

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES UPDATE

THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR ALBEMARLE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS—MAY 2018

## OVERVIEW

Horizon 2020, the Albemarle County Public Schools' Strategic Plan, consists of one, overarching goal for our system:

***All students will graduate prepared for citizenship, post-secondary education and workforce entry levels as evidenced by multiple indicators of lifelong learning competencies.***

Within the Horizon 2020 plan, the Albemarle County School Board has identified five objectives for the school division:

- **We will engage every student**
- **We will implement balanced assessments**
- **We will improve opportunity and achievement**
- **We will create and expand partnerships**
- **We will optimize resources**

Central staff reports on the division's progress toward meeting these goals and objectives multiple times throughout the year, and each biennium the school board reviews, revises and adopts strategic priorities that will push the division toward achieving success and meeting the challenge outlined in the Horizon 2020 motto of "Unleashing Each Student's Potential." In the fall of 2017, the board adopted the following strategic priorities for the 2017-2019 biennium:

- **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.**

The following report provides examples to the school board of key programs, practices and strategies that are being implemented to achieve success on each priority, and will report on several formative indicators of our progress so far this biennium.

## TELLING OUR STORY

A crucial component of the effectiveness of a strategic plan is the degree to which the key stakeholders in the plan understand the connections between the goals and objectives of the plan and the work that they do in their schools each and every day. Albemarle County Public Schools places a high degree of emphasis on ensuring that these connections are clear and that they are publicly acknowledged. In short, when we can tell the story of our work and its impact on our school and our community, the connections between our practices and our goals and objectives become clear.

This update to the strategic priorities will attempt to tell our story in an authentic way to the school board. While some quantitative data will be provided to the board, the heart of our evaluation is going to be measured by looking at examples of our strategic plan in practice within each of our schools. This report is designed to provide information needed by the board to rate the impact of each of our strategic priorities and consists of the following items:

- **Horizon 2020 In Our Schools**—reports from each of our schools about the work that they are doing to meet our strategic objectives. (Sent to the board as a separate file)
- **Division Highlights**—Key programs, practices and strategies from the 2017-2018 school year that show the impact our work is having toward meeting our strategic priorities.
- **Division Metrics**—Formative and summative indicators of our work toward achieving our strategic objectives and priorities can be found through links to the State of the Division Report which contains our most up-to-date quantitative data.
- **School Improvement Plans**—Each year, principals work with a team of administrators, school staff and community members to create a personalized strategic improvement plan for their school. They use these to set goals for the year around academic achievement, professional development and school climate and culture. The school SIP teams monitor and update their progress each quarter, and submit updates that are posted to the division web page. The most up-to-date school strategic improvement plans can be found [here](#).

## DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

### PRIORITY ONE-- CREATE A CULTURE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL.

- **Program Evaluations**—Beginning in October of this year, the position of division program evaluator became full-time. A significant highlight of the program evaluation work that has been completed for the division includes the evaluation of the **Extended Day Enrichment Program**. Through the evaluation process several areas for improvement, particularly in the areas of equity, emerged and staff has been implementing changes to the program to narrow the equity gap. Overall, program evaluations serve to ensure that all programs in the division have high expectations and a mission of continuous improvement. Examples of other evaluations that have been completed or are in progress include a study of the **Advanced Placement** program in the division, a program evaluation of the **Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Center**, and an evaluation of the **Driver's Education program**.
- **Strategic Communications**—The strategic communications team creates dozens of press releases each year while also developing strong relationships with local news outlets to spread understanding of the work that takes place in our schools each day. With all press releases the communications team puts an emphasis on creating a positive message about our schools. Each release typically contains at least three highlights of our work. These messages and stories work to show that we have an expectation of excellence that permeates all aspects of our schools and our school division.
- **Collective Efficacy Survey**—Collective efficacy—the belief that through collective actions, educators can influence student outcomes and improve student learning—has been a focus for school leaders in the division this year. A number of enabling conditions enhance efficacy in our schools, including such elements as advanced teacher influence, responsiveness of leadership, cohesion among the school staff, and shared knowledge of each other's work. A survey conducted in the fall helped to determine the current state of these enabling conditions in our schools. Through the dedicated work of the Office of Strategic Planning, Accountability & Research, and Program Evaluation, a response rate of 99% was attained. This is the first survey we have ever conducted to receive this rate of response. Central and building leaders use this information to build even stronger conditions for high levels of collective efficacy in their schools. All recent division survey results can be found [here](#).
- **Screening Interviews**—A commitment to high expectations for all begins with the new instructional staff members we hire to teach in our schools. Over the past several years, the ACPS Human Resources department has developed a teaching candidate screening process that helps to ensure that all candidates who move forward for interviews in our schools have personal beliefs that align to the division mission, vision and goals. As of mid-May, 2018 over 528 candidates have applied for screening interviews for instructional positions in ACPS.

