



Alexander County Schools

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

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Photo by Rachel Landry

Children First

We believe a quality public education enhances the
lives of all students and communities.

Superintendent's Message

Dear Stakeholders,

The Alexander County Board of Education has adopted the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan and without your input and support, this plan would not have become a reality. Although the ultimate goal of the strategic planning process was to develop a plan to ensure continual growth for our students and staff, the value of the exercise once again became evident during the process itself. The strategic planning process afforded stakeholders the opportunity to learn more about our school system, to share their perceptions of its strengths and weaknesses, and to discuss critical issues affecting, or likely to affect, our students and staff in the future. The strategic planning committee, including teachers, administrators, Board of Education representation, community members, parents and district leaders established the goals, objectives, and action steps to accomplish the school system's mission and vision.

The strategies contained within this document will serve as a framework guiding the conversations and implementation of a solid district plan to graduate highly skilled, responsible, productive students.

We have four priorities where we will focus our attention: Instructional Excellence and Alignment, Family and Community Engagement, Planning and Operational Effectiveness, and Professional Capacity.



Alexander County Schools Board of Education
From Left: Scott Bowman, Josh Dagenhart, Anthony McLain, Chair Ramie Robinson, Vice Chair Robert Arguelles, Matt Reese, and Brigette Rhyne



Dr. Jennifer Hefner

It is an honor to lead the dedicated school system employees who serve each day to educate, engage and challenge the students of Alexander County. Thank you for your continued support in our commitment to provide a quality public education to ALL students. As we work to meet the goals drafted in this strategic plan, please know how much I appreciate the leadership, commitment, patience, trust, and collaboration that will be expected as we move forward.

Children First,

Dr. Jennifer Hefner, Superintendent



Beliefs and Values

- Ensure student success through shared responsibility among employees, students, parents, and the community
- Provide a safe, inviting, and healthy school environment
- Engage students through the utilization of innovative technologies
- Expect and support educational and professional excellence
- Foster lifelong literacy across all disciplines
- Establish and nurture a collaborative community by building relationships that promote, welcome, and value education
- Model and encourage strong character and personal responsibility
- Recognize, value, and invest in the individual differences of each learner



Photo by Alan Vieyra

Vision and Mission

Vision

Alexander County Schools will graduate highly skilled students who are confident in their ability to become successful adults.



Mission

The mission of Alexander County Schools is to educate and empower every student to become a responsible and productive citizen.

Priority 1

Instructional Excellence and Alignment

A. Goal: By May of 2025, 80% of Alexander County School students will be proficient or make more than one year of growth towards proficiency as evidenced by universal screening, formative and summative data. (NC Star Indicators)

1. Objective: ACS classrooms will deliver our core curriculum: academic, and character education aligned to the Portrait of a Graduate (POG) and behavioral instruction with fidelity while consistently and pervasively utilizing high yield instructional strategies.

Action Steps

- District leadership and instructional coaches will conduct a curriculum audit every August to ensure completion and reevaluation.
- Teachers will create and use lesson plans from district curriculum maps in and pacing guides.
- Curriculum and instruction will be evaluated for effectiveness and modified as needed.
- District leadership and instructional coaches will lead grade level meetings to involve staff in the further development of curriculum materials and instructional expectations.
- District leadership and instructional coaches will conduct monthly reviews of school level curriculum pacing.
- Principals will monitor the use of curriculum and high-effect size instructional practices and provide staff quality formative feedback through classroom walk-throughs and formal observations.
- Teachers will utilize a problem-solving process of bringing curriculum concerns to the instructional coaches in order to improve practice.



h. Schools will develop vertical teams to examine the alignment of core and instructional practice in all content areas.

i. District and school leadership will provide an avenue for teaching core behavioral practices and character education aligned with POG and student engagement strategies.

2. Objective: All teachers will provide a classroom environment with differentiated core support.

Action Steps

- District and school leadership will engage staff in job-embedded training to increase and improve upon differentiated core support through small groups, student collaboration, double-dosing, pre-teaching, choice boards, and the like.



Instructional Excellence & Alignment



Tiered Support

B. Goal: By June of 2025, 100% of Alexander County Schools will have fully implemented processes that support high-quality implementation of a multi-tiered system of support as evidenced by Facilitated Assessment of MTSS-District (FAM-D) and Facilitated Assessment of MTSS-School (FAM-S) Scores.

- 1. Objective:** One-hundred percent of Alexander County Schools will articulate and follow teaming structures to support a multi-tiered system of support.
- 2. Objective:** All teams will use multiple sources of data to analyze practices for effectiveness in academics, character education, behavior, and attendance.

