACPS Backpack Giveaways | 2000 |
| Mon, August 26 | High School Project Presentation to T.C. Williams and Minnie Howard Teachers | 400 |
| Mon, August 26 | High School Project Presentation to Lyles-Crouch Elementary School Teachers | 60 |
| Mon, August 26 | High School Project Presentation to T.C. Williams Satellite Campus Teachers | 5 |
| Tues, August 27 | High School Project Presentation to George Washington Middle School Teachers | 120 |
| Thurs, August 29 | High School Project Presentation to Francis Hammond Middle School Teachers | 130 |
| Thurs, August 29 | High School Project Presentation to Patrick Henry K-8 School Teachers | 80 |
| Thurs, August 29 | High School Project Presentation to Chance for Change Teachers | 12 |
| Thurs, August 29 | High School Project Presentation to George Mason Elementary School Teachers | 57 |
| Fri, August 30 | High School Project Presentation to Matthew Maury Elementary School Teachers | 12 |
| Fri, August 30 | High School Project Presentation to James Polk Elementary School Teachers | 80 |
| Fri, August 30 | High School Project Presentation to Douglas MacArthur Elementary School Teachers | 80 |
| Fri, August 30 | High School Project Presentation to Detention Center Teachers | 9 |
| September 2019 | | |
| Date | Name | Exposure/ Attendance |

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|---------------------|--|----|
| Wed, September 4 | High School Project Presentation to Early Learning Center Teachers | 26 |
| Fri, September 6 | Invitation Email for Public Meeting to all Alexandria Civic Associations | 42 |
| Mon, September 9 | High School Project Presentation at Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee Meeting | 20 |
| Mon, September 9 | High School Project Update to Lynn Haven Civic Association Members | 25 |
| Wed, September 11 | Public Meeting at George Washington Middle School | 75 |
| Wed, September 11 | High School Project Update to Fairlington Civic Association Members | 18 |
| Thurs, September 12 | High School Project Update to Seminary Hill Civic Association Members | 22 |
| Sat, September 14 | Public Meeting at Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School | 35 |
| Mon, September 16 | Email and Phone Request to Present at Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority Meeting | 2 |
| Mon, September 16 | Email and Phone Request to Present at Alexandria NAACP Meeting | 2 |
| Mon, September 16 | Email and Phone Request to Present at Alexandria Tenants and Workers Union Meeting | 2 |
| Tues, September 17 | Public Meeting at T.C. Williams, King Street Campus | 42 |
| Wed, September 18 | High School Project Presentation at Principal’s Meeting | 20 |

The High School Project Team will continue to host information tables at citywide events, farmers markets and back to school nights, share progress update presentations at civic association and faith-based organization meetings, and facilitate community meetings throughout Alexandria City neighborhoods. These diverse outreach tactics ensure a comprehensive gathering of public comment and input from stakeholders throughout each of the three ACPS School Districts.

| Upcoming | |
|-------------------|---|
| Date | Name |
| Wed, September 25 | High School Project Presentation to PTAC Members |
| Mon, September 30 | High School Project Presentation to John Adams Elementary School Teachers |
| Sat, October 5 | High School Project Update at Ethiopian and Eritrean Alliance for Education |
| Mon, October 7 | High School Project Update to Del Ray Citizens Association Members |
| Wed, October 9 | High School Project Update to Potomac Yards Civic Association Members |
| Mon, October 14 | High School Project Update to North Ridge Civic Association Members |

APPENDIX A – COMMUNITY COMMENTS

September 11, 2019 - Community Meeting

Comment 1:

I came in strongly preferring the Two High Schools approach. I still do, however I can understand better how the “connected campus” concept would work. I strongly urge you to move forward with the Two High Schools approach. With 5,000 students, it would be easy for students less stray to get lost, to not receive enough attention, and fail. With fewer students, this is less likely to happen because teachers can know a higher proposition of students.

However, I don’t support the desire to have each high school specialize. Having gone to high school in both Germany and the US, and the advantage of the US system is that students aren’t pushed into tracks at an early age.

Please move the Two High Schools concept forward, but with similar/identical curricula.

Also, it seems like access to athletic fields is driving this process. If you’re serious about academics, then athletics shouldn’t drive site considerations and please consider rezoning to better use space.

Comment 2:

We need to make sure that we plan 20 years out so that we don’t outgrow the facility before it opens like we did with the current TC building.

I support two schools; our school population is too big to keep only one high school.

Comment 3:

For the Two High School option, I think showing 2 examples that both have specializations of Humanities or STEM presents a bias against that option. If curriculum decisions are being made in the next 1-2 years, I think the examples (A+B) should be taken off the table. Many parents dislike the idea of their kids having to choose one or the other. There are other options for 2 High Schools Model, including having 2 integrated schools, or schools that are more balanced in terms of their STEM vs. Humanities focus. My kids attend Mount Vernon Community School. I would hate for them to have to choose between continuing their dual language learning and focusing on STEM (which they’d have to do in option B in the Two Schools Model). I like the integrated model of the Connected Network but it seems completely untenable giving the population growth. The logistics of trying to schedule 5,000 – 6,000 students across 3+ locations sounds like a nightmare, managing extracurricular activities on top of that seems unmanageable. My concern is that the multiple locations and high number of students would actually limit options because of complicated scheduling and many students would feel lost in what is basically a school the scale of a college campus.

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Comment 4:

Ideally, I prefer the one school campus model at TC King Street Concerned that expanding to Chinquapin property is not an actual feasible option.

Also, tough to make decisions before costs are included.

Comment 5:

I have a current 10th, 8th and 9th grader. I like the way Minnie Howard keeps the 9th grade separate. It's nice to not have 9th graders mixing with seniors since there is so much growth between ages 14 and 18. Can you build another floor on top of Minnie Howard footprint to accommodate 9+10 at Minnie Howard and have 11+12 be at King Street campus. It seems redundant to have 2 locations CTE – maybe keep it at T.C. Williams King Street but make it bigger. Too many kids drop out before graduating. Maybe if we could have greater capacity for CTE, perhaps graduation rates would. Thanks.

Comment 6:

How is the district ensuring that the diverse population/families of ACPS are receiving the information and able to represent their voice, questions and concerns? (i.e. H.S. Project) Echo the belief that exposing and providing access to all students earlier rather than waiting for students to enter high school is essential to grow the opportunities. I represent the Literacy Lab that partners with 5 ACPS elementary schools and am eager to see where we can be of further support as the district develops.

Comment 7:

I have confidence you all will choose correctly for the educational success for all out students! I believe the one high school model with the connected network is that opportunity.

Thank you for all you do for our kids.

Comment 8:

One hallmark and very important source of this city's pride has been and is an absolute equal access and community available at and fostered by our single high school. Our community does not argue with itself or among any fractions for choice or assignment of assets disparately located and seen of differing quality. Don't do that to us. Keep one high school please. Chinquapin will save our common treatment and access for every one of our city's children – rich, poor, black, white, Latino. Please use Chinquapin.

Comment 9:

I am very concerned, as a parent and ACPS school counselor, that 8th graders are not developmentally prepared to make a choice (if 2 High Schools Model is chosen) b/w STEM &

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Humanities. There are so many issues/consequences associated with such a decision. Not to mention the equity issues of which students go to which high school (seems a little like tracking).

Comment 10:

I prefer the GW middle school transformation into a high school. The schools would be better spread across the city to help students see other neighborhoods and have new opportunities. Also, as housing in Potomac Yards explodes, there will be less traffic crossing the city to get to T.C. Williams.

On a separate note, it is outrageous that Virginia Tech is able to build a whole new campus but Alexandria is unable to find any prime space for an all new school. Instead of amending zoning rules for developers, we should be holding them accountable for the growth they bring. Development is great, but developments with no school for the kids is incredibly short sighted. Also, why not consider a partnership with Arlington?

Comment 11:

Many concerns with either option(s) under the 2 High Schools Model – would enrollment be each (STEM/Humanities) HS be limited? What is the enrollment criteria? What happens when 1 high school vastly out-enrolls the other?

One high school option B seems like the only equitable solution to offer all students the same class/extra-curricular activities without additional liabilities and overhead of inter-campus transport. Don't burn the potential capital of T.C. Williams lights if you're going to build new athletics facility on a location that has lights.

Comment 12:

Land set aside in Potomac Yards in 2000 (?) still available, how much acreage and where?

Comment 13:

Attending this event as well as other media and publications on this topic, I have yet to hear anyone discuss extra-curricular activities that enhance the high school experience – often leaching more real life lessons than a classroom setting – soft skills for emerging adults.

Question – How many kids can one orchestra, football team, musical production hold?

Comment 14:

Alexandria absolutely needs 2 high schools that does not mean both need to be as comprehensive as T.C. sports are supplementary and can be shared. Core services, counseling need to cover 5,000 students that is not possible with one high school. The connected high school network is not realistic for 5,000 students.

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Why didn't anyone think about putting 9th grade at the middle schools, expand middle schools, new elementary schools are being built with 8th grades then you would have less capacity issues.

Comment 15:

I recommend (given the past history of racism in the city and the current self-segregating of schools like George Mason Elementary – which is not diverse) –

1 – One High School Model *strongly to address equity, inclusion + diversity b/c East side still is elitist vs. West side.

2 – Alternative Three – Minnie Howard + Potomac Yards *strategic w/Amazon, Google +VA Tech campus nearby.

*Do not build on Chinquapin – Federal property with National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding that created this city park.

Comment 16:

- 1) With the connected network, are we now thinking about 2ish sites, or are we thinking a greater number of satellite campuses? If yes, how many (est.)? 5? 10?
 - 2) For 2 High Schools – Option B – If we have an “AP” school, does that mean if I’m at the IB/Arts/Language school I cannot take a AP exam in, for example, math?
 - 3) For 2 High Schools – Option A – Fine Arts only appear in Humanities high school. Does that mean that if I’m in the STEM high school, I cannot take Fine Arts?
 - 4) What’s the difference between one high school network A and B? Is it just where the 2nd site is? (Minnie Howard vs. Chinquapin?)
 - 5) What will admissions/boundaries look like? Will there be districtwide choice, even if 2 high schools are located in different geographic parts of the city?
 - 6) Why wasn't a 2 comprehensive high school model considered? I'm concerned that, in reality, the 2 High Schools options will limit my child's choices. If my child at the STEM HS, they won't realistically be able to take Fine Arts – for example (see my questions # 2 & 3)
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Comment 17:

What are some of the selection entries the Board will be using to select the 2 options?