## PRIORITY TWO-- IDENTIFY AND REMOVE PRACTICES THAT PERPETUATE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP.

- **Speech-to-Text Software**—Through the dedicated work of both our LEAD team and our Division Director of Testing, Albemarle County gained permission from the Virginia Department of Education to allow the use of speech-to-text software for students taking the Standards of Learning writing test. The use of this software provides an additional avenue of access for students who may struggle with the mechanics of writing, but who have the skills needed to write proficiently given the proper accommodations. Convincing the DOE that these accommodations were necessary and proper was no small task, and demonstrates the commitment that ACPS makes to ensuring all students have access to the tools they need to be successful in the world of academics.
- **Child Nutrition Summer Meals Program**—The Department of Child Nutrition earned the approval necessary to participate in the Summer Food Service Program. The program is sponsored by the USDA free lunch program, and districts must submit applications to receive funding. Eligibility is based on free and reduced lunch rates, and this summer 9 schools will be served over 8 sites. Albemarle County began the program in the summer of 2017. During that summer, an additional 1,662 breakfasts and 1,317 lunches were served to students who otherwise might have gone without.
- **Elimination of School Fees**—As a part of the adopted school board budget, all school fees for the 2018-2019 school year will be eliminated. School fees, although waived for any student in need, serve as a barrier to opportunity for many families.
- **STEP Program**—With the support of the division Student Services Officer, Jack Jouett and Burley Middle Schools launched the pilot Short-Term Education Program (STEP) during the 2017-2018 school year. A goal of the program is to increase the level of support that students feel with adults in the school and to make sure they get the support they need academically. The program replaces out of school suspensions by having students remain in school with a teaching assistant who helps them with schoolwork, and also talks to students about what caused them to be in STEP and provides activities related to Mindfulness and Positive Psychology that hope to reduce recidivism. In the 2016-2017 school year, the total number of out-of-school suspensions for middle school students was 350. As of mid-May, the total number of out of school suspension for middle school students is 120. The program will expand next year.
- **Academy Transportation**—Through a board budget initiative, transportation to all ACPS high school academies will begin in the 2018-2019 school year. Students who could not provide their own transportation to academies in the past could not attend an academy outside of their high school zone. This resulted in a 40% increase in students applying to high school academies from outside of their feeder pattern.

## PRIORITY THREE-- ENSURE THAT STUDENTS IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP PERSONAL INTERESTS.

- **Freshman Seminar**—The Freshman Seminar class launches in the 2018-2019 school year for all incoming ninth grade students. Freshman Seminar is a year-long course designed to help grade nine students make a smooth and successful transition to high school. With a focus on the social and emotional needs of adolescents, Freshman Seminar is arranged in four modules: *Discovery, Connectivity, Opportunity, and Contribution*. In Freshman Seminar, students will work on academic and personal goals and communication. Students will increase awareness of their personal contributions to their learning as well as their contributions to their school and greater communities. Students in Freshman Seminar will work in collaborative settings while learning how to participate in collegial discussions and use sources to support their ideas and opinions. Freshman Seminar instructors will employ student-centered pedagogies to increase connectivity and engagement.
- **Naviance**—All middle and high school students use, Naviance a comprehensive college and career readiness program that helps districts and schools align student strengths and interests to postsecondary goals. Through the use of the program, students develop academic and personal goals, complete career interest profiles, and strengths finder assessments. This information helps students develop their four-year high school course plan based on their personal interests and strengths. In addition, these tools are used in later years to conduct college “super match” searches that find college programs that may be aligned to their personal interests. Students can use Naviance to see the academic profiles of recent ACPS graduates who have applied to those schools and whether or not they were successful in gaining admission.
- **Albemarle Tech--Albemarle Tech: The Center for Creativity and Invention** is a new ACPS high school experience designed to offer students an alternative style of learning in a place where they are supported and where they can succeed. Designed using the best contemporary research on education, Albemarle Tech will remove several potential barriers to learning such as time constraints, environmental limitations, and curricular restrictions. In addition, with a location embedded in the Albemarle County world of innovative businesses, ATech will allow students to fully engage their world. Removing these barriers allows students to discover an extensive education made possible by a grassroots connection to the community through technological problem-solving and maker-infused learning.
- **Community Use of School Facilities**—The Building Services department supports the community use programs for our school facilities. The community use of our facilities allows groups such as Girls Geek Day, Women and Girls in Sports, M-Cubed, Boy and Girls Scouts, CoderDojo, and clubs such as robotics, running, baking, art, gymnastics/dance, garden, French, debate, chess, and knitting, to meet in schools and contribute to developing the personal interests of students.

## DIVISION METRICS

This year the ACPS State of the Division report has been moved to an online format. Metrics contained within the report are updated on a regular basis and serve as the most current reflection of the work we are doing in our schools.

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### ENGAGE EVERY STUDENT

[Fine Arts](#)

[Career and Technical Education](#)

[Physical Fitness & Athletics](#)

[English as a Second or Other Language Program](#)

[Special Education Services](#)

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### IMPLEMENT BALANCED ASSESSMENTS

[Elementary Literacy & Numeracy Screening](#)

[Growth-Based Assessment](#)

[Performance Tasks](#)

[Standards of Learning \(SOLs\)](#)

[College Work and Readiness Assessment](#)

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### IMPROVE OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

[Advancement Via Individual Determination \(AVID\)](#)

[Academies \(MESA, HMSA, & ESA\)](#)

[Maker Spaces](#)

[On-time Graduation](#)

[Virtual Learning](#)

[World Languages](#)

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## CREATE AND EXPAND PARTNERSHIPS

[Work-Based Learning & Internships](#)

[Grant-Related Learning](#)

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## OPTIMIZE RESOURCES

[Division Optimize Resources Page](#)

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## OTHER SUPPORTING DATA

 [SAT Scores](#)

 [AP Score Frequencies, by Subject & by Demographics](#)

 [Summer School](#)

 [Elementary Climate Survey](#)

 [Secondary Climate Survey](#)

 [CTE Enrollment by Program Area](#)

 [MAP Reading & Math Mastery](#)

 [Performance Tasks - Lifelong Learning Mastery](#)

 [Performance Tasks Trends](#)

 [SOL Scores 2014-2017](#)

 [SOL Pass Rate Trends](#)

 [On-Time Graduation Rates](#)