

## Community Q&A

### Part 1 – Posted Wednesday 2/25/26

- (1) What is “Use of Fund Balance” (p A-26) totaling \$627K? How does this relate to the “Carry Forward of Fund Balances” that appeared on the Feb 12 2026 school board consent agenda which totaled \$13.3M? Help us understand why for example \$2.9M was not spent in FY25 for Child Nutrition and carried forward to FY26.**

The use of fund balance on page A-26 primarily represents funds in our Special Revenue funds.

School Fund	
2000 Projected carry-over (B-22)	\$173,000
Special Revenue Funds	
3214 Special Education IDEA (F-24)	\$217,020
3152 Algebra Readiness Program (F-31)	\$10,000
3501 Albemarle Trust (F-39)	\$10,000
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Total Budget Use of Fund Balance (A-26)	\$627,040

There are a multitude of reasons that funds may not be fully expended within a given fiscal year. Sometimes there are anticipated operational costs that do not materialize (such as when there are vacancies in positions), sometimes there are contractual agreements where monies have been encumbered within the current fiscal year, but products/services are not rendered until the following fiscal year. For some federal grant funds, the ACPS fiscal year and the federal fiscal year do not align, so fund balances are carried forward to maintain full funding for ACPS. Other times, we maintain a budgeted fund balance to assure essential fee-based services are not affected by any emergency revenue shortfalls, which is the case with the Child Nutrition program. Regardless of the reasoning for these fund balances, they are carried forward each year and spent within the scope of the described program. The school board item on Feb 12 represented unspent balances during FY 2024-25, which were carried forward into FY 2025-26.

- (2) How does ACPS report actual expenditures compared to budgeted amounts?**

The budget documents show actual expenditures where available and budgeted amounts for years not yet closed out. A comparison of budget vs actuals is included in each quarterly financial report, as presented to the School Board.

**(3) What is included in “Other Wages”? We see this School Fund category is increasing by 28.1% for Instruction and 21.2% for Transportation (p A-28), and is separated from “Salary”, “Benefits” and “Operations”. Likewise, we see 35% increase in “Other Wages” for Student Services (E-13). We know that is a state-defined category, but can’t figure out what this includes.**

“Other Wages” is pay that is not part of the base salary for a regular FTE staffed position. This expense category includes pay types such as: substitute teacher, substitute driver or other substitute pay, temporary employee pay, overtime pay, shift differential pay, and teacher extra work pay. The collective bargaining process is a significant factor in the increase of “other wages.” Specifically, there are a number of workplace changes (such as mandatory lunch and planning time), and benefits (such as paid parental leave, bereavement leave) that will require greater use of substitutes and temporary employees along with other wages such as overtime pay and shift differential pay.

**(4) What is the “Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program”? We were surprised to see that there is an increase of \$248K proposed (p A-31) when ACPS is struggling to hire certified teachers, and that the division-wide costs are \$2.3M (p E-27).**

The Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program (VERIP) incentivizes early retirement as a benefit to employees. Through the VERIP, ACPS provides a financial contribution toward medical insurance, which may be provided as a cash payment or applied toward the cost of the continuation of ACPS medical benefits. VERIP benefits are provided for a maximum of five years or until age 65, whichever comes first. To be eligible:

- employees must minimally meet the age and service criteria for VRS retirement;
- be a current benefits-eligible employee at least 50 years of age; and
- have been employed in a benefits-eligible position for 10 of the last 13 years immediately prior to retirement.

[Policy GCPC](#) provides additional details on this program.

ACPS is not struggling to hire certified teachers. Rather, there is a decades-long national downturn in the number of people choosing to enter the profession. We remain highly competitive for hiring certified teachers and have had great success implementing programs to provide alternate pathways to certification. Our teacher vacancy rate on the first day of school was just under 1.0%. As of 2/24/26 92.7% of teachers are fully licensed. 6.2% are provisionally licensed (ranging from needing to pass one exam to having partially completed their certification program). 1.1% are unlicensed (15 teachers).

