

WAKEFIELD HIGH SCHOOL
Arlington, Virginia

17 March 1971

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington County School Board

FROM: Ray Anderson, Wakefield Faculty Member and Member of
New School Planning Committee

SUBJECT: A Proposal for an Experimental "Free High School" to be
Created by the Arlington County School Board

The need for such an experimental school can be suggested by the following points:

- a. The "Parkway" experiments such as that in Philadelphia
- b. The need for increased emphasis on excellent vocational training
- c. The need for changes in curriculum and discipline at Wakefield
- d. Many educators today view alternative schools as one solution to the problems of educating all students equally well. The social, racial and religious composition of the student body of John Dewey High School, a voluntary experimental school in Brooklyn, New York, closely resembles that of the entire district. But its program is a radical departure designed to individualize instruction.
- e. Dwight Allen, Dean of the University of Massachusetts School of Education, has said that every school system in the United States should create an "alternate" school, "where change is the tradition. Students will no longer tolerate a procrustean system of education. I want useful alternatives and an atmosphere of choice." (Time, Dec. 21, 1970, p. 34, "Education", Vol. 96, No. 25).

Students and teachers who feel that they could learn better in a less rigid and more experimental situation would be encouraged to transfer to this "New School". Student transfers would be regulated by the guidance counselors and administration of Wakefield High School. These transfers would be strictly voluntary and their approval would be based on three criteria:

1. A voluntary decision by the student that he could learn better at the New School
2. Administration conviction that the student could successfully adapt to the experimental program and less rigid discipline of the New School
3. Permission of the student's parents

All students, regardless of race or economic level, would be encouraged to seek such a transfer, if they believed they would profit more from attending

that school. Each student requesting a transfer would submit recommendations from three teachers, from their guidance counselor and from their parents. The selection would be made by a committee of teachers and administrators from the New School. It is anticipated that eventually the "New School" would service all three public high schools in Arlington.

Relevant and meaningful programs will help to alleviate student dissatisfaction and resulting boredom and unrest. The rationale behind the proposal for the "New School" is that all students cannot be expected to maintain one set of behavior patterns part of the school day and another for the remainder of the day. True experimentation can take place most successfully in an environment remote from traditional practices and procedures.

Therefore, the Arlington County School Board is requested to make available to the "Planning Committee for the New School" an unused elementary school for the school year 1971-72. The Planning Committee will supervise (with the assistance of the Superintendent's office) the staffing and selection of a student body of three hundred students from Wakefield High School. Since the faculty members and administrators will also be taken from the present Wakefield staff, no detrimental effect will result on staffing requirements at Wakefield for next year.

Because this proposal is in its initial form, no attempt will be made to elaborate on the experimental programs already under consideration by the Planning Committee. Instead, a list of proposals is provided below:

1. All staff of the "New School" (teachers, counselors and administrators) will teach classes for at least one-half of their assignment.
2. Transportation from Wakefield (and later from Yorktown and Washington & Lee) will be provided by buses leaving at 8:00 and then going to the "New School".
3. School will run from 8:30 to 3:30. A series of buses will run shuttle service between Wakefield and the "New School" every hour. This will enable students to attend the "New School" while still participating in special programs that can only be offered in a larger school (various shop, home ec., lab courses, as well as D.E., I.C.T., V.O.T.).
4. The cafeteria of the "New School" will be catered by an outside commercial establishment which would manage the cafeteria but employ "New School" students in most positions. Students would also be hired to perform many services now provided by the custodian staff.
5. No formal athletic program would be offered in major sports. However, an extensive intramural program would be provided as part of the physical education program.
6. All members of the "New School" community (students, parents, teachers, counselors and administrators) would participate in over-all planning of the school's program. Students and/or staff would be permitted (sometimes required) to transfer back to the regular county program if unable to adapt to the special requirements of the School.

7. The School would be operated on a per-pupil cost of \$100-\$200 less than is normally spent by the County. The savings would accrue from staffing procedures, building requirements, and a general lack of emphasis on physical over educational facilities.