

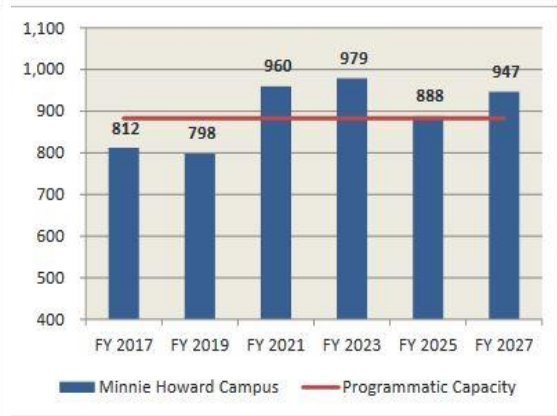
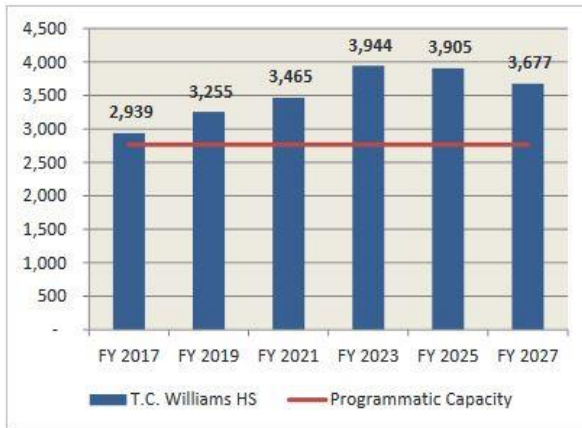
**Statement of Beth Coast
Co-Chair
Capacity Committee of the Instructional Leadership Team
T.C. Williams High School**

Madame Chair and Members of the Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force: thank you for the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the Capacity Committee (the "Committee") of the T.C. Williams Instructional Leadership Team. The Committee's purpose is to examine ways that TC teachers can make constructive contributions to solve our secondary school capacity crisis.

Our understanding is part of the work of this Task Force is to develop criteria for prioritizing projects in the Capital Improvement Program budgets approved by the City Council and the School Board in May of this year. We urge you to make addressing capacity needs in our schools, especially at the secondary level, the highest priority.

Our Committee supports the vision for a new secondary school building for T.C. at the Minnie Howard site as expressed in the capital budgets approved by the School Board and the City Council. We think this need is urgent and amply demonstrated by TC's current and projected enrollment. For example, as of March 9 – the last date for which we have enrollment data --, the enrollments at our secondary schools were as follows: TC Williams (King Street Campus): 2,977, TC Williams (Minnie Howard Campus): 793, George Washington Middle School: 1,343 and Francis C. Hammond Middle School: 1438. There are additional students in grades 6-8 at Jefferson-Houston School.

The CIP's enrollment projections (see below) are an increase of nearly 1,000 students anticipated over the next six years. The chart below clearly shows that the TC King Street Campus already exceeds its programmatic capacity and the TC Minnie Howard Campus will exceed its programmatic capacity by Fiscal Year 2021.



ACPS Proposed 2018-2027 CIP Budget

<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/cms/lib/VA01918616/Centricity/domain/803/cip/cip2018.pdf>

As teachers, we see every day that the crowded conditions at TC-King Street and Minnie Howard make going to school more difficult for our students and teachers. You may hear from school advocates about crowded conditions and overdue repairs at the elementary schools. We empathize with them and we support their efforts. However, circumstances are different in the secondary schools. At grades 9-12 redistricting is not an option. Additions to existing buildings are also not feasible (at the King Street campus) nor cost effective (at the Minnie Howard campus). Our purpose in appearing before you today is not to whine or complain about working conditions. Alexandria’s teachers will strive to do their best under any circumstances. However, the following provides an idea of the challenges associated with the crowding at all of our secondary schools. These challenges include:

- safety concerns including jammed passing times, fire drills and crowded lunches that result in students spending too much time in cafeteria lines;
- an increasingly chaotic cafeteria that drives students to eat lunch in all parts of the building;
- an increasingly slow Wi-Fi system;
- crowded classrooms and difficulty accessing elective courses;
- an inadequate complement of security personnel for a school of TC's size;
- large scale (SOL, PSAT/SAT, WIDA) testing that requires a shutdown of other academic activities;

- science classes being held in rooms without science equipment; and,
- teachers working in multiple classrooms, on carts and in similar makeshift arrangements.

Addressing the capacity needs of the schools is a criterion that our Committee believes should have the highest priority. Given the existing enrollment and projected growth at TC, we think application of this criterion would lead to the conclusion that, of all the City and ACPS projects including proposed elementary school modernization, a new secondary building for TC at the Minnie Howard site should be first in line.

We recommend a second important criterion and that is the degree to which the project will have a positive impact on those served and on the community at large. Here too, we think application of this criterion would leave little doubt that a new building for TC at the Minnie Howard site should be first. Of all the City and ACPS capital projects, this project provides the best opportunity to make a real and lasting difference in the lives of students and future citizens of Alexandria. The greatest negative effects of overcrowding are felt by students who have the most difficult time in school. Our administrators say that at-risk students repeatedly say that there are just too many people at TC. We work in the largest, and arguably most diverse, high school in Virginia without an effective alternative program for students who have difficulties in TC's large and crowded environment. A rebuilt Minnie Howard is a chance to address overcrowding, design space that complements, not duplicates, the King Street campus and creates specialized space for an alternative program. This facility would be an opportunity to raise academic achievement and meet the needs of all students at TC.

Alexandria has experienced a significant enrollment surge in recent years at all grades making capacity an urgent issue. Addressing this capacity problem should be a top criterion. Another crucial standard should be the degree to which a project will make a positive impact on those served. We urge the Task Force to prioritize these two criteria and make building a new secondary building for TC at Minnie Howard its highest recommendation.

Thank you.

Beth Coast

Co-Chair, Capacity Committee

Mark Eaton

Co-Chair, Capacity Committee