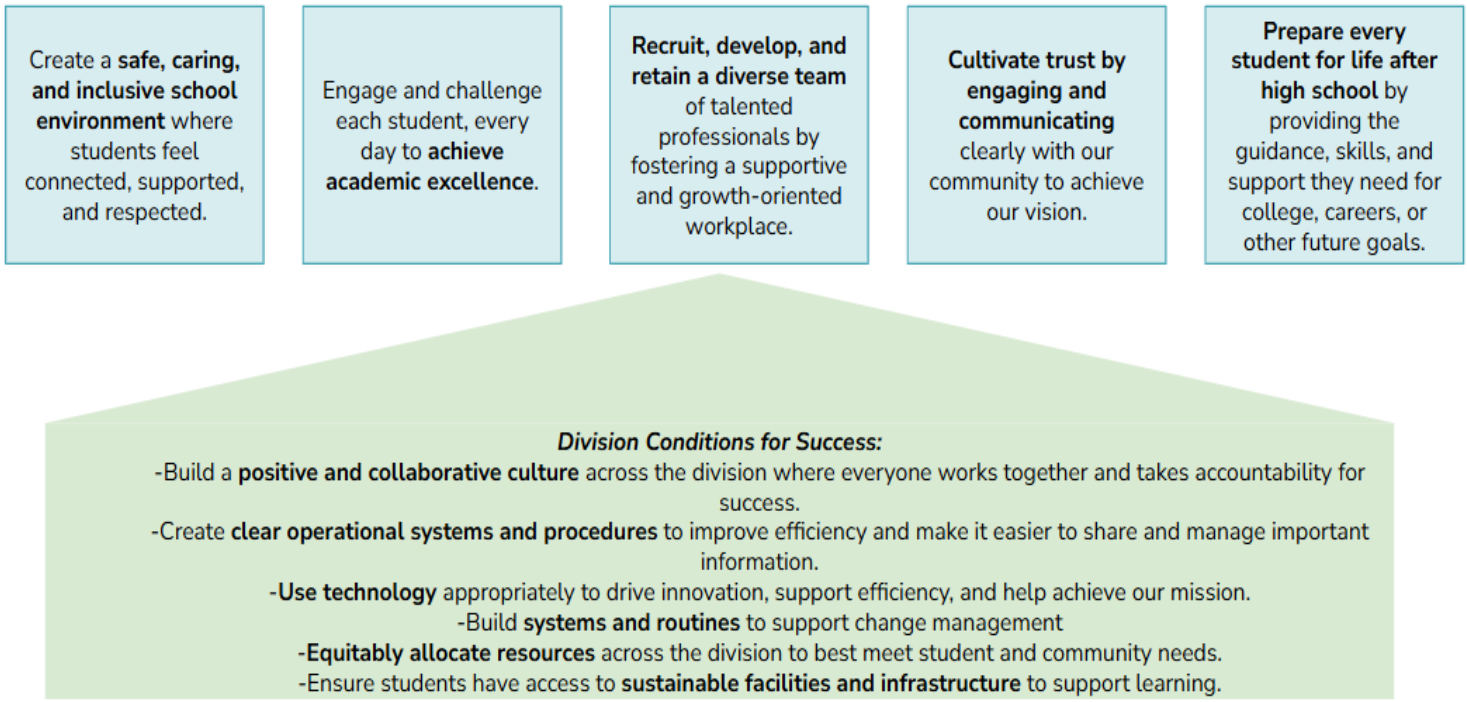
ACPS Draft Strategic Plan Outline



Create a safe, caring, and inclusive school environment where students feel connected, supported, and respected.

Engage and challenge each student, every day to achieve academic excellence.

Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse team of talented professionals by fostering a supportive and growth-oriented workplace.

Cultivate trust by engaging and communicating clearly with our community to achieve our vision.

Prepare every student for life after high school by providing the guidance, skills, and support they need for college, careers, or other future goals.

Division Conditions for Success

Create a safe, caring, and inclusive school environment where students feel connected, supported, and respected.