Projected VERIP costs increased primarily due to increased cost of medical coverage, as well as predictions around the number of retiree participants and their selected payment option.

**(5) What is included in “Operations” for Instruction in the School Fund (p A-28)? We know that is a state-defined category, but don’t know what that includes.**

Generally, the “Operations” expense category includes expenses incurred to run a school or department, outside of staffing costs. Specific to Instruction, FY 27 Operations allocations are in areas including: copying, printing & mailing, field trips, software licenses, educational & recreational supplies, contract services, local contribution to CATEC (\$2,041,005), office supplies, travel/training/education, machinery & equipment, stipends, textbooks, books & subscriptions, dues & memberships.

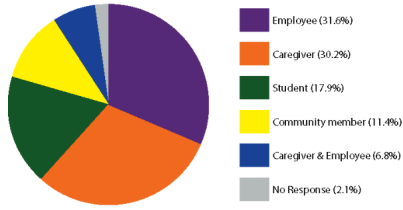
**(6) Research – Could you please share the in-depth results of the budget priority analysis? (We liked the new visual format!) Would appreciate seeing both quantitative and qualitative, including for use in advocacy in support of the budget proposal.**

We asked the community to rank specific initiatives along with two key focus groups – student senate and ACPS leadership. The Community Survey was the primary factor in determining top priorities we should address to provide the level of service and instruction expected from ACPS.

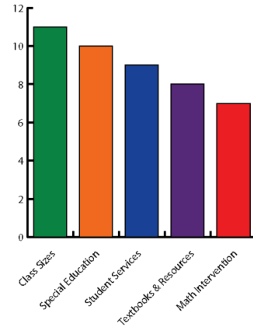
As noted in the graphs below, 31.6% of community survey respondents were employees. 30.2% were student caregivers. The remaining 40% were: Students (17.9%), Community members (11.4%), and those who identify as both a caregiver and employee (6.8%) with two percent of respondents not identifying their relationship to ACPS.

There are two ways in which we evaluated the ranking of all respondents to the community survey. The first is the “Condorcet Method,” which puts each issue in a head-to-head comparison to identify which item has the greatest level of priority. We applied this methodology to understand what was of greatest importance for all respondents, student senate, and ACPS leadership respectively. These findings are presented in the top three bar charts below.

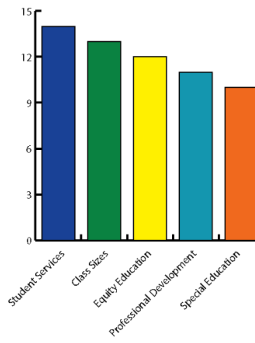
The second method we used was the weighted ranking for each item. Through this method, the greater rank priority receives a higher weighted value. The six bar charts at the bottom of the graphic below show how each segment of responders from the community survey prioritized the initiatives.



