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## INTRODUCTION

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The Albemarle County School Board believes in a strong partnership between the Commonwealth and its school divisions, and we depend on local leaders to help us address the needs of our school division so that we can continue to deliver a high-quality public education to our students and ensure that every member of our school community thrives. Annually, the Board adopts a legislative agenda to inform public officials of its positions on legislative policy issues. To bring focus to the issues that Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) considers most critical, the Board designates certain stances as “priorities.” Our priorities, along with our positions on issues that might impact our division and other school divisions throughout Virginia, are set forth in this packet for distribution to our partners in the ACPS community.



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## STRATEGIC PLAN: HORIZON 2020

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### Mission

The core purpose of Albemarle County Public Schools is to establish a community of learners and learning, through relationships, relevance and rigor, one student at a time.

### Vision

All learners believe in their power to embrace learning, to excel, and to own their future.

### Core Values

Excellence • Young People • Community • Respect

### Student-Centered Goal

All Albemarle County Public Schools students will graduate having actively mastered the lifelong-learning skills they need to succeed as 21st century learners, workers and citizens.

### Objectives

1. We will engage every student.
2. We will implement balanced assessments.
3. We will improve opportunity and achievement.
4. We will create and expand partnerships.
5. We will optimize resources.



### Strategic Priorities

- Create a culture of high expectations for all.
- Identify and remove practices that perpetuate the achievement gap.
- Ensure that students identify and develop personal interests.

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## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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### School Safety and Student Mental Health

**ACPS supports** improving school safety and security.

As such, we believe that the General Assembly should prioritize mental health and the physical security of school facilities by:

- Eliminating the state's arbitrary cap on funding for support positions, which would help more directly link state funding with actual local staffing needs and costs. In the absence of full elimination, positions related to direct student services and to student mental health and safety, such as school social workers and school psychologists, should be exempt from the cap.
- Making legislative changes that authorize the school board to prohibit guns at all school-related functions and events, regardless of setting. Local school boards are held to act "in loco parentis" by various courts, and students often attend functions like athletic events and school board meetings that are hosted and/or approved by school boards. These functions are, at times, held in non-school building sites, but those in attendance are nonetheless counting on school officials to ensure their safety.

### School Discipline

ACPS is concerned about national and statewide reports of disproportionate discipline for minority students. Although the disparities in our schools are narrower than those reported in the national data, any disparity is troubling. We are working to improve student discipline outcomes and reduce demographic disparities in discipline in ACPS.

This year, we implemented a pilot program at our middle schools, a new approach for handling minor drug and alcohol infractions by students. Instead of giving them a 10-day suspension, they now get a three-day in-school suspension and also enroll in Teen Intervene.

Teen Intervene is a brief intervention program run by Region 10 that aims to educate students on drug and alcohol abuse and teach them to make better choices. These efforts help us further address the achievement gap, incarcerations, suspensions and missed school, and drug and alcohol abuse. This program costs the division \$160,000, but our own staff could run this program at a savings to taxpayers if our school division had adequate funding for school counselors.

As such, **we support** revisions to the Standards of Accreditation to include provisions for the recommendation of schools exhibiting suspension and expulsion rates above the state average to implement evidence-based intervention programs designed to improve suspension and expulsion rates. **We also support** full funding of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) requirement for school counselors as recommended by the American School Counselors Association: one school counselor per 250 students.

### Raising Solar Power Purchase Agreement Caps

The codification of Virginia's first Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) in 2013 has been a large driver of solar installations in the Commonwealth. In 2017, ACPS installed six solar photovoltaic (PV) systems totaling 1 Megawatt (MW) of capacity as part of its first solar PPA.

Solar PPA rates in Virginia have become even more favorable over the past two years, with some recent PPA contracts selling electricity for \$0.08/kilowatt-hour (kWh). This rate is approximately 2 cents less per kWh than Dominion's all-in rate. If ACPS decided to participate in another solar PPA at the current rates with a similar system size of 1 MW, significant utility savings can be realized. Assuming a conservative 1% escalation for Dominion's rates and a PPA rate of \$0.09/kWh, the 1 MW system could generate a savings of over \$500,000 for the school division over 20 years. Further, a 1 MW solar PV system will lead to the conservation of energy resources amounting to the equivalent of:

- Almost 100,000 gallons of gasoline;
- Nearly a million pounds of coal;
- Almost 200 passenger vehicles driven for a year; and
- Over 100 homes' energy use for one year.

Virginia law currently places an overall limit of 50 MW on projects installed in Dominion Energy territory using third-party PPAs, the primary financing mechanism for tax-exempt entities. This program has been so successful that it is now in danger of hitting its aggregate program cap before June of 2020.

Therefore, **ACPS supports** raising the Dominion and Appalachian PPA cap to at least 500 MW as part of the 2019 biannual review so as to avoid market uncertainty and disruption of the fastest-growing industry in Virginia's economy this year and for the next two years.