Action Steps

- Universal screening data (or systems) for academic, social and emotional components, behavioral, and attendance will be analyzed regularly to identify school-wide needs for core development.
- In collaboration with specialized instructional support personnel and district behavior specialists, school teams will develop a responsive multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) plan based on classroom walkthrough data, office discipline referrals, and state, district, and classroom assessments to address student needs.



Instructional Excellence and Alignment



1. Objective: The Digital Learning and Innovation Specialist will support leadership development by working with media coordinators and teacher leaders to build the capacity of all.

2. Objective:

The Digital Learning and Innovation Specialist will support teachers in personalized learning for students in using digital resources to enhance engagement.

“ I like how there are so many different communities and groups at ACHS. I play three sports and am in four clubs, and each one provides me different experiences and helps me meet new people. ”

Student Meredith Miller

C. Goal: The middle and high school staff will enhance/expand opportunities through dual enrollment, credentialing, work-based learning, credit by demonstrating mastery, and virtual and blended classes.

D. Goal: Alexander County School personnel will utilize technology to enhance instruction, promote interest and engagement, and provide background knowledge.





Photo by Alan Vieyra

Instructional Excellence and Alignment

E. Goal: Alexander County's preschool director will work collaboratively with the Partnership for Children to increase the number of students receiving early childhood education to align with the NC county average and recommendations from *My FutureNC*.

- 1. Objective:** Alexander County's preschool director will support early literacy practices consistent with early childhood training around the Science of Reading.
- 2. Objective:** All Head Start, and NCPK teachers will receive the following training Heggerty with DPI Early Literacy Specialist. When new lead teachers are hired, they will enroll in LETRS (Science of Reading) training.
- 3. Objective:** Board of Directors/Employees of Partnership



Priority 2

Family and Community Engagement

A. Goal: Family:: Alexander County Schools will support families by providing learning opportunities, sharing our work, and communicating high expectations as measured by 100% completion of objectives by 2025.

1. Objective: Alexander County Schools Technology Department will craft a “Safe and Effective Use of Technology” Form in Student/Family-friendly language and offer a short video of the information in English and Spanish. The form includes opportunities for parents to opt out based on our photo policy.



Partners with you

2. Objective: The Digital Learning Innovation Specialist will assist media coordinators in developing additional content on the safe use of technology for students to be shared annually at Open House and/or an additional event focused on technology.

3. Objective: District leadership will partner with RTI International to offer schools, families, and communities a parent support group calendar, focusing on high-interest topics.

4. Objective: District leadership will develop and implement a district communication plan, incorporating procedures, common language/terms, and a process for communication with business and community partners.



5. Objective: Alexander County Schools principals will ensure representative parent membership on School Improvement Teams.

6. Objective: Alexander County Schools principals will work to broaden parent advisory councils (PACs) to mirror the student population.

7. Objective: Alexander County Schools will share a consistent and frequent message regarding student progress in all areas as measured by 100% completion of objectives.



Family and Community Engagement

Action Steps

- a. Alexander County Schools teachers and administrators will schedule and conduct quarterly conferences with students and parents working below or trending towards below grade level.
- b. Alexander County Schools building administrators will monitor to ensure regular maintenance and upkeep of grade entry by educators.

B. Goal: Community:: Alexander County Schools will support and promote positive and mutually beneficial community engagement opportunities through 100% completion of objectives by 2025.

1. Objective: Alexander County Schools high school principals and CTE Director will explore establishing the equivalent of “college day” for career exploration/job shadowing.

2. Objective: Alexander County Schools will offer open house events, registration meetings, elective fairs, and college visits, increasing opportunities for students and families to partner with businesses and post-secondary schools.

3. Objective: District Leadership will engage business, and community members in partnerships on the engagement and support group calendar and activities.

4. Objective: Alexander County Schools will recognize school system school volunteers annually at the district level.

5. Objective: Alexander County Schools will recognize school system community partners annually at the district level.

Action Steps

- a. District leadership will create opportunities for recognition by going to the community partners. (E.g.: photos, balloons, local students celebrate)
- b. Alexander County Schools will hold school events featuring signage to recognize community partners



Priority 3

Planning and Operational Effectiveness



Photo by Alan Vieyra

Fiscally Responsible

A. Goal: Alexander County Schools will develop and monitor processes and procedures to ensure the budgeting process aligns with the district strategic plan and is fiscally responsible as measured by the number of exceptions reported in annual financial audits.

