

Advisory Council on School Facilities and Capital Programs (FAC)

Chair: Tony Weaver

December 9th, 2025

Background

Per guidance from the Arlington School Board, the FAC has reviewed the Superintendent's draft Capital Improvement Plan Direction for FY2027-2036 (Draft Direction). Additionally, members of FAC attended School Board working sessions and received input from members of the public during meetings. Every effort was made to ensure transparency and allow for comments and questions. With this input, the FAC submits the following comments on the Draft Direction.

Overall Assessment

In general terms, the FAC concurs with the Draft Direction. It continues various capital projects that are in progress as well as major infrastructure projects listed in the Facility Condition Assessment report. It includes the relocation of the Montessori Public School of Arlington (MPSA) to the Arlington Career Center legacy building and the demolition of the MPSA/Patrick Henry Building. Concurrently, the FAC recommends a broader analysis of other potential options for the location of all programs, given the excess capacity across elementary facilities and our current fiscal environment. In keeping with the School Board's commitments, the FAC supports the Draft Direction that all proposed project work recognizes and adhere to the School Board resolutions on Prevailing Wage and Climate Action.

The FAC supports the Draft Direction to commission an analysis of capital financing mechanisms beyond traditional bonds. Furthermore, the FAC reiterates its position from the previous school year that strongly supports the consideration of public-private partnerships and mixed-use developments to finance capital projects. This includes the exploration of opportunities for educational facilities that are partially owned or utilized by private entities (e.g., lower floors designated for businesses with upper floors for schools) and multi-use facilities in partnership with the County (e.g., Library/Community Center/School).

Findings and Recommendations

In keeping with FAC's advisory role, comments are framed in terms of whether the FAC agrees with the Draft Directions or alternatively would add to or modify these Directions.

1. Financial Stewardship and Bonding Authority:

- **a.** To ensure fiscal responsibility while addressing capital needs, the Draft Direction sets a hard \$100 million ceiling for new FY 2027-2036 bonding authority. The FAC supports preserving the County's AAA bond rating.
- **b.** As noted in the overall assessment, the FAC supports the Draft Direction that APS continues to analyze capital financing mechanisms beyond traditional bonds to ensure long-term fiscal health.

2. Standardization of Specifications and Studies:

- **a. Educational Specifications:** The FAC recommends that the Board direct the Superintendent to adjust educational specifications to make them as uniform as possible. This standardization is necessary to allow for closer, more accurate comparison amongst school facilities when prioritizing capital needs.
- **b. Feasibility Studies:** The FAC recommends that the Board direct the Superintendent to adopt a common standard for feasibility studies and other similar contracted studies. This

standard should be employed by consultants to ensure that cross-comparison amongst different studies is possible, improving data-driven decision-making.

3. Middle School Renovations:

- **a.** The FAC recommends prioritizing complete renovations over partial middle school renovations to ensure equitable learning environments.
- **b.** To achieve the goal of complete renovations, the FAC supports a Draft Direction that prioritizes major renovation projects at both Thomas Jefferson and Swanson Middle. The FAC recommends raising the budgeted 150 million dollars to 200 million or to a level that would allow full renovations of both facilities.

4. Elementary Planning and Capacity:

- **a. Seat Capacity Analysis:** The FAC interprets the Elementary School (ES) section of the Draft Direction as a request for staff to conduct an analysis that may lead to a reduction of seat capacity in areas where there is excess. This analysis might include consolidating schools and taking facilities offline.
- **b. Asset Retention:** Consistent with extensive the FAC discussions during the last school year, the FAC supports the Draft Direction that facilities taken offline should *not* be sold but “preserve[ed] ... to use ... as a school in the future.”
- **c. Renovation Impacts:** While the FAC supports cost-effectiveness, the FAC does not support renovations that significantly reduce student capacity.
- **d. Clarification:** Item “2.” of the ES section references “three elementary projects.” For clarity, the Board’s final CIP Direction should identify the three referenced projects. Are they the “deep dive” feasibility study schools – Taylor ES, Barrett ES, Randolph ES; the major infrastructure project schools – Hoffman-Boston ES, Jamestown ES, Oakridge ES; or others?

5. Reduction in Relocatables:

- **a.** The FAC recommends that the Draft Direction advise the Superintendent to prioritize moving students and educators from relocatable classrooms into main school buildings for an improved student learning experience and educator working experience. While these units serve an important role as an effective temporary solution for rapid enrollment growth, stabilizing enrollment projections and sufficient school-designed capacity now allow for a reduction in relocatable inventory at schools that are under program capacity or at others that have been identified by the Superintendent as surplus.

Conclusion

The FAC supports overall the Superintendent’s Draft Direction proposals with priorities and clarifications that we have noted.

Sincerely,
 Tony Weaver
 FAC Chair 2025/2026