If the 2 High Schools Model is selected, how will the Board ensure that one school isn't primarily of a certain demographic?

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Comment 18:

I'm concerned about the logistics of a connected campus and the largeness of it. I think it would be hard for our kids to feel seen and successful at a school competing with regards to extracurriculars. You say not to focus on curriculum but you have already presented detailed models for the two high school options, and I am worried that either (a) those models will stick and our kids will be forced to define themselves too early in life, or (b) people will take those models seriously in making the decision, unnecessarily prejudicing the vote towards the really big integrated campus.

Comment 19:

Very interested in the Two High Schools Model so long as they are roughly the same. Prefer not to have my children placed on Arts/Humanities or STEM tracks in 8th or 9th grade. Strongly encourage the Board to pick the two schools option – so long as the schools are balanced with opportunities.

Comment 20:

Concerns with Two High Schools Model:

- Equitable access to extra-curricular activities
- Ability for kids to have a liberal arts education (students can be interested in music + math)
- Not creating a have/have not high schools in ACPS

As a former IB diploma teacher, I would love to see that in ACPS but will the structure in earlier grades support IB diploma? FCPS struggled with implementing IBMYP program, but I think in a smaller school district and with 5 – 8 middle school ACPS could really implement this and give IB students more chances to succeed.

*Would like to see a balance w/vocational classes and NOVA cross-curricular studies.

* Two schools option B seems to be the most balanced for all learners.

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September 14, 2019 - Community Meeting

Comment 1:

I am a parent of an ACPS student and a teacher at T.C. I am strongly against Two High School option for the following reasons:

1. Pigeon-holes students too much at too young an age
2. One school will inevitably be seen as the “smart” school and that just would not be good for our community
3. TC is known nationally for doing an outstanding job of being super inclusive with AP/DE classes and getting kids into those classes who might never otherwise try one & supporting them to succeed. I am afraid that would be lost. Afraid it would re-open old segregation wounds, as well!

Also, please consider the following & build it into the inter-connected option:

1. We need more “alternative” capacity. Not just for kids with behavior issues but just kids who, for a year or two of high school (not all four years necessarily) could benefit from a physically smaller environment with very small classes (15 or so) while going through a rough time, etc. I think that population in any given year is 200-400, but the size of satellite & Chance for a Change are currently too small for these kids.

Comment 2:

If a student decides to change their type of study, how easy can they switch? Will they be able to switch? What if they don’t know what they want to study in 8th grade?

Comment 3:

I believe the Connected School option B using Chinguapin field for expansion is the best option. The Two High School Model was a great option 10 years ago when Potomac Yard was empty. Not now. Won’t work.

Comment 4:

My recommendation out of these available options is the Connected option B using the Chinguapin are for the connected campus. Sport complex at Minnie Howard.

- Get through the legislative issues with using Chinguapin. Push to meet the timelines.
- Remove bike lanes on King to help with traffic. Stagger starts to help with traffic flow.

Comment 5:

The project should better analyze that the students should not be displaced from one place to another and only consider one site to receive classes. There should only be one high school because the population is very big and, on many occasions, more alternatives of schools should be looked at. Too much bullying. (*Translated from Spanish*)

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Comment 6:

- It is better to do a longer Q & A it is beneficial to the audience to hear everyone's questions (suggestion allow 30 minutes instead of 15 minutes)
 - Meeting parking & childcare not advertised.
 - Some students NEED a smaller environment; Only a Connected Schools model will allow this for students particularly with extra needs.
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Comment 7:

I'm excited to hear how deeply the Education Design Team has considered the issues but also agree with the speaker at the meeting that "Titan Pride" is driving a lot of the conversation. The Connected Network is an exciting idea, but not the only way to achieve positive outcomes. I think that it's important to recognize that all four have the potential to advance education at ACPS. Both option A's seem generally similar, and I'm more attracted to option B's. I also have a preference for two schools/B with the GW campus: The Metro just makes sense.

- Recognizing "predictions are hard especially about the future" which options give us the most potential for expansion 10-20 years out if 5,000 is not the cap?
- I liked that the theme of two school/B was equity but didn't get why that was so in the design. What sets that apart?
- I don't see why the NOVA early college option isn't possible in all four.
- What about the VA Tech Innovation Campus announcement about courses and offerings for ACPS? Is that available for all four?
- Would an option for fluidity also be "tele-teach" options? We have tele medicine now, why not in ACPS?

Thank you very much for your hard work and looking forward to seeing where we go next! Oh, and more dual language programs K-12, but especially for MVCS students going to middle school and beyond.

Comment 8:

Thank you for all the hard work. Our city's diversity is such an asset. As we consider curriculum & the space requirements needed to implement it, I hope opportunities for dual language programs/global studies are offered and supported. I hope efforts are made to serve existing students who will be here in the disruption of transition.

Comment 9:

Has any consideration been given to the potential advantages of having high school classes available for middle school students? Conversely, upper class high school students could gain teaching/mentoring experience with middle school students.

Comment 10:

Thanks for sharing with the community. I really like the option of the Connected High School Network because of the facility of the kids to move around the building. I think it's more

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reasonable and could be a short term or it won't take that much time to build it. In the future, maybe it could be another high school.

Comment 11:

- IB/AP is a split that would really benefit students & choices
 - Are we thinking forward? STEM is the educational “thing” right now. Will it be in 20 years? Probably not.
 - Are we thinking of projected population increases? HQ2, etc.? Is 5,000 seats enough?
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Comment 12:

- If the two-school option is chosen, then two schools should not be next to each other – they should be spread out. Most importantly, SPORTS FIELDS SHOULD NOT DRIVE THIS decision.
 - STEM is flavor du jour – we need to be thinking beyond STEM and to what kids actually need to learn to be successful adults in the 21st century. They need to understand courage, leadership, trust, and basic human skills.
 - We should expand partnerships with NOVA, VA Tech and George Washington. This helps kids find things they want to focus on.
 - Finally, we should use this as an opportunity to change the name of T.C. Williams. We can keep Titan pride by calling the field “Titan Field”.
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Comment 13:

I assume either of the options presented will allow for continued growth of the city and the concept of ACPS and capacity issues won't be a problem in 15 – 20 years?

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September 17, 2019 -Community Meeting

Comment 1:

- 1) Difference between option A and B in 2 High Schools is not clear
- 2) What percent of students make a sports team today (e.g. 200 students' tryout for soccer for 20 spots)?
- 3) Why no full AP/IB or at both schools? Other schools do it with 1,600 kids? Montgomery, Fairfax, Arlington.
- 4) Where are cities with schools empty? When has Alexandria ever under-projected?
- 5) Has the city considered eminent domain to take needed land? Why not?
- 6) Given the recent redistricting of elementary schools and diversity at the most "white" schools (Charles Barrett, Mason) why do you think the schools will not be diverse? And why can't it be solved with a "magnet" at one school, if needed (e.g. STEM, Chinese Language) apply?
- 7) What is the plan for 2026? Why being short-sighted?
- 8) Why can't we have 2 high schools with all?

I am strongly in favor of two separate high schools. I have heard TC called a "death trap" and students can't play sports due to size. Smaller is better when it comes to high school.

Comment 2:

Would IB be/require full diploma? What if students want to transfer to other high school? For NOVA Early College, have you considered impacts for dual credit transfer for at or state colleges? Will either option provide all sports? What is the plan to ensure cultural + diversity equality "consistency" across both schools? Is IB being considered for all options?

Comment 3:

Minnie Howard should be rebuilt with either 2nd high school or connected network. Design if connected network should allow for change to 2nd high school in future.

Also, Francis C. Hammond property should be considered for another middle school for IB or Dual Language/STEM on property.

Comment 4:

Wow very impressed with all the work already done. As a parent of 2 alums who didn't get to enjoy this new campus you have an immense job!! Good luck. If I had to choose a plan I would advocate for a blended school with Minnie Howard.

Comment 5:

Two high schools options will not work. Where/who draws the lines? Option B for connected high school is only viable option. City too small in terms of size (15 square miles) for two high schools.

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Comment 6:

- 1 – How many new hires required (support, teachers, maintenance) cost?
 - 2 – Building new structures addresses capacity, not test scores and academic ranking in VA overall, how does this address?
 - 3 – Alexandria City allowed to attend Thomas Jefferson High School in Annandale.
 - 4 – How does this affect taxes?
 - 5 – Is two campuses enough? Don't want the same problem 10 – 12 years from now.
 - 6 – Is the attendance based on choice or zoning?
 - 7- What does this do to the annual school budget?
 - 8 – What is at-capacity? For each new site?
 - 9 – Eminent domain for land use? Landmark Mall?
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Email and Online Comments

Comment 1:

I am a community member and recent ACPS/TC parent (TCW classes of 2016 and 2018). I have reviewed much of the information on this page (<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/hsproject>, which I point out does NOT include this email address for contact!) and attended the forum at George Washington Middle School last night.

I understand the problem well at TC having lived through the last 6 or so years of traffic and increased crowding and parking issues. I have lived in Alexandria for over 30 years and know there is no land left. I want to like the 2 high school concept because the idea of a 5,000-student high school is daunting. I thought the programmatic approach is creative but no matter how many ways you divide the schools, no matter what, students will lose more than they gain. Here are the reasons why I believe it is NOT a good choice for Alexandria:

- If there are 2 schools, there will be inequity of population, of academic course offerings, of accessibility (due to traffic and parking and space constraints), and students will have to give up too much to be in one or the other school.
- There isn't enough room for another set of fields and parking needed, which a 2nd high school will require. There would have to be 2 football, 2 basketball, 2 crew, 2 baseball, 2 swim, 2 marching bands, 2 tennis, 2 everything teams - there simply isn't room for all that in this city.
- T.C. Williams has an amazing reputation with colleges - they know kids who come out of TC were in big, diverse school. That makes the graduates resilient and adaptable and that is appealing to colleges. For that reason, many will not want to go to the OTHER high school. Even using programs such as STEM or STEAM or Humanities or IB - no matter what - what if the student, who had to make a choice in 8th grade, doesn't like whatever they chose? What if they choose wrong?
- Thus, both schools would have to offer a broad range of courses (core and elective) and services. What if they want to take classes across the spectrum? Both schools have to offer a full complement of AP, regular, elective, CTE, special ed, etc. Presumably, students would have to stick with wherever they started and could not take courses or participate in activities, such as robotics or German Club or debate or whatever club the other school has that their school doesn't have. And then both schools would have to have more staff to allow for a full range of CTE and special ed courses in addition to the upper level and "regular" STEM, humanities, and arts courses. Both schools would have to have a full complement of counseling, support, coaches, and administrators. We would lose economies of scale. In other words, from an operational standpoint, surely running 2 high schools would cost more than operating one.

