

FINAL REPORT OF THE EDUCATIONAL PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE

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To: Heritage High School Task Force

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The Educational Plan Subcommittee was asked to study five options for Heritage High School (HHS) and to develop the strengths and weaknesses of each option. These five options were:

- Option 1: Refurbish HHS
- Option 2: Renovate Part/Demolish Part/Add New Construction
- Option 3: Construct a New HHS
- Option 4: Combine HHS and E.C. Glass (ECG) into One 9-12 School
- Option 5: Combine HHS and ECG into One 10-12 School

The subcommittee reviewed, studied, and analyzed the five options. Based on the identified strengths and weaknesses of each option, the subcommittee was asked to prioritize the options for the task force.

After a careful review, the subcommittee concludes that options 4 and 5, which include consolidating Heritage and E.C. Glass into one high school, are not in the best interest of education in the City of Lynchburg. Both high schools are well respected across the Commonwealth, and graduates have been successful in both college and work environments. Combining the schools would limit student participation in extra-curricular activities potentially having the greatest impact on minority students. Creating one mega-high school also increases the risk of lowering the graduation rate. Therefore, the subcommittee recommends that options 4 and 5 which combine the two high schools be withdrawn from further consideration.

In addition, the subcommittee does not recommend option 1, that Heritage High School be refurbished. The subcommittee does not believe that the Heritage High facility is adequate to prepare students for a 21st century education. Because of inadequate academic space and potential safety issues, refurbishing would be a band-aid. It would be educationally unsound. Should, however, the choice come down to refurbishing versus consolidating the high schools, the subcommittee would support refurbishing over consolidation.

The subcommittee believes there are only two viable options for Heritage High School and prioritizes these options as follows.

1. Option 3: Construct a new Heritage High School. The site could be on existing property or on a separate parcel located in another part of the city in the Heritage attendance zone. If re-build on existing property, the subcommittee recommends that the school be constructed on higher ground so there is more visibility to the community and greater access to wireless technology.
2. Option 2: Renovate Part/Demolish Part/Add New Construction. Renovate the bottom two levels of Heritage and the Governor's School. Build new academic and career technical wings around what can be saved from the existing facility. The new wings could be built on either side of the current building.

Strengths and weaknesses of each the five options follow.

Option 1: Refurbishing Heritage High School (HHS)

Advantages

- HHS would remain a comprehensive high school
- Cost would be less
- Could take place while students are in school or during summer (minimal disruption)
- Would maintain the "character" of HHS campus
- Better than nothing
- Could provide improved classroom space for Career Technical programs
- Would allow HHS faculty to continue using creative teaching practices it has been using
- Already one of the highest achieving schools in Virginia with such a larger percentage of students on free and reduced lunch
- Would assist with stability of Governor's School, no additional costs.

Disadvantages

- Would sink money that could be used for educational resources into more band-aids that have not worked since 1977
- Current state of HHS is unacceptable
- Inadequate space for science labs
- Inadequate space for logistical movement of students in hallways
- Health and safety risks due to mold
- Health and safety risks due to inadequate heating and cooling system
- HVAC problems – teachers and students have to dress in layers
- Health and safety risks due to multiple problems with sewage system
- Problem with lack of sunlight
- Health-related issues with the building – allergies
- Concern for how long repairs would last – 5 years, 10 years – then the city is faced with the issue again
- Safety concerns during refurbishing if done while students are in school
- Temporary loss of classroom space
- Installation of technology would be more complicated in the current building
- Technology access may continue to be limited in some areas
- Wireless connections could be affected
- Continues the separation of career technical programs

Option 2: Renovating Part/Demolishing Part/Adding New Construction (Use what you can, build around)

Advantages:

- Could continue use of building during the process
- Could design the new construction to accommodate curriculum/educational needs
- Could design the new construction to accommodate technology needs
- Potential for improved classroom space for career technical programs
- Could utilize two major areas: field house and cafeteria
- Athletic fields are already in place
- Less cost than new construction
- Give students pride in seeing something started and completed
- Adding an “academic wing” could address width of hallways, appearance, accessibility
- Retaining a nationally ranked high school
- Does not impact extra-curricular participation
- Keeps two smaller schools which has more positive impact on dropout rate

Disadvantages

- Possible problem with enough acreage
- Depending on location of new construction, band practice area and tennis courts may have to be added
- Land is not favorable to future needs – building still in a hole
- Potential safety issues if students remain in building during renovation/construction
- Potential safety issues with portable or temporary classrooms
- May not be able to provide “equal access” of technology in all areas of the building due to structural constraints
- Continues the separation of career technical programs
- Potential impact on of parking and bus access
- Potential displacement of students, academic programs, and extra-curricular activities during renovation/construction
- Location is not visible to the public
- Building layout presents safety concerns due to need to secure five levels during renovation/construction

Option 3: Construction of a New HHS

Advantages

- HHS would continue as a comprehensive high school
- Would accommodate future needs in curriculum, educational programs, and career technical
- Could be designed to accommodate for 21st century technology including potential online courses, use of hand held devices, and wired to accommodate multiple users at the same time
- Could design facility to address unique needs of 9th graders
- Could design facility to address needs of career technical programs
- Could design facility to address needs of extra-curricular programs
- Could design facility to address needs of cultural arts
- Could design facility to address science lab space
- Could design facility to address foreign language lab issues
- Could design facility to address width of hallways and lockers
- Could design facility to address needs of ROTC

