

Community Q&A

Part 3 – Posted Wednesday 3/3/26

(1) What categories of spending comprise the jump in per pupil costs post-pandemic?

Compensation, health care rates, and new proposals are the drivers in the jump in per pupil spending post-pandemic.

This will be discussed in Work Session #3.

(2) Health Care Plan Year 2027 rates “are projected to increase by 8% compared to Plan Year 2026.” Combined with the projected increases in Plan Year 2025, that’s an increase of \$1.77M. Are these costs under the control of ACPS or the County government?

The total FY 26 Adopted health care costs to FY 27 Draft health care cost increase is \$6.0M (p. C-19) when including the cost for new FTE and combined Plan Year 26 and 27 rates. ACPS is in a joint health plan with Albemarle County Government, Albemarle County Service Authority, Emergency Communications Center, Charlottesville-Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau and Blue Ridge Juvenile Detention Center. Plan design and rate setting is under the control of a joint steering team. Cost increases are aligned with experience nationwide.

(3) What is being done to accelerate the recompetete for health insurance? Please let us know if this is a question for the County instead of ACPS.

The contract with our insurer will go into an RFP process next year. As a self-funded plan, the insurer (at a flat per member per month fee) processes claims and provides access to a network of providers at a discount. Plan design and rate setting is the decision of the Joint Steering Team.

(4) Stipends – What are these (p G-32):

- **Non-Instructional Stipends (new) \$147,200**
- **Incentives & Bonuses (new) \$115,000**

Non-instructional stipends are for miscellaneous costs, including paying staff for additional supervision of students outside of the school day due to transportation delays. The budget is an estimate that is reflective of past spending

Incentives and bonuses are miscellaneous incentives and bonuses. The budget is an estimate that is reflective of past spending.

(5) Staffing – Each comprehensive high school has 3.33 FTE for Athletics (p G-14): Athletic Director (1), Trainer (1.33), Clerical (1). ACPS also provides significant funding for coach stipends (totaling \$238K per high school). And also “Athletic Laborers” on a part-time basis for \$45,900 per school. Is this staffing allocation guided by a state agency or group?

In Virginia, athletic staffing is primarily governed by the Virginia High School League (VHSL) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), but much of the specific staffing levels is left to individual school divisions.

(6) Community Lab School – The first step of the proposed Middle School Plan is to fund a potential expansion of Lab in CIP. That is based on an assumption that applications exceed available spaces. Could you please add the specific data on application #s for middle & high school to the annual budget for reference?

As of 2/26/26, applications for SY26-27 are 227 for MS and 49 for HS.

(7) Work Based Learning (1 FTE) at ACEL – Is this in addition to the central office “Work & Community-Based Learning” Curriculum Coordinator? We believe there was also a Career-focused staff member added at each comprehensive high school.

Yes, this is a teacher.

(8) Scholar Studios (1.7 FTE) – These are additional stipends for teacher leaders, but although there are Studios are WAHS and MoHS, they have no stipends?

The budget may not reflect the actual placement. These were budgeted at ACE Academy as a placeholder until final studio locations were determined.

(9) Asst Principal and Clerical (3 FTE) – This number is the same for ACEL as Burley MS, for example, which serves 100s more students...?

Yes, this is a base level of staffing provided to all schools.

(10) How much \$ was the “unbudgeted portion of Plan Year 2026 health care rate increase”? (p A-31) Wondering what % of the total “Baseline Adjustments to Maintain Services” \$2.58M the health care increase comprises.

\$3.24M is the amount that was added for health care costs in the baseline adjustment to maintain the current Plan Year 2026 rate.

(11) Enrollment → Staffing – We know that staffing is allocated based on formulas (on pp G-6+), many of which were updated this year. We’re interested in how these changes play out at each school.

- ❖ **Class Sizes & FTE Shifts** – We appreciate that ACPS is working to keep class sizes low across the division, and appreciate the new ranges for elementary that place upper limits. We see value in the intention to shift slightly more staff to the higher-needs schools, although losing FTE is challenging in the short-term for the less-high-needs schools. When these new formulas (p G-6 to G-8) are applied, they result in changes in numbers of teachers assigned to each school.
- ❖ **Cont – Related, we see “Target Class Size Reduction” (p G-26) which adds more FTE, but we thought we’d understood that the prior years’ class sizes were now rolled in.** *In prior years, FTE were allocated to schools in a separate allocation called Reduce Class Size. In FY 27, they are allocated with regular target class size staffing and are not pulled out separately.*
- ❖ **Intervention – The Staffing Standards (G-6) and School-Based Staffing Allocations (G-23 and G-24) are missing “Interventionists” as compared to last year. There are changes in both the Reading Specialist & Tiered Services, resulting in significant changes for many schools. Please explain?** *Intervention staffing is combined with Tiered Services staffing in FY 27 for simplification.*
- ❖ **School Security Officers** – We understand that there is no state or industry staffing standard for school security officers and that ACPS has partially funded their internal 1 SSO per 300 students ratio (p G-12). We also see that there is a proposed addition of six (6) full-time SSOs across the high schools. What is the rationale and cost of this proposal? *There is no cost to this proposal. The staffing standards more closely align with how the high schools have chosen to use their instructional staffing over the last few years. The purpose of this budget change is to better communicate how high school staffing is actually used.*

All of these above staffing standard changes were reviewed and revised as a group in 2024 to 2025 to ensure the most minimal total FTE impact to each school, while remaining net neutral in the overall cost. As a total group, none of these changes add costs in FY 27. In any staffing standard changes, some schools will lose staffing and some schools will gain staffing, regardless of enrollment and demographic changes.