No matter what, even if there were space to accommodate 2 high schools, I cannot come up with any real advantage to this community being able to support 2 high schools.

I keep coming back to the "connected network option" as being the only option that will allow student choice and the most incredible diversity that Alexandria has to offer. As I watched my

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kids and their friends go through the college search and application process, I learned what a great reputation TC has because of the diversity that they know our students had

- academically, socioeconomically, racially, ethnically.

When my 2 students got to college, they both found that their time management skills and sensitivity to a wide variety of people is far better than their college peers who went to less diverse schools with fewer activities to take part in and a narrower choice of academic and elective offerings. While a large school size may be a problem for a handful of activities, such as varsity sports and drama performances that can only accommodate a certain number of participants, other programs such as musical groups, robotics teams, and clubs can only be better if there is a broad pool of students to participate. When I think about the population of international/ESL, special ed, and socioeconomically disadvantaged, I can only imagine that one high school would offer more and better services as well as better integration.

The "connected network" option, presumably using the Minnie Howard location due to its proximity to the King St campus, offers the most flexibility of programming and use of space. The other site options (in Potomac Yard) could offer alternative programs for kids who need a smaller environment (such as the satellite campus does now) and/or specialized programs. I assume, since the Chinquapin option really isn't feasible, that Option A is the remaining option. I like that option, especially knowing that during the design phase over the next 2 years, there will be plenty of student, faculty, and community input to tweak it and make it the best option possible.

The connected network concept is clearly the best option for our community.

Comment 2:

I attended an information session at GWMS tonight and I am even more concerned. The ACPS administrators noted that the School Board is being asked to vote on the TYPE of facility (1 integrated campus or 2 separate high school) BEFORE the programming is discussed. My other concern is the models there were shown do not compare/contrast the same program example. The 2 school option images described areas of focus such as STEM and Humanities and how they would work together. The Integrated option did not show how the SAME program would be executed in this solution - the infographic was very hard to understand.

In addition, it appears that the 2 school option would have 1 school larger than the other. This looks like ACPS is heading down a road to split ACPS students into 'have' and 'have not' campuses. We already struggle with this at the middle school level. It will be even worse at High School. GWMS has strong arts and sport programs and Hammond struggles to attract and maintain similar programs.

An Administrator said even if the School Board votes on the facility now, the program study is expected to change the type of buildings would be needed. Why is the School Board selecting a location before ACPS has a general idea about the program direction is decided knowing the initial decision is expected change significantly.

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I urge the School Board to defer the facility location until the program discussion provides a general direction. I also urge the School Board to carefully consider all factors around a divided high school program.

Additional Comment:

Thank you for responding and providing additional information. Our daughter just graduated from TCW and we have an 8th grade son. I'm very familiar with the current course of study and how students select a path and courses. Our daughter is a freshman at VA Tech and was complimented on her application with the diversity of academic, humanities and extra programs. This is the driving reason ACPS must keep a well-balanced option of education front and center at all times. Our son has an IEP and has several complex learning challenges. This flexibility and diversity will be even more important for him.

My concern is the way the material was presented and discussed during the meeting on Monday.

#1: The information boards did not appear to present the same program with different types of facilities (2 separate high schools or 1 integrated campus)

#2: I do not see the option of expanding TCW per the plan that was approved in 2004. Can you share this information? We went through the entire process in 2001-2004 and were promised that the TCW plan was scalable and flexible to meet future student growth, changes in educational needs, etc. We are extremely concerned that ACPS is not honoring this promise and at a minimum, explaining why the 2004 plan needs to be augmented.

#3: The City of Alexandria is small compared similar communities with a MUCH smaller tax base than Arlington or neighboring communities. ACPS struggles to maintain the buildings we have. GW had another emergency last week and J-H has 'temporary' A/C units for the second year. The plans do not cover how any new building would be managed in the overall portfolio.

I strongly believe the timing for selecting a physical structure is not aligned with the overall plan for the future of ACPS. If there is no clear direction of what is needed, how can the School Board decide what facility option is best? I also believe that ACPS cannot support 2 full high schools that are equitable, well staffed, accessible for all students, provide critical flexibility and scalability.

As I read the material and listen to comments, I am very concerned about the view of the whole student. While this may be part of the process, it is hard to understand as a parent.

- The public does not seem to understand how special tracks such as STEM work in relation to selecting electives and supplemental programs work. For example, the current STEM program only provides the option for a single elective. Most students choose world language to satisfy the college requirement. They do not have time for Arts or other interests.
- The public does not seem to understand how thin current programs and clubs are attended now and how they will shrink or disappear with 2 separate high school programs.
- ACPS continues to pursue boutique or trendy 'academies' such as STEM, Humanities, IB or Medical that lock students into a specific track. I am very concerned about his path as

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it does not provide students with the flexibility they need to move into higher education. It also does not seem to solve core problems that ACPS is facing such as ensuring all students have a strong base. The amount of math remediation that is required is alarming at Minnie Howard from an academic point of view as well as the scheduling changes that have cut off access to other programs at TCW King Street Campus. If a student follows STEM 100% at TCW, they will be missing critical requirements that are mandated by major engineering programs such as VA Tech, etc. Students need to understand how to build a program that satisfied requirements for several pathways whether it's NOVA, University, Certification training, etc.

- ACPS needs to fundamentally study the current program of study and define stronger avenues for students if they do not want to start with formal college/university programs but wish to pursue other professions. How can typical 'vo-ed' be updated to meet current and future needs for skilled professions that require training outside the university system.
- If students wish to attend the university system, ACPS must better educate students about requirements at CC such as NOVA vs. 4 year options. They are VERY different.

I know my reply covers more ground than the physical building but I wanted to highlight why I feel more work on the program is vital before a facility path is identified.

At a minimum, additional clarity is needed to compare 1 program to different facility options as well as a clear understanding of several constraints regardless of the building (e.g. Academy programs allowance for other courses outside the prescribed track). Parents also need more clarity around HOW students would participate in extracurricular and classes outside the core set with different facility options.

I am more than happy to provide very specific examples or discuss this further.

Comment 3:

I am writing as a resident of the Del Ray community since 2008 and a mother of a 1st and 3rd grader at MVCS. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the High School Project. In 2025, my daughter will be a 9th grader and my son a 7th grader, so I'm totally invested in this outcome.

I have read all the available materials, talked to other parents, and reflected on my own experience. I believe Alexandria should build a second high school, instead of pursuing the connected campus option. While the plans for a connected campus are innovative, it feels too much like a plan for an urban college campus (like GW or NYU), which is fine for college kids, but not for 14-18 year olds who I think we probably want to keep closer tabs on.

I have no particular loyalty to the Titan brand and creating two high schools creates more opportunities for kids in sports and other extracurriculars, and also gives them the opportunity to explore a wide range of interests and get a more specialized education if they want to. The size of TC currently is overwhelming and even the size proposed for the 2 high schools is in the upper limits of nation-wide averages, so I'd even support the exploration of additional high

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schools in the near future though I haven't heard discussion of that.

Comment 4:

I unfortunately was unable to make tonight's meeting at GW on the HS project, so I am writing to you directly on this issue.

We are residents of Del Ray, Alexandria for over 20 years and have a 6th grader at GWMS. I speak on behalf of many neighbors that we are extremely concerned to learn that GWMS's open space (baseball field) is being considered as a potential site for a second HS, if that option is voted on later this month.

Del Ray is already bursting at the seams with traffic, construction, scooters, and with little to no open green space. Squeezing a HS into the already overcrowded GWMS campus would put even more strain on our little neighborhood - which soon will be likely to experience more congestion with Amazon H2Q coming.

GWMS is desperately in need of facilities upgrades & renovation - with serious mold/building issues affecting student and staff health. The focus should be on aggressively/quickly addressing those needs, and not adding to construction impact with a HS.

While we are strongly in favor of the straightforward 2nd HS option as soon as possible - we implore the Board to vote against using GWMS as a site. Rather, use a site in a less congested location and where there is more open space available (e.g., Minnie Howard).

Comment 5:

Thank you so much for hosting the community forums on the High School project. I was able to attend last night and was motivated in large part to attend because I wanted to hear feedback from the community. I am personally leaning one direction on the one high school vs two but my intent was to hear, not express, an opinion. To that end, I want to thank you for taking more public comments than what may have originally been planned. If the presentation had concluded and gone straight to an open house format I probably would not have felt it was time as well spent.

One comment I heard several times from parents of high schoolers was there would be a loss of extracurricular activities if we moved to 2 high schools. However, when I asked the follow up question of why, it was that the current schedule only allows effectively one elective (I did not ask why or what counts or doesn't). The sentiment in particular was that band, orchestra and choir would suffer from a lack of students if there were two high schools. My oldest is in 6th so I am not familiar with the scheduling constraints but believe my children would be interested in music and sports, which, as was conveyed by older parents last night, seems not to be currently feasible.

Particularly should the board approve a two HS plan, I would hope that possible changes to the schedule could be considered to create multiple extracurricular opportunities for students. I went

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to a smaller high school and had the opportunity to do multiple extracurricular activities and think this would be particularly helpful in developing the whole student.

In my conversations with people about the HS project the overarching concern is pressure students will face to select a track at age 14. I echo that concern and think creating an opportunity for students to do multiple extracurricular activities, for example music and sports, would be beneficial and perhaps alleviate some of that concern.

Thank you for all the thoughtful work that has been done to date to prepare for future growth.

Comment 6:

I urge you to please vote for the second campus at the Minnie Howard site.

Comment 7:

Thank you for sharing the proposals for a new high school. I will have two students at TC Williams in four years. I favor the One High School Model (Connected High School Network) Option B. I think it makes sense to relocate Chinquapin Recreation Center to the Minnie Howard campus and expand TC Williams into the Chinquapin footprint.

Comment 8:

I believe that a one school model is the most appropriate for Alexandria because (1) it provides access to all courses for all students, (2) utilizing Chinquapin land makes the most sense financially, (3) building a first-rate sports complex at Minnie Howard provides a significant revenue stream and is a substantial upgrade from what we currently have, and (4) the traffic impact is minimal so it doesn't adversely affect the rest of the city.