## Expand Critical Shortage Destination

For the eleventh year in a row, Albemarle County is suffering from a bus driver shortage. On the last day of the 2018-19 school year, 164 driver positions were budgeted; of those, 14 were unfilled, amounting to 9%. Drivers must do double-runs in order to cover routes, and other division staff are frequently called to do runs so that all students can get to school. This driver shortage is taking a toll on families and employees; students are being picked up and getting dropped off at home late, causing parents to complain and students to miss time in classrooms.

Other divisions are struggling with the same problem. The Virginia Association of Pupil Transportation recently conducted a bus driver shortage survey to determine the gaps in staffing across the Commonwealth and determined that 80% of districts are short on drivers. All divisions with more than 200 drivers have a shortage.

Currently, there is a statutory concession for hard-to-fill teaching positions designated as “critical shortage.” **We support** legislation that extends the critical shortage designation to bus drivers.

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## LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS & POLICY STATEMENTS

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### SOQ Re-Benchmarking

**We support** full funding for any costs that arise from the State Board of Education’s prescribed changes to the SOQ.

### Strategies to Address Virginia’s Teacher Shortage

While ACPS has long felt fortunate to have a good supply of candidates for open teaching positions, we, too, have begun to feel the effects of the teacher shortage in the Commonwealth, recently experiencing a progressive decrease in applications. Public education for all children must be a priority when the state allocates resources, yet the state is not investing in teachers in ways that will encourage people to enter and stay in the profession.

#### **We support:**

- A comprehensive evaluation of initial teacher licensure and licensure renewal requirements, particularly in light of the piecemeal accumulation of legislative mandates for new licensure requirements over time; and
- Revisions to science teaching endorsement structures that create a single “science” endorsement, rather than requiring teachers to be endorsed separately for biology, chemistry, Earth science and physics.

### Charter Schools

**We oppose** any constitutional changes that would decrease local control of public education by allowing external authorities to establish a charter school in a community without local school board approval.

### Broadband Infrastructure

**ACPS encourages and supports** efforts that assist the school division and its communities in creating universal and affordable access to broadband technology, particularly in unserved and underserved areas. Access to broadband or high-speed internet, is critical for 21st-century students and has become a basic requirement for equity in access to public education. Many Albemarle County students, particularly those in unserved rural areas, need long-term strategies to address the broadband gap. Accordingly, we believe state and federal support should include:

- Development of a statewide comprehensive plan for broadband and state support for local governments that are developing or implementing local or regional broadband plans.
- Provisions that provide for sharing utility and road right-of-way easements for expanding broadband.
- Support for linking broadband efforts for education and public safety to private sector efforts to serve businesses and residences.
- Consideration of proposals that would subject broadband to stricter and more developed regulation as a public utility.

### Special Education

**We support** legislation that will provide school divisions with greater flexibility in the use of Children’s Services Act funding to enable students to remain in their neighborhood schools.

**We support** efforts to study and revise the funding/staffing formula for Special Education to better meet student needs.

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## DIVISION SNAPSHOT

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### Schools

- 15 elementary schools (PK-5)
- 6 middle schools, including 1 charter middle school (6-8)
- 4 high schools, including 1 charter high school (9-12)
- 3 science and technology academies (9-12)
- 1 high school center specializing in project-based learning (9-12)
- 1 education center specializing in short-term intervention (6-12)
- 1 regional technical education center (9-12)
- 1 regional center serving special education students (K-12)
- 1 regional center serving students with emotional disabilities (K-12)

### Employees

- 1,344 teachers (including classroom teachers, speech pathologists, school counselors, instructional coaches, and librarians)
- 1,303 classified employees (including school and department leadership, teaching assistants, bus drivers, custodians, maintenance and food service staff, office associates, human resources staff, and other support staff)

### Student Enrollment

- All Students: 14,435 (Grades PK-12)
- Economically Disadvantaged: 29.4% (4,247 students)
- English Learners: 10.0% (1,448 students)
- Students with Disabilities: 12.8% (1,854 students)

### International Diversity of Our Students

- Countries of Origin: 96
- Home Languages Spoken: 81

### Class of 2019

	Division	State
<b>Students Earning an Advanced Studies Diploma</b>	64%	51.5%
<b>On-Time Graduation Rate (Four-Year Cohort)</b>	94.4%	91.5%
<b>Dropout Rate</b>	4.1%	5.6%

### Post-Graduation Plans (Self-Reported)

- Continuing education, military, employment, or another endeavor: 16% (162 students)
- 2-year college: 24% (253 students)
- 4-year college: 58% (601 students)

### Advanced Programs Participation

- Advanced Placement (AP) Test Taken: 22.94%
- AP Course Enrollment: 37.17%
- Dual Enrollment: 21.84%

### Data Spotlight

- Average number of meals served daily, including breakfast and lunch: 8,000
- School bus miles traveled daily: 14,384
- Children served by our Families in Crisis Program in 2018-19: Approximately 400

### Adopted 2019-20 Budget

- Operating Budget: \$195,478,605
- Per Pupil Expenses: \$14,234

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## CONTACT

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