What: Ensure that every student feels welcome, included, and safe so that their well-being is supported through our schools.

Why: Strong relationships and connectedness are critical to the culture of our schools. Our data show that many students do not yet feel safe (physically or emotionally) in our schools, and we want everyone to feel included and valued so that they can show up ready to learn.

How we will measure impact (metrics):

- Students report increased sense of safety & belonging (student survey)
- Reduction in disproportionality of disciplinary actions for prioritized groups

How we will reach our goal (strategies and potential activities):

1. **Create strong support systems for students' social and emotional well-being through building positive relationships with peers and trusted adults.**
    - Elevate student voice in meaningful ways in the school community to inform school-level decisions.
    - Provide systems and support (including adequate time) for adults to cultivate relationships with students and repair them when they are harmed.
    - Develop and implement a plan of action to address recommendations delineated in the ongoing Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) evaluation and analysis of disaggregated Equity Climate Survey data (DSIP).
2. **Establish and uphold clear behavior expectations while supporting each student's unique academic and social-emotional needs.**
    - Communicate and teach behavior expectations to students and partner with families.
    - Provide de-escalation training for all staff, including security staff.
    - Build capacity of all school staff to utilize trauma-informed practices.
    - Increase utilization and monitoring of positive behavior supports and restorative practices across schools.
    - MTSS implementation to include expanded alternative education options

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Engage and challenge each student, every day to achieve academic excellence.

What: Deliver challenging and engaging (differentiated and rigorous) learning experiences that enable *every student* to reach their full potential and excel academically and develop their critical thinking abilities and ability to manage feelings, build confidence, and get along with others in alignment with the Profile of a Learner.

Why: We believe that holding high expectations for all students and supporting them to meet those is essential to their success. Our data show that we are not serving all of our students well, particularly our students from traditionally underserved populations like students of color, low-income students, Multilingual Learners, and students with disabilities. We know from research that more engaging, challenging instruction is necessary to do so.

How we will measure impact (metrics):

- Accelerate the achievement of EL, Black, and Latino students on summative assessments
- Increase in student growth for all students (MAP)
- Increase in students feeling their learning is meaningful/engaging (survey)
- Change in teacher practice/level of student engagement in walkthroughs

How we will reach our goal (strategies and potential activities):

1. **Use high-quality learning materials and teaching practices that reflect students' diverse cultures, support their social and emotional growth, and ensure each student gets what they need to succeed.**
    - Refine and socialize the instructional framework to clearly define what highly effective teaching and learning looks like in ACPS.
    - Enhance the curriculum and accompanying materials to include social emotional learning and equitable learning practices.
    - Student Services department collaborates with Teaching, Learning, and Leadership and at the school level to integrate Social-Emotional Learning with Tier 1 academic instruction.
    - Support teachers in utilizing the curriculum in alignment with state standards.
2. **Empower the school-based instructional leadership team (Principals, Assistant Principals, and Instructional Coaches) to serve as strong instructional coaches and mentors for educators.**
    - Support school-based instructional leaders to conduct effective walkthroughs (and provide meaningful feedback) and leverage PLCs as tool for instructional improvement.
    - Promote cross-school collaboration around effective practices through more effective meetings and knowledge sharing for school leaders.
    - Leaders coach and support teachers to meet the ACPS definition of highly effective teaching and learning.

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Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse team of talented professionals by fostering a supportive and growth-oriented workplace.

What: Recruit high-quality staff that are reflective of our student population and intentionally support and develop them so that they want to stay and are effective in their respective roles.

Why: We know that our staff are the heart of our division and their interactions with students form the foundation for our collective success. Our data show that we continue to struggle to find and keep high-quality staff in many critical positions.