Comment 9:

I write to express my family's and essentially all of our neighbors' categorical opposition to pending proposals to divide T.C. Williams High School into anything amounting to multiple locations. These proposals would separate our students from each other by geography, and/or subject-matter of their high school curricula, or both.

The dominant characteristic of TC is not TC's size – there are many highly successful secondary schools, including the country's best schools – that are larger. TC's dominant characteristic is TC's comprehensive nature. On one campus, TC offers a range of academic programs and athletic and co-curricular activities that are much more comprehensive than the offerings of a typical smaller liberal arts college. That breadth and depth of course and non-course offerings contributes to student success. And TC's large campus makes the expansion of the existing TC facility by far the easiest and least costly, least disruptive, lowest-risk proposition.

The division of TC into multiple separate high schools, especially high schools that are not adjacent, would rob our students of the benefit of a busy high school program – and of the

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benefit of each other, as a large and active community:

- If a student wants to take AP math and chem, but otherwise wants to enroll in an arts program, that would be effectively impossible under at least 3 of the 4 "options" that the school board is considering.
- If a student wants to take a language that is offered at only one of the separated high schools, and a non-language course that is only offered at the other, then the student is simply out of luck.
- If a student is an athlete but wants to be enrolled in a particular academic program, then she is at risk of the high school to which she is assigned not being proximate to the athletic program.
- If a student wants to pursue drama or musical performance as a co-curricular, but doesn't wish to be enrolled only in that academic program, then the student will be at peril of being enrolled in one building and then racing across town - if the School Board will even permit cross-attendance for co-curriculars.

The effects of the current proposals on the City's students will be extraordinary, and negative. Students will no longer all have equal access and proximity to athletic programs. Students will no longer be placed together in the same, common melting-pot. Students will no longer be assured of the universal access that they now have to the full academic and co-curricular programs offered to all students at T.C. Williams.

Advocacy for a division of TC stems in part from the various iterations of educational specifications that arbitrarily selected a misleadingly weighted average-size statistic as a somehow optimal target, and from the Hanover November 2017 report (which was so facially deficient that it was debated and not released for an additional half year). The educational specifications treated micro-schools and alternative programs as if they were the equivalent of general high school programs, calculating them in pari passu with other schools, and leading to a deceptively tiny, false-mean school population. In the Hanover report's research phase, only 16 teachers were surveyed. Nine of the 16 opposed the division of TC. The Hanover report somehow concludes that 44% is a clear majority. It plainly is not.

Our entire community benefits from the certainty that EVERY student has access to EVERY course, EVERY form of academic support, and EVERY co-curricular and athletic activity. College-bound students benefit from a broad and intensive curriculum, from one-site access to advanced and honors courses, and from access to co-curriculars. At-risk students benefit from having all material supports co-located. Students facing financial issues benefit from having their courses and their co-curriculars close to the SFA office. The average student benefits from having a range of choices that address personal interests and direction, without requiring that a young teenager select an enveloping "track" for the remainder of her schooling.

A decision to avulse Alexandria's students from enriching and protective curricular, co-curricular, and support access would have potentially permanent ramifications, and would definitely be determined by many parents to constitute violations of fundamental access and accommodation rights.

If nothing else, it is both shocking and disappointing that most of the options that the School Board is considering would require a student to "track" academically, starting as early as age 13.

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To be clear, the choice of high school programs and activities can and does profoundly affect post-high school options. A student and parents would be compelled to consider interest levels in academic subject-matter, and available co-curriculars, while in 8th grade. A student who innocently and reasonably changes her mind might lose time, or struggle to change programs. A particular academic and/or co-curricular program might not be available at the most proximate high school location. It is not simply inappropriate – it is offensive – to even consider forcing children (and that is what they are) to pre-select an entire life-development plan in a fashion that is designed around a combination of school division convenience and contractor recommendations.

Comment 10:

I am writing to express my concern about the plans regarding the expansion of TCW High School and wish to learn more about the process – both developing requirements and including experts in school planning.

Our daughter just graduated from TCW and we have a son in 8th grade. There is no question that ACPS must review the current facilities and update them to support the growing and evolving needs of students. When TCW was built, there were plans for expansion that were part of the plan to maintain a single campus. We are very concerned about the consequences of 2 separate high schools. ACPS needs a comprehensive and flexible approach to all schools, especially the high school to allow the system to adjust as population, courses or study and student needs change over time.

Grace loved being part of a diverse high school community that offered a wide variety of programs that allowed her to create a schedule that included AP and honors courses as well as choir and drama. She benefited from having a well-rounded experience – both academically and overall wellbeing. In addition, her college application and acceptance process was very positive. She is a freshman at VA Tech and was happy with her schedule.

We are a very small system and already struggle to have strong student participation in many programs.

During the 13 years our children have been involved with ACPS we continue a struggle to develop a plan that has continuity between changing ACPS administration and School Board members. From the parent's perspective, it appears to be a disjointed and short-sighted approach that appears to be reactionary with a focus on solving a single problem instead of the root cause and related issues. Maintenance is an easy example that we've all seen recently. It's deferred short term with long term impacts to students. We have observed the same issue with changing curriculum frequently with limited time for training or allowing the program to establish before changing. We also have a child that has special education needs and have experienced a different approach and resources every single year.

We are concerned to see a similar pattern around the high school discussions. I understand that the current process included a focus group of about 16 teachers who were surveyed and participated in initial brainstorming sessions. The sessions did NOT include any additional

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feasibility studies or professional planning information to inform the brainstorming ideas. However, when the topic of 2 schools were discussed, nine of the 16 opposed the division of TC.

As we study the proposals, we are extremely concerned that 2 separate schools will make access to a wide variety of opportunities will be more difficult. Most of the proposals will result in TC being divided into multiple high schools, separating our students from each other by geography, and/or subject-matter of their high school course of study, or both.

A few of our major concerns include:

- When TCW was built, the plan included EXPANSION options. How is this being factored into the current discussions?
- At TCW many programs already compete with the current course schedule to allow students the opportunity to participate in vital non-academic programs such as world language, Arts (band, choir, orchestra, drama), alternative career opportunities and clubs.
- If our son plans to take AP math and chem, but also wants to enroll in an Arts program, such as drama or orchestra, it will be difficult under at 3 of the 4 "options" that the school board is currently considering.
- If our son wants to take a language that is offered at only one of the separated high schools, and a non-language course that is only offered at the other, it does not appear as though he will have this option available.
- If our son wants to be part of the athletic program but wants to be enrolled in a particular academic program, it is unclear how a 2 school solution would be reasonable based on the location of the campuses.
- If the School Board votes to move forward with 2 high schools, how will students be able to attend courses in multiple locations?

We are in full support of expanding ACPS facilities to meet the growing needs of the student population. Our concern stems around the rush to make a decision without a clear plan that addresses the all of the goals for the community.

As taxpayers and parents, we must have a plan that is flexible and sustainable that allows the ACPS to change with growing and shrinking populations, evolving educational needs and related programs and services that is nimble and avoids the emergency mode of the past. We feel a single campus that encompasses recreation facilities that is centrally located is the best option for our community.

We look forward to learning more about the process in upcoming meetings.

Comment 11:

I read the material sent out today about the future of the high school and was struck in particular by the two-school model. I won't bother being anything but blunt: I'm horrified. Absolutely horrified that this is even being proposed much less seriously considered. Please let me explain why.

I am horrified on a professional level. I was a Senior Admissions Officer at UVA's Law School for five years. I learned a lot about both law school and college admissions in those years. I can

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tell you that almost every college and university in the country is seriously focusing on creating a diverse student body. TC Williams has punched well above its weight in terms of college admissions across the board and especially at some very prestigious national schools for a number of years (Yale, Penn and UVA are just a few examples). TC provides a great education and produces excellent students. So do a lot of schools though. Especially in this area. Differentiating a student, even a top student, is not easy anymore.

What really sets TC Williams apart in many admissions offices is that it is one of a very small number of nationally ranked schools that is majority-minority. TC William's integration story is known nationally. While this may not seem like much to those outside of admissions, it is EVERYTHING inside. What you may not realize is that every single student at TC Williams is considered diverse by the sheer fact that they attend an integrated TC Williams. That includes the white students. There are very few white students, let alone upper middle class ones, that attend a majority-minority school. The whole, complete and integrated TC gives all the TC students an experience that is simply not replicated in many other places in the United States. That experience is very valued in admissions offices. What a lot of Alexandrians simply do not know or understand is that their students are not getting in to universities and colleges (especially the elite and selective ones) in spite of TC, but frankly in significant part because TC is united and integrated. Choosing to split TC into two separate schools will very likely have a negative impact on our students' college admissions going forward. Especially if, as I think will clearly happen, the two schools will become segregated. You will be removing a valuable life experience that a lot of parents in this district want our kids to have – true and deep diversity. You will also be taking from them an advantage that life experience accrues to the kids at college application time.

In addition, enrolling in a program focused school brings its own issues at college admissions time. Students seeking to leave a STEM environment for liberal arts will have to explain the choice or look like a student who entered a STEM school because it was deemed “more rigorous” simply because they wanted to impress colleges. It will be virtually impossible for a child in a Humanities school to apply to a serious STEM program if that student decides that is what they want to pursue in college. It does not matter if you intend to offer STEM at the humanities school and vice versa. The schools will be known for their focus. You will be tracking these children and shackling them to a decision that they made at 14. Or worse, that their parents made for them. This will not happen in a unified TC that does everything well and remains known for that.

I am also horrified at the two-school model on a personal level. The reasons are numerous. I really do not want to tell my daughters that at 14 they need to decide if they want to attend a STEM or Humanities focused school. It will absolutely impact their future trajectories. No 14 year old should have to make that choice. You will leave mine with no option. I don't know of any school with a specific focus that doesn't give short shrift to the subjects outside the focus. TC currently provides excellent programs in all academic areas. It would be simply heartbreaking to lose that and tell my kids that it is no longer available to them. I also seriously doubt that the current expansive and rich course offerings at TC can be replicated at two separate high schools. It simply cannot. I am also unaware of any other school division that has two specific focused schools and no traditional model.

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In terms of equity the two-school model is going to lead to the upper middle class white parents in Alexandria pursuing the STEM school with everything they've got. It will disadvantage our many minority students, particularly the immigrant students, and will lead to students under pressure to study languages in which they have no interest to get in to the STEM school or perhaps worse still, to enter in to a STEM school in which they have no interest, but their parents do. The two-school model is designed to address the concerns and desire for choice of a small percentage of white parents and seems to ignore the needs of the minority students who make up the majority of our division. That is shameful. For a school division that is focusing so much attention on equity this hits a very sour note and makes me question the seriousness of the Board's desire for equity.