- Could design facility to address special education needs related to employment and independent living
- Could design facility to address needs of media center – library of the future needs to be virtual with good acoustics
- Could design facility to address large group testing needs rather than using the media center for two months of the year
- Could design facility to address math issues – classrooms are too small for 25 students with size providing little flexibility for use of varied instructional methodology
- Creates an opportunity to create a dynamic electronic classroom
- Would generate a new pride in the area
- Could be a Green Build to be environmentally friendly
- Would completely solve the HHS problem
- No negative impact on student learning during construction
- Keeps school size in the community in better balance with what most of the research says for academic achievement
- Could create a safer building
- Retaining a nationally ranked high school
- Does not impact extra-curricular participation
- Keeps two smaller schools which has more positive impact on dropout rate
- Opportunity to give faculty, students, and community a voice in the design

Disadvantages

- Most expensive of all options

Option 4: Combining HHS and ECG into One 9-12 School

Advantages

- Less expensive than most other options
- More specialized academic classes could be offered at a higher high school
- All career technical classes could be offered at one site
- Research tends to show a curvilinear relationship with math achievement scores and school size: a school the size of the “new” school would mirror that of the curvilinear relationship for high math achievement (Werblow, 2009)
- Having one high school in the community can provide a focal point
- Resources would not have to be shared between schools
- Athletic teams would be very competitive

Disadvantages

- Research shows a linear relationship between school size and dropout rates. A school the size of the “new” school would fall within the parameters of school size where dropouts increase.
- Implementation of the Graduation and Completion Index connected to Virginia School Accreditation adds to the importance of keeping students in school and not creating an environment that research says promotes additional dropouts
- More students will fall through the cracks
- Harder to maintain high academic standards (Public Agenda Report)
- Lack of personalized environment
- Decreases extra-curricular activities. The research clearly indicates that students who are involved in extracurricular activities do better academically than students who are not. We need

to be expanding opportunities for involving students, not creating a structure that limits those opportunities.

- More difficult to close the achievement gap
- Could increase violence, especially connected to gangs. The Lynchburg Police Department should be consulted about their thoughts related to the impact of combining the high schools on community dynamics. They may be able to provide an important perspective. Realtors should also be consulted about the impact of having one high school on property values
- Would impact parking and athletic fields
- Could lose career technical programs because of cost of relocating expensive programs that exist at HHS
- Parents prefer smaller schools – combining could lead to families who can afford it moving into the counties or sending their children to private school
- While less expensive, there would be significant expenditures for additional classrooms, labs, common areas, restrooms, cafeteria
- Could result in the loss of one of the ROTC programs
- Increase in absentee and tardy rates
- Elimination of a nationally ranked high school in the city
- Most likely, leads to an increase in student-teacher ratios
- Two smaller high schools are better than one “mega-school”
- Both high schools have their own culture and standing in the community
- Both high schools have produced outstanding graduates and are fully accredited in spite of changing demographics
- Both high schools have outstanding faculties
- The new census data indicates that the city is growing with most growth in the HHS zone
- Creating a “mega-school” would make it the 7th largest high school in Virginia. E. C. Glass has spent the last five years arguing that it should be considered AA for Virginia High School League activities because there are no AAA schools closer than 60 miles to Lynchburg. Creating a larger school will put the city right back where it was with increased costs for travel for athletic competition. The AA schools in the area will not play a mega-school.
- Not only will athletics be affected but so will programs such as theater. Both high schools have outstanding theater programs, and both perform a variety of plays and musicals each year. The reward for creating such vibrant programs should not be reducing the opportunities for students to perform. Other programs including academic competition, show choirs, and band will also be affected by decreased opportunities.

Option 5: Combining HHS and ECG into One 10-12 School with Restructuring of 9th Grade

Advantages

- Creates opportunity to address 9th grade achievement and dropout rate
- More specialized academic classes could be offered at a higher high school
- All career technical classes could be offered at one site
- Research tends to show a curvilinear relationship with math achievement scores and school size: a school the size of the “new” school would mirror that of the curvilinear relationship for high math achievement (Werblow, 2009)
- Having one high school in the community can provide a focal point
- Resources would not have to be shared between schools
- Athletic teams would be very competitive

Disadvantages

- Research shows a linear relationship between school size and dropout rates. A school the size of the “new” school would still fall within the parameters of school size where dropouts increase.
- Implementation of the Graduation and Completion Index connected to Virginia School Accreditation adds to the importance of keeping students in school and not creating an environment that research says promotes additional dropouts
- More students will fall through the cracks
- Harder to maintain high academic standards (Public Agenda Report)
- Lack of personalized environment
- Decreases extra-curricular activities
- More difficult to close the achievement gap
- Could increase violence, especially connected to gangs
- Would impact parking and athletic fields
- Athletic teams would have no one to play in the area – would increase travel even beyond what ECG experienced before moving to the Seminole District
- Could lose career technical programs because of cost of relocating expensive programs that exist at HHS
- Parents prefer smaller schools – combining could lead to families who can afford it moving into the counties or sending their children to private school
- While less expensive, there would be significant expenditures for additional classrooms, labs, common areas, restrooms, cafeteria
- Could result in the loss of one of the ROTC programs
- Increase in absentee and tardy rates
- Elimination of a nationally ranked high school in the city
- Most likely, leads to an increase in student-teacher ratios
- Could lead to restructuring of city’s entire educational system
- Adds an additional transition grade
- Increases the logistical movement of students
- If 9th grade is separate, must find a school location for 9th grade
- If 9th grade paired with middle schools, older students stay too long with younger students
- A 9th grade academy concept, or some variation, is a strong concept. However, the 9th grade academy is best delivered within each high school rather than a separate school. A separate school creates transportation issues, VHSL issues, curriculum issues, and transition issues. Since some 9th graders already have high school credits and some don’t, the range of curriculum offerings would need to be expansive. This would add additional costs through a duplication of services.