How we will measure impact (metrics):

- Increase the retention rate of licensed staff who receive satisfactory evaluations
- Increase retention of first-year ACPS licensed staff (Annual target aligned with DSP target)
- Increase in staff responding positively to "The Central Office provides opportunities for support and collaboration" (Equity Climate survey)

How we will reach our goal (strategies and potential activities):

1. **Retain talented professionals by valuing their input, supporting their wellness, offering leadership opportunities, and ensuring competitive pay.**
    - Staff input/collaboration:
        - Establish a strong mechanism for feedback and collaboration with Principals and other division leaders.
        - Better incorporate staff voice meaningfully into decision-making processes.
    - Wellness support:
        - Expand staff wellness initiatives - e.g., wellness champions, promoting wellness apps/tips.
        - Expand the ACPS mentor program (for first three years) to foster retention and teacher growth.
    - Growth and leadership:
        - Expand leadership pipeline opportunities.
        - Recognize and provide opportunities for teacher leaders who want to stay in the classroom.
        - Provide opportunities for subsidized continuing education.
    - Competitive pay:
        - Revise salaries for hourly non-contracted employees to be more competitive.
        - Establish a clear pay philosophy; consider recruitment and retention bonuses and ways to address the perceived "loyalty penalty."
2. **Provide more focused, differentiated learning opportunities for educators, with a focus on meeting the needs of underserved students.**
    - Involve teachers and staff in the design, implementation, and evaluation of division wide professional learning that is aligned with professional learning standards, curriculum, and strategic plan goals. (DSP)
    - Provide better support and development for unlicensed staff (including IAs and substitutes).
    - Build the capacity of educators to teach in our unique urban community and recognize the skills and talents of our diverse student body.

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- Strengthen PLCs as a mechanism for true collaboration and data use to drive instructional improvement.

3. **Improve and streamline hiring and orientation processes to make them more effective and coordinated.**
    - Establish a more integrated/collaborative and consistent approach to the full hiring process (including transparency with leadership and candidates on the process and timeline, and impact of license requirements).
        - Align recruitment and hiring timelines to ensure access to the best pool of candidates.
        - Provide targeted support for staff who are hired after the initial hiring phase.
    - Use creative and targeted hiring strategies, like partnering with local universities and offering apprenticeships, to find great candidates.
        - Establish strategic HBCU and other local and international partnerships.
        - Investigate apprenticeship model for new staff.
        - Develop a profile of a good candidate for ACPS to help us recruit and screen candidates.
    - Reimagine and implement a more effective and user-friendly orientation/onboarding process for all staff within the first three months of their employment. (DSP)
    - Build more self-service HR systems.

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Cultivate trust by engaging and communicating clearly with our community to achieve our vision.

What: Leverage the strengths of our families and broader community to build connections and partner together in support of our students.

Why: We believe that our diverse community is our strength. Our data show that we have room to grow in establishing trust and providing regular opportunities for connection with our community, and we want to be sure we are all working together to support our students.

How we will measure impact (metrics):

- Increase diversity of voices engaged in school & division decision making
- Increase % of families reporting that they have trust in ACPS

How we will reach our goal (strategies and potential activities):

1. **Help schools connect with all families through focused and meaningful engagement efforts.**
    - Co-create action plans for each school around family engagement, with a focus on families that are traditionally underserved.
    - Support school staff in transparent and effective communication by providing training and resources to engage families and the community in a partnership-driven approach.
    - Utilize family liaisons to build the capacity of teachers for family engagement.
2. **Share clear, timely information and create meaningful two-way conversations with students, staff, and families around division decisions.**
    - Strengthen communication with families, staff, and students by providing clear, timely updates on division operations through a mix of in-person, digital, and printed formats.
    - Create meaningful two-way engagement opportunities through town halls, listening sessions, advisory groups, and open forums that invite student, family, and staff voices into decision-making.
    - Enhance accessibility and inclusion by ensuring language support, clear event information, and easy-to-navigate communication tools, including an improved division website (created in partnership with staff and families to improve the user experience).
    - Demonstrate responsiveness by sharing back feedback and decision-making rationales so the community understands how their input shapes division decisions.
3. **Improve the day-to-day experience for students, families, and staff by providing responsive, helpful, and supportive service across the division.**
    - Establish clear standards for service across the division and train people/hold accountable (include students, families, and staff in the development of these standards).
    - Celebrate exemplary service across the division.
4. **Engage the broader Alexandria community in support of our students and our overall vision.**
    - Utilize a tiered partnership model to support the division and Academies at ACHS (with community and business partners).
    - Strengthen knowledge sharing of community partnership opportunities.
    - Provide more diverse volunteer opportunities for community members to be in schools regularly.