On a practical level it is ridiculous on its face to house a high school for 1600 students across the street from another high school or at a middle school. As the parent of a current middle school student and another one on her way up, I can tell you that I have absolutely no desire to have high school students on the same campus as my middle school student. Under no circumstances should an 18 year old be on the same campus as an 11 year old if it can be avoided. This should be obvious.

Until today I have never doubted that I made the right choice in choosing ACPS for my daughters' education. The division is far from perfect, but it has always been a division with a heart. It has always been a wonderfully diverse place for kids to learn and grow together, especially at TC. It has a rich and varied curriculum that is honestly unmatched in Northern Virginia and I would argue in Virginia. The students take tremendous pride in the history of the school and the unity that has resulted decades later. All of that helps makes our students stand out at college application time. You seem poised to undo all of that with a vote for a two-school option.

I am seriously confused about why this is even being considered. The two-school model is not a serious proposal from a thoughtful school division. The two-school option is proposal from a school board with a number of novice members who do not understand or appreciate the uniqueness and strength of the high school they are charged with overseeing. I am asking you to take your responsibilities to ALL the students of Alexandria seriously. For my part, I have to say with absolute disappointment in the School Board and its members that I will have to very seriously consider enrolling my children in another school division if the two-school option is where you are headed. I am confident that I will not be alone in making that choice.

I am absolutely horrified.

Comment 12:

I'm an ACPS Parent and disappointed in the options you've been offered in the High School Plan.

I appreciate and want to attack the history of white supremacy and segregation in the system, but the options presented are not an attempt to correct for those legacies. I fear these are four variations of one plan, which will force ALL Alexandria children into an unnecessary

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educational specialization scheme -- using the space crisis to upend the traditional comprehensive school model.

We need equity, high quality and choices for students. We do not need to divide kids by course of study and make them grow up faster than they already are. I'm deeply disturbed by the lack of debate within the Board and community. Why can't you even consider two traditional schools?

I don't want to move my family or remove my children from ACPS, so I am asking for someone to help me understand why I should be open to ANY of these options?

I'd appreciate any attempt to reach out to me about the plan.

Comment 13:

Writing into document feedback shared during Tuesday's George Washington Elementary evening session on the HS Project. Thank you for a thoughtful session and for the work you have put into this project to date. I look forward to learning more about your recommendations and progress.

I BELIEVE you would increase confidence from parents, School Board, etc. as you create and socialize for decision-making alternative models/options for a future TC Williams that is a more equitable and richer learning environment through any/all of the following actions:

(a) share what lessons you learned from named comparable HSs (nationally, regionally or locally) so that it's clear to decision-makers whether the models/options you are proposing have a precedent for success, or whether they are brave new directions we'll pioneer, in which case we'd want to consider where risks/uncertainties may exist and how we'll successfully counter them.

(c) quantitatively score each model/option according to the set of criteria you believe are most important so that decision-makers can understand what the real differences and real trade-offs are between them. Cost would certainly be a factor, along with any of the categories (Student Choice/Multiple Pathway Offerings) or the individual values (Variety of Courses) in the report.

As it stands, while you have outlined and explored a range of models/options, the narrative- and diagram-based approach used is directional in nature. Coupled a lack of concrete HS examples representative of each model/option and quantitative scoring of each model/option to reveal where the real differences and trade-offs exist, **I do not believe you have fully enabled parents, Board members, etc. to (a) meaningfully debate the merits of your models/options and (b) intelligently decide** which model/option best meets the criteria you have established as essential based on your stated goals (more equitable and enriched learning environment, etc.). You may be well underway with work along these lines as part of your recommendation to the Board on Sept 26, but that is not transparent to me at this time.

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Offhand, I did not see student safety as a goal/value in the report - and that is one where, perhaps, there is a real difference between 2 high schools and 1 high school, given the need for student travel between connected schools. I do not know.

I would like to thank Dr. Hutchings and all the ACPS staff who responded very thoughtfully to parents and community member questions. Thank you!!! This is clearly a huge undertaking, and I hope as it proceeds there is even greater transparency about WHAT we are choosing to do, WHY we are choosing to do it relative to alternatives and HOW we'll measure our progress toward our goals (student success, equity, etc.).

Additional Comment:

I BELIEVE you would earn greater confidence from parents, School Board, etc. by sharing your work on enrollment projections, including noting your methodology, its limitations, your confidence levels and any concerns/factors it does not account for that could be material in the future.

As it stands, there is less than 1/4 of 1 page in the report you shared providing information about this matter. Very reasonable to expect questions from the community here given low level of information shared, and also given recent experience of parent/students/teachers with overcrowded elementary schools and past experience, of which I am less familiar, with under forecasting ACPS enrollment.

I was thankful to learn from a staff member (demographer?) at the event that much more work was done with enrollment projections than is shown in your report, such that they are likely solid. But as even a cursory glance reveals (<30 minutes of google searching/reading) there are all kinds of actions schools/boards/counties can take to be more transparent and successful with their forecasting. See here for more than a dozen recommendations from Arlington County group on what actions could be productive to improve transparency and quality of enrollment projections, knowing that there are limitations to the GPR and CVS methodologies as documented in this report about Arlington County.

Thank you for your continued time and effort making the HS Project a success for students.

Comment 14:

I am a lifelong Alexandria resident and TC Williams graduate, class of 1999. I am writing to suggest what I believe is the best option for a second high school in Alexandria. I believe the best option is to have 2 buildings but one campus. I feel the most equitable and best option is to build a second building on what is now Chiquapin Park and relocate Chiquapin's aquatic center to the grounds of Minnie Howard with a 25 or 50 yard pool. Both high schools should then be renamed with the land under both of them being renamed T.C, Williams Park (or Grounds). Then to keep the 2 schools united, one should house 9th and 10th grade, and the other 11th and 12th grade. This addresses all of the issues I can foresee from issues of historical inequality and keeping Alexandria United. My quote to introduce this new plan is: Keep Alexandria United with a Second High School.

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The next few years are going to be tumultuous times for all of you as you wrestle with this decision. I want you all to know the city appreciates the sacrifices all of you have and will make in office. This will not be easy, but the public, while emotional and passionate, does not forget how lucky we are to be represented by all of you.

Comment 15:

I'd like to add my voice to the parents that are against 2 high schools.

I'm against the 2 school program. Having gone to a HS that was in a similar situation due to swelling class sizes, and limited resources, as well as a diverse student population that were very split between college bound and trade school bound.

Student pride in the legacy of being a TC student is paramount in Alexandria. The Pride of how desegregation took place in our community and how TC rose above is a testament to the value of a diverse community. Current school facility and resources issues are paramount across the entire district, and will likely get worse with filtering of funds for a 2 school system.

a 2 HS system would fracture the community, drain limited resources, and Initiate steps to segregate Alexandria based on affordable housing. To propose 2 HS, one STEM based one humanities based- but with attendance based on zoning is going to further damage the community and our future generations- there is no way to create magnet schools that don't allow for attendance based on demand- or are you going to waste facility budget on another Jefferson Huston style plan.

Yet here we are with TC, a well branded, well accepted school and you want to fracture that.

A single connected school can and will support our students and support next generation learning.

I do not support 2 schools and demand the school board support all of Alexandria and the next generation with a better thought out plan for the future.

Comment 16:

First of all, thank you for your work and your commitment to the education and the future of youth of Alexandria. As a parent, an educator, and a West End resident, I am writing to you in support of the connected high school option. My current seventh grader will be graduating from TC Williams in 2025; my fourth grader in 2028; the preschoolers that I teach will be graduating in 2033.

I support the connected high school option with a central location at TC and an expanded, rebuilt, updated Minnie Howard. In addition, I look forward to the educational design concepts of dual NOVA enrollment, partnership with Virginia Tech, trade school options, that develop dynamic 21st century skills for ALL students in Alexandria. One of our strengths is our diverse immigrant community who will benefit from the varied options in a connected high school

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system. This West End community needs extra attention because they do not have their parents advocating for them.

First, students will be able to make the choice to either specialize in their STEM track or diversify across disciplines. Brain development continues until 25 years old. Taking advantage of studying both art and science, languages and math, in high school will encourage both sides of the brain to flourish. Students in the International Academy will also have the flexibility to explore more options.

Second, students will be able to ACCESS all programs, whether it is a German exchange trip, a fencing team, or an expanded health clinic. Whether it is an educational program or a support program, it will be strong. Alexandria does not have enough resources to split.

Finally, a connected high school system will keep our city connected and build a healthy community. Alexandria is both a small town and a city. In our small geographic patch, we meet new people everyday and run into old friends all the time. In the 21st century, with the increasing use of technology that can often isolate, let's use our small land area to take advantage of bringing all people, all programs, all strengths, and all opportunities together.

I disagree with the 2 high school choice for several reasons. First, resources of employees and programs would be spread thinly across the city. You would have to recruit and pay more teachers, administrators, staff, and coaches to achieve balance and equity at both schools. You would have to recreate or duplicate many programs, like sports teams or health clinics at both locations. If the only fencing team was at one location and you bussed some kids from the other school there, that sounds like a connected high school system.

Second, do you know middle schoolers? I have a seventh grader and I cannot imagine that she would be able to think clearly to discern her high school path in 8th grade. She can barely decide what she likes to eat. With your two high school option, she would have to choose. You will have to triple your counseling staff to manage that! I would also argue that few 12th graders can make a good college choice. Even if the two high school option allows a child to switch in 10th grade, you are putting a lot of pressure on these children to make these decisions.

Thirdly, with a two high school option, the lack of program availability at both schools creates another inequitable situation. If my kid likes art and German, now she has to switch to an online program for German because she goes to the art focused school. Maybe she then ends up missing out on a German exchange program from the STEM school. Again, if you 'bus' her to that program, it sounds again like a connected system is the way to go.

Finally, and most importantly, the two high school option will be inequitable. Parents will track their kids to the more exclusive programming at one school. No matter how hard you try to balance TAG, the International Academy, Special Ed, STEM, languages, art, sports, etc. one of those schools will become exclusive, therefore leaving many other residents of Alexandria behind. Additionally, if you build the second high school on either Hammond or GW, you will continue to emphasize and exacerbate the east-west divide of the city. GW and Hammond are already challenging enough to create some sort of equity, forget about the high school.