1. Objective: All school and district expenditures will be aligned to the district's strategic plan.

Action Steps

- Principals and bookkeepers will review the schools' budgets monthly.
- Principals will follow clearly defined procedures for money transactions in the schools.

c. District leadership will pursue new funding sources for additional school resource officers.

d. In consultation with the executive leadership team, the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the executive leadership team, will develop a budget calendar and meet quarterly to review all budget expenditures with this team and department heads.

e. The preschool director will work the county office administration and the Partnership for Children to comply with federal, state, and local funding guidelines and balance the budget.

B. Goal: Alexander County Schools will ensure the safety of our students and staff as measured by surveys and annual implementation of procedures and processes conducted throughout the district.

1. Objective: The Executive Director of Human Resources and Auxiliary Services will partner with local law enforcement and emergency management to improve safety on all school property.

Action Steps

- In collaboration with emergency management personnel, district personnel will conduct yearly safety inspections for each school system facility.
- District and school leadership will maintain and upgrade security and fire monitoring systems, other school safety equipment, and support resource officer employment.
- Leadership will ensure all employees are knowledgeable of the incident management plan and can apply its directives in a variety of emergencies.



Planning and Operational Effectiveness

Action Steps cont'd.

d. Building administrators will conduct monthly inspections to identify needs for maintaining a safe and clean learning environment.

e. The Executive Director of Human Resources and Auxiliary Services will ensure that safety training including fire, tornado, earthquake, and code down drills are conducted each year.

f. Building administrators and school employees will ensure buildings and classrooms are secure from trespassers.

2. **Objective:** Leadership will implement a district-level technological monitoring system for viewing student activity on laptop devices.

3. **Objective:** The technology department will provide parent/guardian access of student internet activity (Grades 3-12) with the capability of setting parameters for browsing school system-owned technology while at home.



C. Goal: Alexander County Schools will ensure appropriate technology is available to employees to enhance instruction while maintaining 1:1 access for students to support learning as measured by the Teacher Working Conditions Survey conducted every two years (2024).

1. **Objective:** The technology department will continue to support and maintain the school system infrastructure and 1:1 device and technology resources throughout the district.

Action Steps

a. The technology department will evaluate and purchase technology equipment/devices to ensure equity in access for all students

b. System administration will consult with the technology department before purchasing all hardware and software. New software requests must be evaluated according NCDPI Third Party Data Integration Standards prior to purchase and annually thereafter.

Planning & Operational Effectiveness



D. Goal: Alexander County Schools will develop processes to evaluate the efficiency of operations as evidenced by annual analysis of reports (maintenance requests, state transportation reports/inspections, activity bus requests, etc.) and Teacher Working Conditions Surveys conducted every two years (2024).

1. Objective: The Director of Maintenance, in consultation with senior level administrators and the Board of Education, will annually review/update the school facilities plan.

Action Steps

a. The five-year facilities plan will be reviewed with school administrators two times per year.

b. School administrators will consult with the Director of Maintenance about purchases for facilities, regardless of the funding source.

2. Objective: The Director of Transportation, in consultation with senior level administrators and the Board of Education, will annually review the transportation reports and needs.

Action Steps

a. The Director of Transportation in collaboration with school administrators will develop bus routes and procedures for efficient and effective transportation.

b. The transportation department will maintain and update GPS systems and camera systems for the bus fleet, including routing changes and employee timekeeper abilities.

c. The Transportation Department will become fully staffed by mid-October 2023.

d. The facilities in the Transportation will be cleaned and organized in order to promote a safe and pleasant work environment.

There are 7 major funds



2023-2024 ACS Budget



THESE POTS OF MONEY EACH HAVE A PURPOSE
AND CANNOT BE CO-MINGLED

Priority 4



Professional Capacity

A. Goal: Alexander County Schools will recruit and hire a highly skilled workforce as measured by the completion of 100% of the objectives by 2025.

1. Objective: Alexander County Schools will develop and sustain partnerships with universities and community colleges that deliver teacher preparation, particularly for the recruitment of staff in high-need areas.

2. Objective: Alexander County Schools will identify the characteristics of the district and schools that are attractive to teachers and seek to both market and build upon them to recruit new staff.

3. Objective: Alexander County Schools will develop, communicate and participate in a recruitment plan to attract highly skilled certified and classified personnel.

4. Objective: Alexander County Schools will establish a “grow your own” program to recruit future educators from the pool of current high school students, paraprofessionals, teaching assistants, and community members.

Action Steps

a. Alexander County Schools Leadership will recruit teacher assistants and encourage enrollment in the “TAs to Teacher” university-sponsored programs.

b. Alexander County Schools will support and promote the Teacher Cadet program at Alexander Central High School.

c. Alexander Early College staff will work with the district office and Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC) to create a pathway to education.

d. Human Resources will examine and communicate the student teachers in our school district who remain in Alexander County Schools by surveying to find out why they stayed and why they may have gone to another to inform best practice.

e. Student teachers will be invited and encouraged to attend Beginning Teacher meetings.



