

The Potomac River Generating Station

To the editor:

It was with much interest that I watched the demolition phase of redeveloping the Robinson Terminal and the Regal Theater sites. The former will make room for the Alex Renew water project while the latter will be the new location for Virginia Tech's Innovation Campus.

This article provides commentary based on a tour of the Potomac River Generating Station facility, the next site to be taken down and made ready for redevelopment. We start with a bit of background.

PRGS was decommissioned in 2012. Prior to that, this coal-fired plant generated about 500 mega-watts of power, enough to help meet the needs of D.C. and parts of Maryland and Virginia. Today, it is a perfect site for redevelopment. Enter Hilco Redevelopment Partners.

In late 2020, this company, experienced in building large industrial and commercial redevelopment projects, purchased the PRGS property for redevelopment – though a small power grid area owned by PEPCO and bordering the much larger PRGS property was not part of the purchase.

Recently, HRP conducted a well-organized tour of the PRGS property they purchased. This tour, held in groups of about 10 interested Alexandria citizens each, started at the North Royal Street gate, from which tour participants walked a

short distance to the south coal yard. The group then received a briefing on how the coal was received, stored and then transported as needed to the power plant.

This was followed by a second briefing along the Potomac at the PRGS pump house. Here, the group also had an excellent view of the conveyor belts and the several towers that made up the heart of PRGS power plant. The group then proceeded around the PEPCO property noted above and back to the tour's starting point, with a walk along an empty rail yard that at one time was populated with coal-carrying hopper cars brought in by the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

The entire tour lasted about 30 to 40 minutes. It was time well spent, as many questions about the workings of the power plant were asked and answered.

We also learned that demolition of the power plant will most likely start next year. Much like the Robinson Terminal North and Regal Theater sites, the clean-up that follows the demolition will leave the former PRGS site ready for the planned redevelopment.

The redevelopment of this area of Old Town North that will provide additional housing as well as dining and retail options, is something to look forward to.

*-Dick Chait
Alexandria*



Filling in the Blanks

with Meagan Alderton

The road to recovery isn't new

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a slew of unknowns that plagued the minds of educators across the nation. How long will this last? What will school look like moving forward? How will we get through this, and what exactly is waiting for us on the other side?

As we have gradually emerged from this moment in history, we have learned new skills, fought unfamiliar battles and, most importantly, we have survived. Given the uncertain nature of the pandemic, oftentimes we asked ourselves questions one day that changed the next. But there was one question that we, as educators, asked ourselves daily since school doors closed in March 2020. What will it take for our students to recover?

While many educators have fretted, worried and pondered over this question, the formula for academic and social-emotional recovery is not new to our practice. We simply have to commit to using it. Anyone who has listened to me over the years, including my fellow Alexandria City School Board colleagues and Alexandria City Public Schools staff, can say – maybe even with slight annoyance – that I have been preaching about the importance of establishing, fine tuning and implementing robust multi-tiered systems of supports in every school since pre-pandemic times.

Why have I emphasized MTSS? Because what has happened to the majority of our students throughout the pandemic has been happening to our Black and brown students, special education students, English language learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged students for years.

The pandemic has simply highlighted the fear of being left behind, losing out or struggling to access the general education curriculum because of a limitation that is completely out of one's control. In this sense, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed many of us to experience for the first time what it is like to feel as though you have been denied something that you deserve because of factors that you have no control over. In this case it was a virus, but for many students, for the entirety of their educational careers, it has been a disability,

a language barrier, a socioeconomic barrier or systemic racism.

It is for this reason that I have been vocal about the need for a robust MTSS framework. Inequitable access can only be enabled through flawed systems that place accountability on the few staff who just so happen to specialize in particular areas, as opposed to creating a culture where everyone is responsible for the success of all students.

When we buy into the MTSS framework, we are essentially holding all educators accountable to all students, with a strong emphasis on Tier One – best practices for all students – forcing us to think about and answer the following questions: What are the best practices, mechanisms, assessment and progress monitoring tools we have in place that are proven to benefit all kids? Are our master

schedules built to support these best practices, including co-planning times and opportunities for robust professional collaboration? Are we collecting relevant data for all students, and what are our expectations for reviewing and using this data to inform our instructional practice?

These should not be difficult questions to answer with consistency and fidelity. If and when we are unable to answer these questions, it is our responsibility to correct the course of the adults, not the course of our students.

ACPS has done the work over the past three years to own the need for MTSS. From the School Board to every single classroom, we are committing to using our MTSS framework to remove barriers to student learning. Our commitment to MTSS will be the essential guide through a post-pandemic recovery and a formula for a sustainable, equitable future.

We are ready to take this on. We know how to get this done. Everyone in our school community has a role to play. We need only to commit and follow through at every possible opportunity for the benefit of all of our students.



**MEAGAN
ALDERTON**

*The writer is chair of the
Alexandria School Board.*

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