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Moreover, the two high school option essentially redistricts the city of Alexandria. Something that was painful enough to deal with in our elementary schools in the past several years.

Alexandria is growing and changing. I support progressive ideas as we become the urban city that we are. A connected high school system will not be without challenges. But this is the right path forward. I am confident that you will make the right choice for the connected high school option as we look ahead to the education of the future. The future that is my kids. The future that is the preschoolers whom I currently teach. The future that is the diverse West End community.

Many thanks for your time and attention! I look forward to hearing from you.

Comment 17:

I have two children at George Mason Elementary school. Elementary school parents haven't been alerted adequately about the high school project, and it doesn't seem right to go forward with a vote on September 26 without doing so. The families that will be affected by decisions made for the high school project are the elementary families, so why are we not being informed adequately on what is going on? Somehow this information should be provided to all ACPS elementary schools, and there should be time for more input from elementary families. Also, I read through the webpages on the high school project, and some of it isn't clear. The "network" option isn't described in way that doesn't make clear sense. I hope that you that you'll be able to clarify that option and to involve the elementary families.

Comment 18:

I would like to voice my strong support of the single, connected high school model as ACPS moves into the future (rather than adding a second high school). I have one child who is currently a junior at TC Williams and a second child who is an 8th grader at George Washington Middle School. Both of my children have benefited from rich course offerings and outstanding faculty throughout their ACPS career, and while I imagine qualified faculty could be found for a second high school, it concerns me that course offerings might have to be limited due to extra cost.

My children are also both involved in extracurricular activities (band and crew) that could suffer if a second high school is required to be fully funded. They have also both studied world languages since 6th grade and will finish high school with AP-level fluency. I wonder if we will be able to offer such a diverse range of languages if we must fund a second school.

Finally, I have observed through my children's activities the way in which our community rallies so well around a single school. The fluidity between campuses is already very much in practice between 9th graders at Minnie Howard, or even 8th graders traveling to/from the middle schools to participate in sports or other activities. I see no reason why this can't continue even with redeveloping the multiple campuses around educational focal points rather than age. I am concerned that redistricting for a second school could result in limiting the diverse student population, and that all students would lose out on the opportunities available through a single high school network.

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The world is becoming more connected in spite of geographic limits. I think it's completely appropriate and better preparation for life for our students to experience this in their high school career. What a unique opportunity we have! My children will have graduated by the time this project is fully implemented, but as a taxpayer and citizen of Alexandria, I think the single connected high school option makes the most sense for the future of our city.

Comment 19:

I have read through the information regarding the High School project and I am in favor of the one connected high school option. I am the parent of 2 children who attend Francis C Hammond Middle School. They are in 7th grade and 8th grade. They already feel the disparity between them and GW. This is mostly a result of them participating in intramural sports and seeing that GW has 4 times more athletes than we do. The kids learn early on that FCH is not the same as GW.

Without creating further disparity between East and West Alexandria, it makes better sense to have 1 connected high school. This way, no matter what part of the city you live in, you will get access to the same resources as every other student. Yes, not all students need the same classes or support, but they should have EQUAL ACCESS to the same resources and class offerings. Plus if a student decides they want to be more STEM focused or more Humanities focussed they don't have to change schools! They can discuss it with their counselor and, hopefully be able to change classes without having to go through an academic transfer. From what I read, it sounds like, in the 2 high school option, it would be difficult for a student to change schools if the high school they would attend would be based on where the student lives.

Also, by having 2 high schools, the city will just perpetuate the east end vs west end dynamic that exists today in the middle schools and in the city overall. I urge you to choose the 1 connected high school option to ensure that all ACPS students, regardless of where they live in city, have access to the high school education they want, need, and deserve.

Comment 20:

I have three children currently enrolled in middle and elementary school in ACPS. I am appalled that there is a proposal to separate STEM from humanities at the high school level, and require children to choose, at the age of 13 and 14, which track they will follow. My have children are strong in, and like, both humanities and STEM subjects and should not be required to choose one to the detriment of the other at such a young age. Furthermore, my middle schoolers have already made their choices of which language to study, and should not be forced to choose STEM versus humanities simply so they won't lose the years of language study they've already completed. It upsets us enough that my husband and I are likely to enroll our children in private school or move out of Alexandria if our kids are required to make this choice.

Comment 21:

I have read through the information regarding the High School project and I am in favor of the one connected high school option. I am the parent of 2 children who attend Francis C Hammond

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Middle School. They are in 7th grade and 8th grade. They already feel the disparity between them and GW. This is mostly a result of them participating in intramural sports and seeing that GW has 4 times more athletes than we do. The kids learn early on that FCH is not the same as GW.

Without creating further disparity between East and West Alexandria, it makes better sense to have 1 connected high school. This way, no matter what part of the city you live in, you will get access to the same resources as every other student. Yes, not all students need the same classes or support, but they should have EQUAL ACCESS to the same resources and class offerings. Plus, if a student decides they want to be more STEM focused or more Humanities focused they don't have to change schools! They can discuss it with their counselor and change classes. From what I read, it sounds like it would be difficult for a student to change schools since they would be based on where the student lives. This makes no sense.

Also, by having 2 high schools, the city will just perpetuate the east end vs west end dynamic that exists today in the middle schools and in the city overall. Unlike Europe, our schools are not set up to put kids into educational tracks from early on so to suddenly set up a 2 high school system where a student will be districted to either a Humanities school or a STEAM school is not the best option for Alexandria City students.

I urge you to choose the 1 connected high school option to ensure that all ACPS students, regardless of where they live in city, have access to the high school education they want and need.

Comment 22:

As plans move forward with plans for Minnie Howard, please consider the impact on the immediate neighborhood regarding traffic and parking. I live on North Early Street, right above the school. Right now there is a significant number of parents/caregivers who drop their students off in the morning and then attempt to make a u-turn at Braddock and Early to go east, making it very difficult for North Early Street residents to enter Braddock Road. Last night our street was choked with cars of families attending back-to-school night. An AT5 bus was stuck because it could not negotiate the street and some residents couldn't get out of their driveways. I recognize the need to improve Minnie Howard, regardless of what plan is adopted. I am only asking that you engage the immediate neighborhood in future planning, provide sufficient parking, and mitigate potential traffic congestion that will result from any expansion. Thank you.

Comment 23:

I'm a parent of two ACPS students, a first grader and a fifth grader. I attended an informational session about the High School Project on Sept. 14, and I wanted to share my reaction.

I urge the Board to think about its decision in the context of the long-term future of Alexandria. The Board should not limit its thinking to what will get ACPS through 2025, when it projects it will have 5,000 high school students; it should think about what might serve ACPS best in 2035

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and beyond—and how ACPS can start positioning itself now to move in that direction.

I spoke to Dr. Mazingo, ACPS’s Chief Academic Officer, at the presentation. She said that the current understanding of the ideal size for a high school is around 1,600 students. Her statement appears to be consistent with the research posted on ACPS’s High School Project web page, at <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/2454>. If that’s what the evidence says, then it seems the answer to the question whether there should be one high school or two is clear: the Board should support two high schools now, and it should have a vision that would accommodate having 3 high schools at some point in the future.

Whatever the ideal size of a high school may be, there surely is a size that is too big. Even if the ideal size is perhaps somewhat larger than 1,600, it seems unlikely that it is larger than the 2,900 high school students that T.C. already supports. Furthermore, what position will a future Board be in if, in 10 or 15 years, the high school population has grown even more, perhaps because of increased population density, or because ACPS attracts students who otherwise might have gone to private school? Should that future Board have to choose between expanding a 4,500 student high school to accommodate yet more students or having two schools, one a giant "connected" school of more than 4,000 and one a much smaller school with far fewer resources? Even if the system shrinks to 4,000 students in future decades, it seems it would still make sense to accommodate those students at multiple schools.

I understand that T.C. Williams High School was renovated and expanded not long ago, and the Board is not designing the school system from scratch. That does not, however, mean that ACPS must now double down on a strategy of a single too-large high school, or even that T.C. must forever serve so many high school students. If the right answer is three high schools, the best way to make a step in that direction is to start by building a second, not to expand the one that is already too big.

Regarding the choice of which two-model school to pursue, I urge the Board to ensure that every student has the opportunity to get a well-rounded education. It is one thing for a school to have areas where it excels—every school is different. It is also fine for districts to have specialized schools if there is adequate interest. Students should not, however, be forced to choose whether they wish to attend a school that offers advanced courses in STEM or a school that offers advanced course in the humanities, with each school only offering few or no advanced options in the other’s focus area.

Comment 24:

Hello- I'm writing to let you know of my family's support for the one high school option for the future of the city's high school. Our daughter is a 7th grader at Hammond, so we have quite a bit invested in what the outcome will be.

While we know that maintaining one cohesive school for the entire city is a challenge given the student population numbers, we feel that two schools would not serve in the students' and the community's best interest. An east/west divide would hark back to the days of segregation in Alexandria and would result in a great deal of inequity amongst the two schools. We already see

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this played out when it comes to Hammond and GW, we don't need to further it when it comes to high school.

Please enact plans that will maintain the current standing of one TC for all.

Comment 25:

I strongly urge you to vote for two schools and a full-capacity build on the Minnie Howard campus. My older daughter will enter 9th grade in 2025 and my younger one in 2029. I write you not just on their behalf, but in the best interest of all ACPS students.

1. TC Williams is already too big. With a 2018-19 enrollment of 3,987 students, TC is already by far the largest high school in Virginia, with 1,100 more students than the second-largest high school. TC is twice the size of the average public high school in our neighboring jurisdictions of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties. It would be grossly negligent for this School Board to allow TC to grow even larger, especially if it means balkanizing students out over separate campuses.

Large schools are overwhelming and impersonal. When thrust into a crowd of 4,000 students (or as many as 5,000 by 2025), individuals are much more likely to fall through the cracks. Or get trampled during the stairwell stampede between classes. Larger school sizes make it more difficult to provide students with personalized experiences, smaller learning communities, and support for their social and emotional needs—all critical elements for an optimal learning environment. Smaller school sizes would especially benefit ACPS, where 25% of high school students are English language learners and 60% are economically disadvantaged. TC uses a learning academy approach to help support students in smaller environments. But with ten such academies to cope with its growing student population, a second high school is a clearer long-term solution.

