

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DATE: August 23, 2011

TO: **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

FROM: Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON WEST TOWSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

ORIGINATOR: Dr. Renee A. Foose, Deputy Superintendent

RESOURCE
PERSON(S): Kara Calder, Executive Director, Department of Planning and Support Operations
Verletta White, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Zone 3

INFORMATION

That the Board of Education be informed regarding the history and current status of the enrollment, capacity and student performance at West Towson Elementary School.

Attachment I – Executive Summary
Attachment II – PowerPoint

West Towson Elementary School Enrollment and Capacity Update Executive Summary

West Towson Elementary School, the newest Baltimore County Public Schools facility, welcomed students for the first time in August 2010. The school has a state-rated capacity (SRC) of 450 and is co-located at 6914 Charles Street on a 20-acre campus with Ridge Ruxton School, one of the system's four separate public day schools serving students with significant disabilities.

Background

The planning process for the construction of a new elementary school located in the central area of the county began in 2007 as a key strategy to relieve overcrowding conditions at Rodgers Forge Elementary School and also to begin to relieve crowding at Stoneleigh and Riderwood elementary schools.

At the time, the school system determined that at least 400 seats would be needed to alleviate crowding at Rodgers Forge ES alone. An additional 500 seats in the York Road corridor were also considered essential to resolving overcrowding at neighboring community schools. The Board of Education-owned, 20-acre site in the Mays Chapel community and the Ridge Ruxton facility were identified as important and viable options in the first phase of the solution and were included in the Board's FY2009 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) request.

In response to concerns expressed by members of the community and key elected officials, the Board of Education directed that a fully exhaustive search be conducted for a location and a solution not involving the Mays Chapel site and one that would cause minimal disruption to the students and families at Ridge Ruxton School. Twenty-three sites that were potentially geographically viable were examined for suitability. None satisfactorily met the criteria that land could be acquired quickly and efficiently and that a school environment that would be safe and conducive for learning could be established.

With growing enrollment pressure at Rodgers Forge ES, the Board of Education adopted a creative plan in the 2010 CIP that would co-locate a new 451-seat school on the existing Charles Street campus of Ridge Ruxton School. The 2010 CIP was approved in May 2009 and construction began immediately.

Current Status:

As previously reported to the Board of Education, systemwide student enrollment as of September 30, 2010, was 104,331. It is projected to gradually increase over the next five years to 107,309 and then in ten years to 109,316. Within five years, systemwide available capacity will be insufficient to meet projected enrollment needs at the elementary school level. Enrollment growth and capacity pressures continue to challenge scarce resources, particularly in the York Road corridor; there are seven schools in the York Road Corridor that are projected to be at 115% capacity or above in the coming school year.

West Towson Elementary School is, as of August 8, 2011, approaching 110% capacity. While this data is unofficial, it is cause for concern, as enrollment at this point exceeds the 2011 projection for the school by 37 students and exceeds SRC by 49 students. BCPS employs relief strategies that range from relatively simple to execute to highly complex solutions that involve significant capital investment and collaboration with local and state funding authorities, often taking years to fully implement. Often, a combination of these strategies is employed over consecutive years to manage enrollment growth. Each strategy has limits to its ultimate effectiveness, dependent on critical variables such as total available space in the school building, available capacity at other nearby schools, suitable space on the campus for relocatable classrooms, and available suitable land for construction. Ultimately, however, capacity relief strategies are evaluated through the lens of *Blueprint for Progress* goals as the school system strives to maintain instructional environments that are safe and support effective teaching and learning.

Relief strategies implemented to date to accommodate the growing student population at West Towson ES include examining the instructional program and classroom spaces for most effective use and changing Superintendent's Rule 5140 to limit special permission transfers. Unlike other schools in the system, the campus of West Towson and Ridge Ruxton cannot accommodate relocatable classrooms. The next step in an effort to continue to provide the school with a safe and conducive learning environment is to cap West Towson's enrollment, at least until a longer term solution can be approved and implemented.

West Towson Elementary School



- Construction begins May 2009
- School opens August 2010
 - Relieves overcrowding at Rodgers Forge ES
- State Rated Capacity 451
 - 2010 official enrollment (FTE): 431
 - 2011 projection: 463



West Towson ES – Capacity Relief