The FY 27 proposed staffing levels are reflective of the FY 27 proposed staffing standards (starting on p. G-5). In addition, when looking at the total FTE counts for each school, there are changes in staffing standards due to the *Workforce Investments* proposal (Collective Bargaining related changes) that may not be related to enrollment or demographics or the restructure as described above.

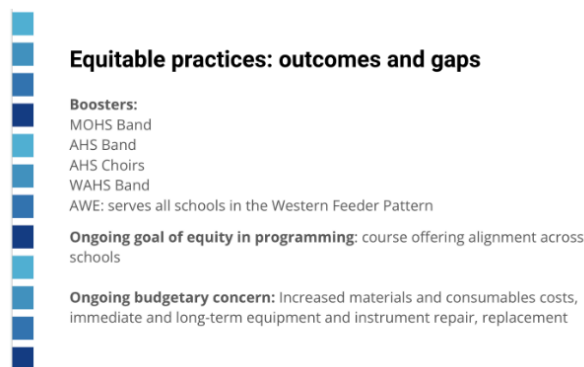
(12) The Collective Bargaining agreement for Classified Employees is for a 4.25% increase, which includes maintenance workers (we think). Why then does the School Fund Salary Expenditures (C-16) propose an increase of 11.8% for “Building Services”?

Yes, maintenance positions fall under the ESP collective bargaining agreement. The 11.8% increase is driven primarily by increased FTE in the Building Services function, leading to higher total salary costs. 8.8 custodial and 3.0 maintenance FTEs were added for the new Mountain View Upper Elementary and ACE Academy-Lambs Lane schools. Additionally, budget to budget, there is an increase in 6.0 School Security Officers (SSO), which more closely reflects current staffing levels.

(13) SNAP Cuts – Is ACPS anticipating any impact on family eligibility for meals & ACPS Nutrition budget?

VDOE School Nutrition has not provided any guidance on changes to SNAP benefits or impact to the School Nutrition Meal program.

(14) Arts Funding – This slide was presented at a school board meeting, and we’d like to understand what work is underway to address the important equity concerns. We understand this may be a set of Qs that takes longer to answer, but we want to encourage this effort, please.



Our Curriculum Coordinator for Fine and Performing Arts is currently working with the fine and performing arts teachers across the division to inventory instruments, equipment, and other materials. Based on the needs of the various schools, we are working to determine a per pupil cost for the various programs and schools.

The budgetary concern will be addressed in Work Session #3.

(15) Has any follow-up analysis been done on budget for instrument purchase, replacement & maintenance costs? Same applies to choir & band uniforms, as well as basic visual art supplies. The western schools have a generous & dedicated arts non-profit, but based on a recent conversation, even AWE is stretched beyond capacity with these types of

requests that seem like they should be covered to some extent by school budgets. Similarly, PTOs have been asked to fund basics like piano tuning, which seems like it should be covered by ACPS if the piano is necessary to the music program.

Yes.

The budgetary concern will be addressed in Work Session #3.

(16) At the high school level, what are the total number of students who participate in arts programs that demand significant out-of-school time? Thinking about marching band, for example, which is considered a “curriculum-based club” in some school divisions & sometimes given access to additional organizational support. Athletic efforts receive organizational support from paid staff (athletics director, office admin), but Arts orgs depend solely on family volunteers and stretched-thin arts teachers. Could ACPS please review this? What solutions is ACPS proposing to increase equitable access to supplemental arts funding for all schools? Family Council is supporting DonorsChoose with many arts projects funded. We understand that Albemarle Foundation for Education has other (important) priorities. If ACPS can quantify the inequities, it will be more possible to come up with potential solutions.

It will be hard to determine with any accuracy how many students participate in arts programs, as some of our programs are not a class (marching band, color guard, etc) or in the case of programs like theater, students can try out for plays but not be enrolled in theater classes. We cannot define what is "significant" as each arts event (theater, marching band, art showcases) can vary from month to month and year to year. ACPS has a Curriculum Coordinator for Fine and Performing Arts. She works diligently to support schools with program needs.

(17) Field Trips – What is the proposal for guaranteed field trip funding for FY27? For which grade levels?

For the 26-27 school year, ACPS will offer 2 guaranteed field experiences for students in grade K-8 and one high school experience for Biology students.

(18) The comparison slide (Work Session #2) shows Crozet as having 2.0 FTE more regular class sections than Brownsville next year. With a projected K-5 enrollment difference of 60, is one additional class section per 30 students in alignment with class size standards?

Staffing is allocated based on the number of students in a grade level. The enrollment difference of 60 is a total difference for the school, but the grade level differences are what determine FTE.

Crozet’s budgeted class sizes are as follows:

Kinder	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	School avg.	Standard
21.0	22.3	19.4	22.3	20.2	24.0	21.4	21.0

(19) The Collective Bargaining agreement includes 3.75% increase in salary for teachers (C-15). But, why is the Instruction functional category FY27 increase proposed for much higher 6.3% (C-16)?

A little over a quarter of the positions in the Instruction functional area are in the ESP group, but most positions in this group are receiving the 3.75% increase as stated. The main driver for the 6.3% increase in salary costs is the addition of 60.7 FTE to this functional area, driven by new school costs, Scholars Studios, and increases in Special Education and Intervention.