Prepare every student for life after high school by providing the guidance, skills, and support they need for college, careers, or other future goals.

What: We will help every student get ready for life after high school by giving them the skills, knowledge, and support they need to succeed in college, careers, or whatever path they choose. This includes providing strong guidance, real-world learning experiences, and resources to help them plan for their future with confidence.

Why: Our ultimate mission is to graduate students prepared to thrive in their next step after graduation. We know that there are critical supports needed as students prepare for that transition that we need to strengthen in order to ensure every student has the best chance for lifelong success.

How we will measure impact (metrics):

- Increase post-secondary going/success rate (esp. for Black/Latino/EL students)
- Increase % of students earning industry recognized credentials.

How we will reach our goal (strategies and potential activities):

1. **Make learning more meaningful for students by using real-world experiences and hands-on ways to measure their progress at every grade level.**
    a. Implement project-based learning at all grade levels.
    b. Expansion career and technical opportunities for students PreK-12 to maximize exposure.
    c. Utilize competency-based learning
2. **Continue to refine the Academies model to ensure it is meeting the needs of our community.**
    a. High school specifically
    b. Expansion of career and technical opportunities K-12 to provide real-world experiences.
    c. Ensure equitable access to advanced coursework.
3. **Expand access to high-quality college and career counseling to support students' transitions.**
    a. Use student-driven postsecondary readiness plans that are regularly updated.
    b. Offer one-on-one mentoring and advising focused on career exploration, college applications, and financial aid

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Division Conditions for Success

What: Ensure that our division is working collaboratively in pursuit of our identified goals (above), in a way that is efficient and effective.

Why: We know that our internal division culture and operations are critical to the success of our identified goals. There is room for growth across the integration and efficiency of our facilities and operations into the academic goals and outcomes we aim to achieve.

How we will measure impact (metrics):

- Increase % of division staff indicating they have what they need to effectively do their job (through surveys and focus groups).
- Increase overall "return on investment" for key programs/initiatives (alongside other criteria).
- Increase % of departments meeting their department-specific efficiency goal.

How we will reach our goal (potential conditions):

1. **Build a positive and collaborative culture across the division where everyone works together and takes accountability for success.**
    - Clarify & communicate the role of each staff/department in achieving our mission.
    - Create opportunities for relationship and culture building that are not meeting-based/location-based.
    - Cultivate a growth mindset and focus on feedback as a mechanism for growth (e.g., through training for managers on giving and receiving feedback).
    - Improve internal communication (including better coordination and active listening).
2. **Create clear operational systems and procedures to improve efficiency and make it easier to share and manage important information.**
    - Codification of systems (and standard operating procedures) and adherence to systems.
3. **Use technology appropriately to drive innovation, support efficiency, and help achieve our mission.**
    - Identify areas where AI and other emerging technology can support efficiency.
    - Provide PL around AI implementation.
4. **Build systems and routines to support continuous improvement.**
    - Examine process for funding and sunsetting programs through establishing a mechanism for calculating return on investment.
    - Establish decision making processes that are more inclusive & transparent when it comes to resource trade-offs (tied to goal 4).
5. **Equitably allocate resources across the division to best meet student and community needs.**
    - Ensure that families are aware of the way in which we are allocating resources in terms of need.
    - Evaluate our staffing model to ensure that we are providing adequate support in schools with the highest needs.
6. **Ensure students have access to sustainable facilities and infrastructure to support learning.**
    - Consider sustainability in development of our facilities.
    - Promote better stewardship of our facilities.
    - Manage expectations/collaborate with the community to understand what's possible and reinforce staff expertise.

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