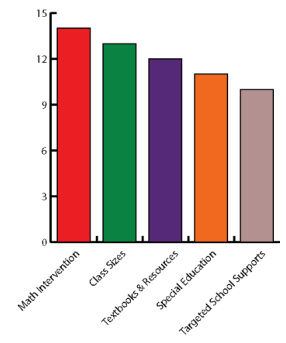
Community Survey Respondents



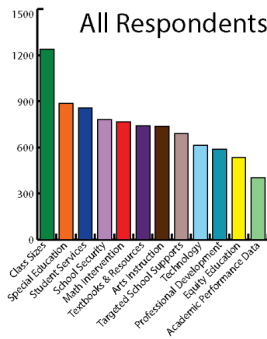
Student Senate



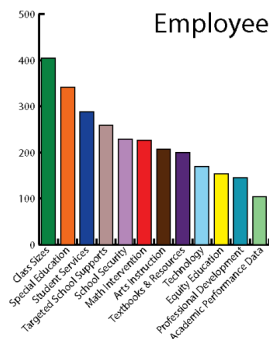
ACPS Leadership



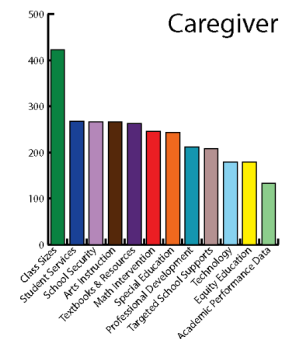
All Respondents



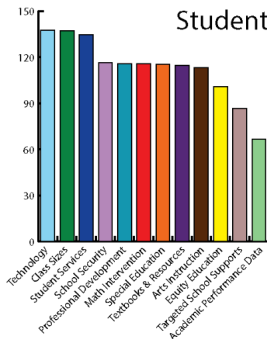
Employee



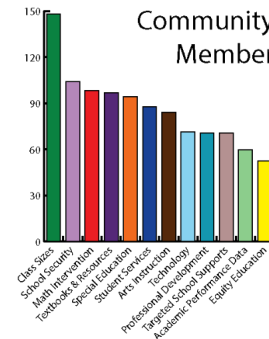
Caregiver



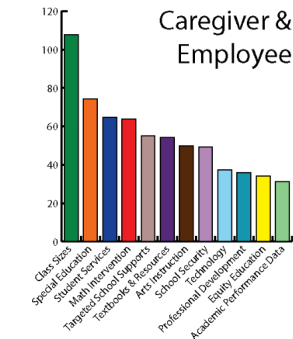
Student



Community Member



Caregiver & Employee



**(7) Enrollment at ACE: Seminole (aka Center 1) – The budgeted projection is for 83 students to attend per day, for a total of 166 students (every-other-day). That is still well below the physical “school” [capacity](#) of 120 students daily, which ACPS predicts will be reached by FY29. For next year, that would be an increase of 7 students/day and 14 students/EOD from current actuals. We note that most parents have not yet met with counselors, but high school students have already been asked to put their course requests in. We see that these Feb 2026 projections are the same as those [shared with the Supervisors](#) in Dec 2025. Is this enrollment projection based on students who have indicated their intentions via the course enrollment process?**

Projections are based on feedback received by counselors regarding student interest in studios and trend data throughout the state in career and technical education programs. Open enrollment numbers remain in alignment with anticipated enrollment. We will adjust budgets and appropriations based on actual enrollment figures once enrollment is closed.

**(8) Cost/Pupil at ACE: Seminole (aka Center 1) – The cost per student for this program is \$20,973 (p G-34). Correct that this doesn’t include the cost of the building lease? Compare to the three traditional high schools: AHS \$12,224; MoHS \$13,995; WAHS \$12,154. Also higher than ACE: Lambs Lane \$17,28. Why is this per pupil cost so much higher? What portion of this cost is due to smaller ratios (fewer students per teacher) vs. higher overhead (staff to run basic operations) vs. specialized materials costs (equipment, textbooks, etc)? Why is the cost per student so much higher than the adopted FY26 budget of \$17,896, which is just for school-based budget (p G-39 Adopted FY26 Budget)?**

Correct, the building lease is not included in the per student cost. The per student cost at ACE Seminole Place is higher than the per student cost at ACE Lambs Lane because of the relatively small facility size of ACE Seminole Place, which limits the number of students who can attend, but does not reduce the number of staff necessary to maintain the programs and Seminole Place. This creates higher overhead per student.