Professional Capacity



Highly Skilled Workforce

f. The Superintendent will contact education programs to encourage the placement of more student teachers in our school system.

g. The Superintendent will make personal contact with student teachers or hold a reception for student teachers.

B. Goal: Alexander County Schools will retain a highly skilled workforce by maintaining or improving our staff retention rates annually.

1. Objective: The Public Information Officer and school administration will develop processes for celebrating successes among employees.

2. Objective: Immediate supervisors will collaborate with all staff on professional growth plans and goals for improvement and review annually.

3. Objective: Human resources and individual departments/schools will provide orientation for all new employees.

4. Objective: District leadership will facilitate focus groups that build trusting relationships and increase interactions between the district office and school staff.

Action Step

District and school leadership will share best practices for building relationships.

“I like how everyone is on the same team.”

Teacher Mackenzie Pennell



Photo by Rachel Landry

Professional Capacity

C. Goal: Alexander County Schools will build leadership/professional capacity within the workforce by completing 100% of the objectives by 2025.

1. Objective: District leadership will establish a progression plan for preparing staff for moves and transitions.

Action Steps

a. District and school leadership will share best practice for building relationships.

annually administer a survey to determine leadership aspirations of staff.

b. District leadership will implement a Principal Leadership Development Plan.

c. Alexander County Schools will advertise and encourage the principal preparation program through Appalachian State University in order to increase applicants from ACS and build the leadership pipeline.

d. Alexander County Schools will support principal growth and development by contracting with Executive Coaches.

e. The Public Information Officer will participate in focus groups and get ideas for testimonials in order to bolster recruitment and student enrollment efforts.

2. Objective: All system leaders will provide feedback promoting growth to staff through the existing evaluation process.

Action Step

a. District and school leaders will create an annual evaluation, professional goal-setting, and growth plan for all classified employees.

b. The Executive Director of Human Resources will audit the timely compliance with evaluation processes and the provision of growth feedback and support as necessary.



Photo by Alan Vieyra



Photo by Ashley Burgin



Photo by Micah Henry

The Team

Alexander County Schools

Jessica Anderson, Director of Accountability,
 Kim Bishop, Technology Lead
 Laura Brinkley, Ellendale Elementary
 Instructional Coach
 Chris Campbell, Maintenance Director
 Dr. Alisha Cloer, Executive Director of
 Human Resources & Auxiliary Services
 Dr. Betsy Curry, Associate Superintendent
 Jamie Curtis, West Alexander Middle School
 Instructional Coach
 Amy Daigle, Bethlehem
 Elementary/Hiddenite Assistant Principal
 Charles Draper, Bethlehem Elementary
 Principal
 Charmion Frizsell, Director, Head Start
 Program
 Talia Godfrey, Lead Teacher, Head Start
 Jordan Hefner, Stony Point Elementary Teacher
 Dr. Jennifer Hefner, Superintendent
 Dr. Robyn Helton, Executive Director, EC &
 Federal Programs
 Jacob Lail, West Alexander Middle School
 Principal
 John McCurdy, Transportation Director
 Renee Meade, Communications Director
 Sharon Mehaffey, Chief Finance Officer
 Michelle Motley Bethlehem Elementary
 Instructional Coach
 Brigitte Rhyne, Board of Education Member
 Lori Sipe, West Alexander Middle School
 Teacher
 Bill Vinson, Alexander Central High School
 Instructional Coach
 Ed Wills, Alexander Central High School
 Teacher



Photo by Faith Schultze

Our Partners

Durant Barr, Pastor, Fairview Baptist Church
 Paula Cline, Executive Director, Partnership for
 Children
 Linda Graham, Taylorsville Rotary Club
 Doug Gillispie, Director of Public Services
 Gary Herman, PIO, Alexander County
 Connie Kincaid, Business Development
 Manager, AC Economic Development
 Brice Melton, VP for Teaching & Learning, CVCC
 Marlena Mudd, Parent
 Dr. Betsy Rosenbalm, Director, ASU Public
 School Partnership
 Sherri Russell, Parent/VP of Compliance,
 Taylorsville Savings Bank
 Joel Simpson, Pastor, First United Methodist
 Church
 Sheridan Stanton, Pastor, Berea Baptist
 Church, Hiddenite
 ESL Representative & Translator
 Corey Teague, President, Huntington House
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