

## Accomplishments and Events Alexandria City Public Schools

*(Editor's note: Information in this section was provided by the [Alexandria City Public Schools](#).)*

### Higher SOL Test Scores

The hard work and focused efforts of principals, teachers, students, parents and volunteers paid off this year as every school saw their Standards of Learning (SOL) test scores rise this spring. Every area tested, including mathematics, English, science, and history, saw increases, some of which were quite dramatic.

For example, in third grade, there was an estimated increase of 18 percentage points in English and 17 percentage points in history. In fifth grade, there was an estimated increase of 17 percentage points in computer/technology and 15 percentage points in science. In eighth grade, there was an estimated increase of 17 percentage points in science and 14 percentage points in both history and computer/technology.

At the secondary school level, where students take SOL tests at the end of their courses, there were similarly dramatic increases in the scores of students who took Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, earth science, chemistry, and world history.

These test score improvements occurred in all populations and were reflected in every ethnic group, socioeconomic group, gender and neighborhood. Clearly, every school took a giant step forward in its journey to accreditation this year and will continue to make progress in the year ahead.

### Higher Achievement in Grades K-2

Significant achievement gains also were seen at the primary level as a result of the district's Primary Initiative, a bold and innovative program focused on kindergartners, first-graders, and second-graders. Regardless of ethnicity or family income, boys and girls with two full years of instruction in the district had significantly better mathematics and language arts skills than those who had not received the same length of instruction.

The Primary Initiative, launched in September 1996 by the first elected Alexandria City School Board and Superintendent Herbert Berg, has instituted as its goal that following three years of primary instruction, all students will be at or above grade level in reading and mathematics.

Overall, the results from the district's own criterion-referenced tests showed that the greatest achievement gains were in the mastery of both math and language arts by Primary Initiative African-American students (a difference of 18 percentage points over Non-Primary Initiative African-American students) and by Primary Initiative Hispanic students (a difference of 23 percentage points over Non-Primary Initiative Hispanic students).

"Clearly, our Primary Initiative holds great promise in raising the achievement of every child, no matter what his or her ethnicity, family wealth, or school," said Superintendent Berg when he released the results at a March news conference.

## President Clinton's visit to T.C. Williams High School

In an effort to find out firsthand how students resolve conflicts, President Bill Clinton paid a visit in April to T.C. Williams High School where he chatted with 31 seniors about the school's successful peer mediation program. For more than an hour, the President listened to students who shared their experiences in handling their anger and helping their peers resolve conflicts. The conversation between the President and students was broadcast to approximately 12,000 schools and eight million students nationwide through an education cable channel.



*Seniors Lauren Lasso and Lydia Durand talk with President Bill Clinton*

## New Elementary School Boundaries

Following two public hearings, seven public work sessions, and countless hours expended by the Alexandria City School Board, district staff, parents, and community members, the Board adopted a redistricting plan in June that shifts the elementary school boundaries, starting in September 2000. Redistricting was necessary for three reasons: a steady increase in the number of elementary students, especially in the west end of the city, construction of a new elementary school in Cameron Station and the negative educational effect of school overcrowding, particularly on the district's most disadvantaged students.

The new redistricting plan brings uniformity to elementary schools as they will all be kindergarten through fifth grade, while creating two focus schools that will offer parents a traditional model (Lyles-Crouch Elementary School) and a concentration on the arts (Jefferson-Houston Elementary School).



*In May, the Alexandria City Public School Board and Alexandria City Council broke ground on the first elementary school to be built in the City in 30 years. (Left to right) Clarie Eberwein, Vice Chairman, Alexandria City School Board; Herbert Berg, Superintendent, Alexandria City Public Schools; Stephen J. Kenealy, Chairman, Alexandria City School Board; Kerry J. Donley, Mayor; Vola Lawson, City Manager; William Euille, Vice Mayor.*

## **Groundbreaking for first New Elementary School in 30 years**

In May, the Alexandria City Council and School Board broke ground on the first elementary school to be built in the city in 30 years. The 80,000 square-foot West End school in Cameron Station, scheduled for opening in September 2000, will cost \$8.5 million to build and will have a capacity of approximately 600 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The two-story school will have 28 home rooms, a science lab, an art room, two music rooms, a media center equipped with a computer lab and television studio, a gymnasium, a cafeteria and a stage that is situated between the two for use by either side. Unique in the school building will be dedicated teacher planning areas and extended learning areas for special student projects. In addition, a covered play area will allow children to enjoy recess, even in inclement weather. Adjacent to the school will be West End Park.

## **Middle School Blueprint for Excellence**

The Alexandria City School Board fully funded this program that provides, among other innovations, more training for teachers of grades six through eight in the core subject areas (math, science, language arts, and social studies). Alexandria's two middle schools, George Washington and Francis Hammond, will benefit from this new approach, which includes hiring four peer-teaching coaches, who will provide on-site staff development for teachers. The school board also approved an alternative education program for middle school students who need additional assistance to meet the district's rigorous academic standards. In addition, the school board initiated a study to determine the feasibility of expanding the middle school facilities to accommodate anticipated student population growth and to provide a critical support structure for students as they transition from elementary school into the middle school.

In July, George Washington Middle School received a new principal who will bring leadership and stability to this school community.

## **High School Academic Expansion Program**

Realizing that students need more time to achieve higher academic standards, Superintendent Berg recommended adding on a period to T.C. Williams High School, which expanded the academic day by approximately one hour. This seven-period day will be phased in over three years, starting in September 1999 with the 10th grade class.

Plans started this year for expanding the successful high school alternative education program and the Secondary Training and Education Program, which is now housed at T.C. Williams High School. As a result, educators presented a written plan to the board, held discussions about possible relocation sites, offered alternative education staff development programs to middle school educators and initiated planning for pilot programs in middle school.



*More than 2,500 volunteers worked with the Alexandria City Public Schools. Volunteers often work with students to sharpen reading skills.*

## **Growth in Number of Volunteers**

Research shows that one of the most important influences in a child's life is a caring and committed adult. Alexandria schools saw its volunteer program grow to more than 2,500 volunteers (including 30 City employees) and 90 business partnerships. In June, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and the Alexandria City Public Schools formalized its relationship with a declaration that establishes an independent 501(c)3 foundation called the Education Partnership. This partnership has the potential of connecting more than 1,000 businesses to the schools in positive and significant ways.