ACE Seminole Place FY 27 Draft: \$1,740,767; Pupils: 83

ACE Seminole Place FY 26 Adopted: \$1,431,654; Pupils 80

Shift in budget allocation: +2 SPED Teachers (eliminated 1.0 SPED TA), +0.5 EL Teacher  
Change in actual staffing from 25-26 to 26-27: None

**(9) Staff Increase at ACE: Seminole (aka Center 1) – We see that the student enrollment is only projected to increase by 7 students per day, but 1.5 FTE staff increase is proposed. (p G-20) Compared to last year’s adopted budget, we see: +0.5 nurse, +1.5 special education teachers, +0.5 EL teacher. Please clarify?**

There is a full-time CNA budgeted in FY 26 and a full-time CNA budgeted in FY 27. In FY 26, certain classified positions are shown as 0.5 (budget value). Beginning in FY 27, we changed the presentation to show full-time positions as 1.0 regardless of their budget value.

2 Special Education teachers are added in the budget and 1 Special Education TA is reduced in the budget. This results in a 1.0 FTE addition.

0.5 EL position: This position previously existed, but was listed as part multi-school holdback staffing, as it was related to the new FY 26 Scholars Studio Proposal.

**(10) Staffing Allocation: Scholar Studios – On p G-23, there is a column for “Scholars Studios” which seems to add FTE for ACE: Seminole (+0.2) and ACE: Lambs Lane (+1.7). Why is this?**

Scholars Studio Leads are Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers who support student recruitment and program awareness. They visit middle schools, assist with open houses and tours, and help prospective students understand available pathways and how those pathways align to postsecondary goals. They also prepare current students to effectively represent and speak about their programs to interested peers. As compensation for this work, these teachers are provided a stipend, which is equivalent to .17 of an FTE. There is an addition of one lead at Seminole place (which the budget book only shows one decimal space of .2). There are ten leads at Lambs Lane, which equates to 1.7 FTE.

**(11) Textbooks – The proposal is to purchase \$800K of textbooks. Where in the budget does this expense actually appear (aside from Overview line item on p A-30)? What grade levels and subjects are being purchased?**

The \$800,000 is proposed as an increase to the current recurring annual operational cost of \$600,000, for a total of \$1.4M per year. This will allow us to supply textbooks over time for standards of learning (SOL) and advanced placement (AP) classes in Language Arts, Math, Science, History, and World Languages. It will take time to update all high quality instructional materials (HQIM) for SOL and AP courses. For FY 27 we recommend prioritizing funding in the following order: Secondary Math, English Language Arts (ELA) grades 6-8, and Algebra Bridge Program. Once those materials have been purchased, the next set of instructional materials would be ELA grades 9-12, AP Science Courses, AP History Courses, followed by SOL High School Science Courses, World Languages, and Electives. We also recommend restoring per pupil funding to schools so that they can maintain resources to address individual issues such as damage or enrollment growth. Those funds were previously suspended due to the significant

cost for HQIM purchases for Elementary ELA and Math. We are in the process of obtaining quotes for all of our resources that need to be purchased for adopted curricula. We know that the total will exceed the proposed annual budget. However, we will defer any unmet funding needs for HQIM to the next fiscal year based on Office of Instruction Priorities. Once we have those quotes, we will be able to make a more definitive list of what will be purchased in FY27.

**(12) Math & Data Support Specialists – The proposal is to spend \$706K on six Specialists in “identified urban ring schools.” Which schools are these?**

The schools identified as requiring the greatest level of specialized support are Mountain View, Greer, Agnor, Woodbrook, Journey, and Burley.

**(13) Newcomer Learning Community – We see a reduction of all 5 FTE proposed (p G-20). Why is this “school” being eliminated? We see that there are still 531 students projected at ELL Proficiency Level 1 (p B-13). Will these staff positions be allocated to other schools?**

A letter shared with EL teachers and division leadership explaining this decision can be found [here](#), which reflects how challenging this decision was. Unfortunately, this is based specifically on a significant decrease in secondary students who meet the criteria to participate in a newcomer program, such as offered at the NLC. A large amount of the projected students included in the proficiency level 1 band reflect incoming kindergarteners, who often score at this level if they have not yet had access to English language educational opportunities. ACPS also has some non-newcomers who continue to score in the level 1 proficiency band; newcomer programming is not appropriate for these learners, but we recognize and continue to work on improved programming for this group. The 5 FTEs previously utilized in the NLC have been allocated to EL staffing in other schools to reflect population shifts and increase the ability of schools to provide integrated co-teaching.

