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New school is a Virginia first

When Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School opened its doors this year, it made history as the first to be constructed as a result of Virginia's Public Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002 (PPEA). The law enables local municipalities to form public-private partnerships to develop, finance and build public projects. This often results in an accelerated building process and a financial savings to local governments. Prior to the PPEA legislation, municipalities had to solicit separate bids for design and construction, which resulted in a more expensive and prolonged process.

Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School opened this fall at a cost of \$25 million, reflecting a savings of \$7-10 million and an accelerated delivery of two years. The 50-classroom building has a student capacity of 600. The building layout supports instruction for the students in grades 5 through 7 by providing smaller learning communities, which reduces the time students need to move from one class to another. Other features of the new school include a media center, a video production studio and 10,400 square foot gymnasium which will be shared by George Mason High School located on the same campus.

The school was also constructed with the environment and community in mind. "Green" features include:

- Low VOC paints and sealers
- Carpet and rubber mats made of recycled materials
- Extra building insulation for better energy efficiency
- Linoleum flooring made of natural materials
- Wheat straw board for sound proofing – a renewable resource
- Locally produced building materials – reducing the amount of fuel needed to transport materials to the construction site
- Extensive commissioning work to ensure optimal operation of the building's heating and air conditioning systems

Community members will have an opportunity to see the new building immediately following the school dedication on Sunday September 18. **The celebration will take place at 2:00 p.m. in the school cafetorium.** The school is located at 7130 Leesburg Pike in Falls Church, Virginia.

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