Proponents of maintaining one high school point out that its large size allows it to boast a wide array of course offerings and a unified community spirit. But a two-school model could easily deliver these same benefits, and perhaps even enhance them.

- Course offerings. It is difficult to evaluate the validity of the claim that a two-school model would result in reduced course offerings. ACPS staff have not fully disclosed how many and what specific course offerings would no longer be supported in a two-school model. Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that there would not still be sufficient student demand for a full range of course offerings in two schools. If TC's King Street campus (current capacity of 2900 students) was one school of the two-school model, it would still be the largest high school in Virginia. And a second school with 1600 students is hardly small. In fact, it is the "prototype" size used in the High School Educational Specifications plan approved by the School Board in 2017.

- Unified community spirit. There is no reason why there is not room in this city to be proud of two high schools. In fact, a single school building dedicated to each school (rather than a connected campus) would more actively promote a united community atmosphere than a

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“connected campus” approach. TC Williams is currently already spread over two campuses—King Street and Minnie Howard. In 2018, grade-level feasibility studies supported the need to combine 9th grade students with grades 10-12 on a single campus. It is difficult to see why it would be beneficial for any other subgroup to be separated onto a different campus site. The logistical, transportation, and scheduling complexities also pose significant obstacles.

- Equity—the elephant in the room. Many fear that a two-school model will result in inequitable allocation of resources and opportunities. Some cite the history of segregation in ACPS, which endured until 1965. Others cite current inequity in elementary and middle schools, which reflects the de facto segregation of residential housing in our city. Informed by such concerns, the School Board should consider a more equitable approach to assigning students to two high schools.

“Controlled choice” is a promising model that can help ensure that the student population in each high school is socioeconomically balanced and reflects the overall student population. The central location of the Minnie Howard campus makes it an ideal location for a second high school under a controlled choice model.

The best way to promote an equitable distribution of students to each school is to offer comparable educational programming in each school. The Educational Design Team has proposed differentiating schools in the two-school model roughly along STEM vs. Humanities pathways. I believe any such differentiation would be devastating to the goal of providing equity. More work needs to be done on this issue, but I believe it can be addressed soon after the September 26 vote.

2. It’s time to act on a long-term solution. The 2016 Long-Range Educational Facilities Plan warned against short-term solutions turning into long-term solutions. Since then, we have suffered through various short-term solutions:

- In 2017, the School Board approved Educational Specifications that recommended a high school size of 1400 to 1800 students. But they did not take action on a second high school even as ACPS high school enrollment reached 3600 students in 2017.
- In 2017-2018, the ACPS commissioned multiple “Grade-Level Feasibility” studies, which essentially concluded that a priority on improving school quality was more important than changing grade level configurations. The only conclusive takeaway was not to separate 9th grade from grades 10-12.
- The district even studied ways to boost the utilization rate of classrooms by moving teachers around and creating “teacher collaboration suites.”

Meanwhile, the high school population has grown by another 600 students since 2016. We have exhausted the short- and immediate-term solutions. It is now time to decide on a sustainable long-term solution.

3. We need at least two high schools. When the new TC Williams building opened in 2007, its capacity was for 2,500 students. Now, the stated capacity is 2,900 students. And the last time student enrollment was this high (back in the 1960s), ACPS had three high schools. The rapid growth in student enrollment is not likely to subside. In fact, if ACPS continues making progress on its goal of ensuring that every student succeeds, enrollment is only likely to grow. The

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“connected campus” approach is a continuation of the current two-campus model that has already been dismissed by students, educators, and expert consultants as undesirable.

Two schools will expand opportunities for students to pursue leadership roles in student government, on a sports team, or in a performing arts group or club. These are important aspects of the high school experience, and two schools will only increase the number of students who can participate.

4. It’s also time to rename TC Williams. If the School Board finally decides to move forward with a two-school approach, it would also be a perfect time to remedy the hypocrisy of keeping one of our high schools named after Thomas Chambliss Williams.

When he was superintendent, T.C. Williams worked to maintain segregation in Alexandria, adopting a strategy of “massive resistance” to the 1954 Supreme Court desegregation ruling. A TC student made a compelling case for renaming the school in 2017:

<https://www.acpsk12.org/theogony/2017-2018/2017/09/20/time-to-re-name-t-c-williams/>.

Today’s student population has changed drastically since the 1970s. Still, the need for equity remains an urgent priority. Every day that goes by without taking action on this issue is a vote in favor of honoring a man who openly opposed equity. We should take notice of neighboring jurisdictions that recently renamed high schools (Washington-Liberty in Arlington, Justice in Fairfax County). ACPS should join them in rising to the occasion.

But equity is not achieved through masking inequities under the cloak of one large school.

I urge you to vote for two high schools and a full capacity build at centrally-located Minnie Howard. There will be more hard decisions to come. ACPS must design comparable and equitable educational offerings across two schools. ACPS must also implement an equitable student assignment policy that incorporates choice and prioritizes socioeconomic balance. But I believe we can get there—under the Board’s direction, and with constant engagement with the entire community of parents, students, and educators.

Now is the time for the School Board and ACPS to finally act on a long-term solution to our pressing high school capacity needs. Thank you for your consideration and your continued dedication to ACPS.

Comment 26:

I’ve been swamped with baseball and travel baseball coaching not including the chaos that comes with a spouse that works nights, but I want to thank you all for the debate and discussion around our future high school model.

I have read through the board questions and much of the available materials on the two models: connected and two high schools.

I continue to stress that ACPS should walk before it runs, I do believe that the ACPS offering two separate high schools is the best option for our students and community going forward. I do

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struggle with the idea that each campus is going to have a specific focus, I come from an area where multiple high schools serve one single area and not in one case did these very large high schools offer programming that would group one as STEM and another as Humanities. There are economies of scale to be found in course offerings at both high school, this could be done through part-time appointments for faculty at both high schools, equaling a full-time position but not requiring duplicate teachers if the course does not require it. Anyway, that's into the weeds but I believe two high schools offers the clearest path forward for ACPS.

I do want to note that while buzz-worthy and consultant-ity ideas of a connected high school network do not seem well established to produce successful outcomes for ACPS students. Forget about the myriad amount of decisions that would need to be made by parents and students, think solely about the logistics of having students on multiple building sites? ACPS has not proven, in my limited experience, that it can successfully scale and manage complex logistical programs/projects.

My apologies for the length of this e-mail. Good luck as you make these decisions and I hope my opinion may add some support for the two-high school model.

Comment 27:

I am a resident of the City of Alexandria and currently have a 6th grader at GWMS, a 2nd grader at MVCS and an 18-month old future student of ACPS. I know you are all very busy getting ready for the big vote next week on the High School Project and how ACPS will move forward by either building a second high school or created one connected high school. I would like to urge you to vote for the two high school model.

I attended the Q&A session last winter, the High School Project Open House at GWMS last spring, and the most recent High School Project community meeting at GWMS last week. At these meetings I've heard a lot of great questions and comments from the community. My biggest concerns with the connected high school model are the push to get more students out of the traditional high school environment and into either self-contained learning environments or early/dual enrollment at NOVA Community College. Those environments may work for a small set of the high school population, but I do not agree that they are the best learning environment for the majority of our students. To best serve our students we must build a second high school to accommodate the 5,000+ students we are projected to have in ACPS by 2030. I've heard that the biggest concern with the two high school model is equity in assigning students to the different high schools. As I understand it, there are already equity issues at T.C. Williams that need to be addressed and I feel confident that ACPS, the School Board, and the community of Alexandria can find the best possible solution whether we build a second high school or create one connected high school. It is also my understanding that the cost to build a second high school is very similar to the cost to creating the one connected high school.

I understand that there is a large section of the community that is very attached to T.C. Williams High School and it's history in the City of Alexandria. I appreciate that there is a huge amount of pride for graduates of T.C. Williams and while I am glad that people feel very strongly about the high school and it's history, we really do need to move forward and look to the future and make

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decisions that will best serve our current and future students. With 5,000+ students it would be incredibly hard to get onto a competitive sports team, be a part of the band, orchestra, or choir, or get a part in the school play, all major components of the high school experience for a lot of students.

I also question the long-term success of the one connected high school. Has that model been used in any other school district? Are we willing to take that gamble with our children/students? I don't think it would be a sense of pride to be known as the largest high school in the country, especially when data shows that smaller schools lead to better educational outcomes.

I understand that that our city has a very unique and challenging situation when it comes to fitting all of our students into the most ideal high school scenario, especially with our lack of land to build on. But I know that the School Board and the rest of ACPS is up to the challenge and will make the best decision for our students. I again want to express my sincere wish for you to vote to move forward with the two high school model and give our students the high school experience that will most help them thrive in their formative years of learning and make the transition to young adults.

Comment 28:

I am a parent of a 1st grader and 3rd grader at Mount Vernon Community School, and I am writing to voice my support for the two-high-schools option. Two comprehensive high schools will allow student to feel as if they are part of their school community. It gives them a home-base for learning where they can feel connected to their teachers and to each other. Two comprehensive schools will give students the opportunities to gain core knowledge, explore their interests, and participate in extra-curricular activities in one place. The one connected high school network does not feel connected at all, but rather separates students from a sense of community, and runs the risk of each student being a cog in the machine or a number on a piece of paper.

ACPS has identified three potential locations for a 1,600 student educational facility. Moving forward with the two school model allows for more possibility as Alexandria continues to grow. If we outgrow two high schools, there can be a third or fourth as needed. If we proceed down the path of one connected high school, how big are we going to let it get? Yes, there are projections for 5,000 students, but what about 20, 30, 40 years from now when there are even more students.

There are many conversations to be had about curriculum models with both options, and I am grateful that the school board is not making that decision at this time. Those conversations will come, but we need to think carefully about the needs of our students. One sprawling high school is just too much - it already is. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Comment 29:

While realizing you are adverse to public input on how to deal with our capacity issues - which I find objectionable and arrogant, I think T.C. Williams is already too large and the Superintendent's opposition to a second high school is misguided. Is he trying to "make his mark" at our expense?

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Comment 30:

My name is Sam Gammon and I am a resident of Alexandria in the Del Ray neighborhood. My wife and I have three children who each attend ACPS. I'd like to voice my opinion about the upcoming vote regarding the "High School Project". In an effort to keep it short I'll get to the point. I believe that the city should pursue building a second high school as the primary strategy to address the capacity problems at TC Williams High School. While I find the connected network an interesting model that will provide a diversity of offerings to students, I believe it will create more problems than it solves and ultimately not retain the single school identity that is a major part of the goal of that model. I am also very interested in my children retaining the traditional high-school "experience" which I think only a comprehensive high school can provide. I can see how a connected network could be valuable in two ways: 1) as a secondary strategy to provide diverse offerings or address capacity and/or 2) establish programs or offerings that both high schools could share, thus connecting the schools at least in some way and broadening the offerings of both schools. However, I believe the primary strategy must be to provide a second center of gravity for the high school education in Alexandria.