**(14) English Learners – We see that there is a projected decrease of English Learners for ACPS (B-13), but aren’t seeing current numbers to compare? To what is this decrease attributed? We know it could be that students have increased proficiency and are no longer classified as ELLs, but this could also be due to changes in population movement locally or immigration.**

This is not a decrease in the number of ELs, but it is that students are increasing in their English proficiency, which changes the staffing ratio. Rather, this is a small increase; our Fall state data reporting listed 1606 ELs. We also have two ways in which the Virginia Department of Education refers to ELs; in some instances, they include students who have exited services in the past 4 years, which may be why this seems like a decrease; this only

includes students actively identified as ELs, as they are the only students who receive services and therefore are reflected in staffing allocations under the Code of Virginia.

**(15) TAs and EDEP – Why are TAs and EDEP staff being reduced by 7.5 FTE? (p A-33)**

In FY 24, ACPS provided 15 half-time teaching assistant positions to combine with half-time Extended Day Enrichment Programs (EDEP) positions to create 15 full-time positions, with the purpose of increasing accessibility, reducing waitlists, and mitigating hiring challenges. The position allows us to attract highly qualified staff and maintain a stable workforce.

Although the positions were projected to continue through FY 28, this arrangement was meant to be temporary until the workforce returned to pre-pandemic levels. In addition, salary and benefits have significantly increased since the pandemic. EDEP is meant to be financially self-sustaining and cannot assume the costs for full-time salary and benefits for the shared position. Lastly, the school division has many instructional priorities, and cannot continue to fund a portion of the full-time position. Additional resources have been allocated to schools for teaching assistants (related to *Working Conditions*), reducing the need for the part-time TA/responsibilities role that was previously combined with the EDEP assistant role.

**(16) Admin Benefits Increases – On the School Fund Expenditures Overview (p A-28), benefit expenditures for “Admin/Attend&Health” are proposed to increase 19.1%. Why is this so much higher than other state categories such as Building Services (1.9%) or Instruction (7.7%)?**

Reclassification of Workers’ Compensation costs from the Building Services function to the Fiscal Services function.

**(17) Are FTEs actually being taken from the three larger high schools and given to Center 2, or are the teaching positions at Center 2 considered additional "new" positions to ACPS?**

It’s a combination. We are moving 18 FTEs from base school to ACEL as part of the shift in enrollment (no net division-wide change overall). We are also adding about 11 new FTEs to be able to provide the Scholars Studios programming (Scholars Studio proposal).

**(18) Are internal transfer requests and/or RIFed staff getting priority for the Center 2 positions?**

For ACEL – an announcement went out through Compass seeking teachers interested in being considered for transfer to ACEL. Those responding went through a screening process and final interviews are being done by Stephanie Carter.

We're watching this list closely as we expect it to result in people not going into the RIF process at the High School level. It is possible some positions will have to be filled externally just due to endorsements required. We had a robust response for internal teachers interested in ACEL. No external candidates have been interviewed yet, as we've been focusing on transfer requests. Principals and division services are working together to avoid unnecessary RIFing in a time we are adding positions.

**(19) Is Center 2 only having English and History as core classes, similar to Center 1?**

The programs do all have Scholars English and Scholars History Classes. None require additional core classes. However, we do think we will be able to run some core classes as "electives" for students who attend ACEL. We are working to respond to student requests and those aren't final, but Biology is a class ACEL will likely run as they will have multiple Bio certified teachers in Pulse Studio and it will give 10th graders schedule flexibility at their base school if they want to take Band, a World Language, Math, and Health/PE for Drivers Ed as their 4 base school classes for instance.