I have not talked to a single parent who, when educated about this effort, is supportive of the connected high school model. Parents of young children (like me) are not sending their kids to school solely to ensure they attend TC Williams but because they believe in the values, diversity, and opportunities that going to school at ACPS provides.

In the end, our jurisdiction must address the issues that so many others do across the country and expand to meet the demand the community presents on our schools.

Comment 31:

I understand the desire to keep one high school in Alexandria. I grew up in Springfield and went to Robert E. Lee High School. The identity associated with T.C. Williams High School was strong, as it continues to be today. Since moving to Alexandria, my husband and I have assumed that our children will attend T.C. Williams. When we drive by the high school, my daughter, who is only eight, asks excitedly if that is the high school that she will attend. Part of me wants to guarantee that future.

Times change, though. We do not live in the same Alexandria that existed over twenty years ago. The city has expanded, and the population has grown. While we can have an idea of how that population will continue to grow, and the demographics it will have, we cannot be sure. We are looking at having a public high school population of around 5,000. On average, this means grade level classes of over 1,200. I mentioned that I went to Lee. I had a graduating class of less than 400, less than a third of the potential class size in the single high school model. While I do not know exactly how large the larger schools in the area have had for classes, my understanding was that the largest high schools in Fairfax County would typically have maybe 800 in their classes.

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I know that the high school models put forward have very creative ways of addressing the sheer numbers they would be dealing with: multiple campuses, college classes, etc. None of these options, in my opinion, change the fact that we are dealing with very large numbers of students. We want to keep a single high school in part for the cohesive identity, but I'm having trouble imagining how cohesive a student body of that size can possibly be. How do the students get to know all of their peers? Where would we have school-wide unifying events, like pep rallies and other things, with a student body of that size? Not only is the cohesive identity hard to maintain with those numbers, but I also worry about the individual attention and recognition the kids can get. There are only so many kids that can be on a varsity football team, for example. Kids who could excel at extra-curricular activities and feel confident in their abilities may not get the opportunity to participate when there are so many to compete with for limited spots. Very large school populations can mean that the individual can disappear.

I do not like the options put forward for the two high school models. I think districts should be drawn to draw diversity into both schools, rather than having themed high schools that force kids to commit to a certain track before they are old enough to make major decisions about their career and life goals. I am confused about the selection process for these themed high schools and worry that they would end up being inequitably distributed through self-selection. It is my understanding that the Board is not making decisions on the curricula for these schools at this time, though.

My concerns about the proposed models for the two high schools aside, I am in favor of having two high schools rather than an extended and very large single high school. The City's future identity resides with our kids, and it is more important to me that our kids go to a school where they know their voice matters than for our kids to simply be in a crowd of Titans.

Comment 32:

I have two sons at Mount Vernon Community School in Kindergarten and 3rd grade. I am writing regarding the upcoming High School Project vote on September 26. I have spent a lot of time thinking about, talking to other parents, and researching this issue, and I hope you will consider these points carefully when voting next Thursday.

First, we are making a long-term decision for the community that everyone will live with for generations to come. I went to a high school that was split grades 9-10 and 11-12 on two different campuses about two miles apart in 1974. These two campuses create all sorts of inequities/issues. I realize it's a different model than the campus model you are considering, but teachers gravitate toward one campus, support staff is spread thin and not equitable, and the logistics of students sharing classes on two campuses is complicated. As a student, it did not feel cohesive. The decision was made by not wanting a "new/old school on the richer/poorer side of town," and now 45 years later, most in the community regret that decision. Having first hand experience, I did not like nor want for my children to have to go to a high school that is housed on multiple campuses.

The high school decision must support ALL students--especially those on the lower economic scale. A campus model is in short the creation of one extra-large high school, maybe one of the

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largest in the country. The decision to make one huge high school has a series of consequences that must be weighed heavily. It will not be a point of honor, but a point of many issues, especially for low-income students. Here are some key points to consider:

- [The research is clear, large high schools are inequitable, less safe, and graduate fewer students.](#) It is our lower income students who have the most to lose in a larger, campus model. If equity is an important issue, one extremely large high school is NOT the answer. Again, the research is clear:
 - Large high schools, particularly those serving low-income students, have disproportionately lower achievement
 - Larger high schools have higher incidences of violence than smaller schools serving similar student populations
 - Larger schools have lower graduation rates and a high cost per graduate.
- A campus model is untested and has no research behind it. It is risky, and we should not chase “shiny objects” in education without research to support outcomes. It’s a huge gamble and not be taken lightly.
- Compared to other student populations around the country, Alexandria is the ONLY city to have one high school for our student population. [Here](#) is a list in comparison to other cities of similar size or geographic area.
- Two (or more) high schools provide more opportunities for sports, music, drama, and leadership and overall engagement. It allows for more families to be more involvement in and support the schools because there are more students participating.
- One large high school will leave students feeling more alienated, less nurtured, and less connected to caring adults. I think it will be extremely challenging for school leadership and support staff to know and support all students in a campus model, while making sure they feel engaged in the school.
- There are solutions to issues of equity among things like elective classes (e.g. shared teachers between two high schools for select electives) especially if the two high schools are located close in proximity. In the end, we will have two good-sized high schools. There will be ample opportunities for classes for both.

I want ALL the children of this city to feel connected, be invested, and grow in ways beyond the classroom. I support two high schools and the building of one or two smaller high schools in the future. I support building at Minnie Howard now, to make location as equitable as possible and because there is a need to rebuild there anyway. We know that smaller schools are better, so let’s start and build one high school with an eye toward more, possibly building on the GW and Hammond campuses in the future. I do not think we need to have “focused” high schools, such as STEM or humanities high school. Maybe in the future, additional schools built could have a focus if the community decides that is something we need.

If we adopt a campus model and cross our fingers it is going to work for all students knowing, that large schools do not support lower income students in particular, we are simply making a mistake.

I hope you will weigh the decision on the future of high schools in Alexandria heavily and consider research, not just ideas, when making it. It is the lower-income students who will suffer

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under a campus model, and two high schools (or more) is what this community needs long-term. We should not knowingly do something that is an untested theory while disregarding research that demonstrates what is best for ALL students.

Comment 33:

I've been meaning to email the school board about the High School Project, but I am ironically glad that I haven't previously had a chance to do so and am writing after attending the TC Williams King Street campus back-to-school night last night. The experience solidified my support for the connected campus model and reiterated my strong opposition to the two high school option in any form. The history of TC Williams High School and Titan Pride emanates throughout the building – one school, one City – and is such an important one for our students and the Alexandria community in general. My family has been in the ACPS system for 11 years and has 11 more years to go, so I feel very strongly about the decision on the high school that the School Board is about to make. It is hard to imagine Alexandria going backwards and separating into two high schools again.

TC Williams is currently full of strong and dedicated teachers and administrators who are proud of their work (and seem to actually enjoy working with teenagers), and they have developed an amazing and wide variety of programs for our students. The main reason people seem to be advocating for a second school is because they don't want their child to go to a large high school, but splitting into two schools as currently proposed does not appear to address that concern and is not the solution. Also, TC Williams already offers a number of specialized programs, like STEM and its new health-focused program in collaboration with GW University, which provides many students with an opportunity to have a smaller school experience within a large high school system. Our taxpayer resources are better spent developing these programs that already exist, as well as new ones like the tech program in collaboration with Virginia Tech, and providing access to them to all students in our City. In addition, I don't think many people realize that the students are also provided with schedules that move them around in smaller pods with their classmates, so they often have classes with the same students on similar schedules (GW and Minnie Howard use a similar approach), so the students have a "smaller school" experience within the larger student body. The connected campus network effectively connects our students with the existing TC Williams programs, and it makes more sense to focus on expanding the facilities needed to support these programs and keep the one school, one community connection.

One of the most important things to me is the fact that two separate high schools will not provide the same opportunities at each school and will not provide the same options to all. The current course offerings are amazing, and there is no way the two high school proposals could ever create two separate, but equal, schools. For example, there are not two former editors of the Washington Post to show up every day, as a volunteer, and advise students on putting together a nationally recognized newspaper. Having separate STEM and Humanities-focused high schools does not make sense when you know there will be students who want to take advantage of the full STEM course offerings, but they are zoned for the Humanities school. They just will not get the same quality STEM education as their peers at the STEM-focused school. TC Williams already offers a number of specialized programs, like STEM and its new health-focused program

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in collaboration with GW University, which provides many students with an opportunity to have a “smaller” school experience within a large high school system. Our taxpayer resources are better spent developing the programs that exist, as well as new ones like the tech program in collaboration with Virginia Tech, and providing access to them to all students in our City. Two separate high schools will not provide the same opportunities to all.

I could go on with a long list of why two separate high schools are not a good option for our City - I haven't even mentioned the effect it would have on extracurricular activities and the extraordinary amount of resources it would take to support two separate sport teams, arts, theater, clubs, etc. Participation in these activities is already low for a school the size of TC Williams. My daughter plays basketball and, while there are “tryouts” of sorts, there are barely enough girls to fill all three teams now, let alone if there were two separate schools with teams to develop. I don't want to write a very lengthy message, but do want to make clear that there are many reasons not to build a second high school in Alexandria. I am happy to discuss the other reasons of why I support the connected campus option examples at length if you anyone wants to give me a call at 703-517-2843.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my thoughts on the High School Project.

Comment 34:

I am an Alexandria resident and mother of a Mount Vernon Community School 2nd grader, kindergarten, and a 2 year old who will be joining her older siblings in school in a few years.

First, I want to thank you for your commitment to ACPS students and our city as a whole. Public service must often feel like a thankless job, so I want you to know that I appreciate your work.

I have been researching the options for the high school project and I believe the two school model is the best approach. I am concerned that the connected high school model/one high school model is untested and not backed by research. I also worry about kids falling through the cracks in one school that serves up to 5,000 students. It seems unwise to invest in an untested model that will have to serve our children for generations.

Thank you again and I wish you all the best as you work to make a thoughtful decision for Alexandria's children.
