



ACPS Family Council 2023-24 QnA Wrap-Up

Note – These are the answers we received in early Sept 2024 for the remaining 10 questions resubmitted to our ACPS Liaison over the summer. We've kept a list of the unanswered questions at the end, and will determine if/when to share again.

Instruction

- Instruction [from Baker-Butler; March 2024] – Thanks for the school board presentation on mid-year data. For middle and high schools, it sounds like there are common pacing guides, but no shared curriculum. Does this mean that each teacher has to create his/her own materials (which seems time-consuming & perhaps not always effective), and if so is there a plan to move toward a common curriculum?

ACPS – The creation of classroom lessons can vary between subject areas. Many courses have more than one teacher teaching the same subject so they use PLC and other times to plan common lessons. However, some courses are singletons, meaning there is only one teacher teaching all sections of that course. When this is the case, teachers will not have a team of people within their building to plan with on a daily or weekly basis. Those teachers often collaborate during their division professional learning days (DPLC) or during other times that work for them based on their individual schedules. As a division we continuously strive to ensure all students have access to a guaranteed viable curriculum, but that may look different in various content areas.

- Health Follow-Up (from [QnA in March 2024](#)) –
 - In which grade levels of the Health curriculum does ACPS include opiate content?

ACPS – In grade 8, students describe the short and long term health issues related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, including inhalants, marijuana, cocaine, stimulants, methamphetamines, opiates, steroids, and performance enhancing drugs.

- Is there a more detailed version of the ACPS health curriculum framework that we can reference please? We find only [this link](#) to the [state standards](#), which seems like the minimum that must be included, but not actually any information about what ACPS is doing.

ACPS – Like all other courses, teachers are asked to share a course syllabus with families. If there is confusion over why we post Family Life Curriculum, that is state code. We do not post our curriculum for other courses.

- Could you please share more on the "several offers to bring more information... to both students and families?"

ACPS – The University of Virginia's Department of Pain Management and Opioid Stewardship personnel would like to speak to parent, school staff and student groups about opioids and harm reduction. They would gladly present to any group interested.

- Any update on the one-pager for Narcan specifically? Let me know who to follow up with, please.

ACPS – [Protocol](#) and [How-to Guide](#)

Officer Note – We made copies of the files from ACPS as of Sept 10 2024 and linked above.

Redistricting

- MS Redistricting – [Mtn View; Jan 2024; resent in March 2024] I know there are a lot of changes in the works all over the county. It seemed like the county was on the verge of an announcement about middle school redistricting then it seems other decisions took priority. I am specifically concerned about the timing of Mountain View ES students being redistricted from Burley to Walton. Do you know when Middle School expansion and redistricting will be on the table again?

ACPS – The division has been working on a masterplan for our middle school facilities. The final recommendations from the work will be presented to the school board at the September 12 meeting. If they agree with the recommendations, the Board would then need to incorporate the projects into their CIP request to the Board of Supervisors during the next budget cycle. Redistricting between Burley and Walton is included in Phase 2 of the plan, and would not occur until 2032 (if the master plan is approved and funding identified). Full details including the final report can be found here:

<https://www.k12albemarle.org/our-departments/building-services/middle-school-master-plan>

Transportation

- School Closures – [Crozet; Jan 2024; resent in March 2024] I have a question regarding snow days. When ACPS decides to close schools do they look the percentage of students that are impacted by that storm, understanding that each part of the county is different. For example, if only 5% are impacted because buses can't reach them, do they still close school? If so, why not create ...[see not-answered question]... a virtual plan? These changes may help with the chronic absenteeism issue.

Officer Note – We believe that ACPS has a policy of closing schools if any % of students are impacted by weather due to equity concerns, but this policy isn't actually stated on the Transportation website. Could a clear policy statement be added, please?

Are there any laws that require the schools to close if they cannot run their bus service or that require the schools to service every area, no matter how remote?

The decision on what areas in a school district will receive service and what areas will not is entirely up to the school district. For example, some school districts elect not to transport students who reside within a specified distance of their school, or other students who reside on private roads, or any number of different criteria.

ACPS – Good afternoon. We do have snow routes and snow emergency routes, but the decision to close school has to do with many operational factors, and not just the school bus transportation. We do have a community that is rural, suburban and urban and so a large portion of families actually live in rural areas with more difficult topography and roadways. We have so much square mileage that conditions in one part of the county can be quite different from another. We also have about 35% of our staff who live outside of Albemarle County.

For transportation, we consider the safety of our roadways for staff and students who must drive. Teenage drivers are not as experienced as adult drivers or as safe as those who ride a bus. Staff come from all over the county and outside the county to work; they may not be able to drive to their place of work from their location and for those who live outside the county, they may have children at home if their division closed school. We also consider the safety of our walkers and bike riders, and, of course, of the ability of our buses to travel on the roads.

To be operational for students, buildings need to have power and staff and students who can make it in safely.

The decision to use virtual school is an instructional decision. We did have a virtual plan for severe weather for a few years and it was never utilized (notwithstanding COVID). The decision to close all schools instead of one or two has always been explained as a way to maintain equity in the division. We do utilize pacing guides and a common curriculum. Finally, state code requires 990 hours of instruction OR 180 school days. We meet 990 hours of instruction with 165 school days and traditionally we are always at 175-180 school days in session. If a division closes for a weather day, it does not count as a day for the division. The calculation is done as a percentage of the days the division is open. Anyone with 10% or more absences, regardless of the reason, is chronically absent.

Here is a video on our site that discusses the process from the transportation lens:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNPFBRgGEC4>

Not Answered by ACPS –

- All-In Tutoring Update [from Mountain View ES; May 2024] – How successful was the spring break tutoring program? How many students were invited? How many accepted? How many attended? Do you have any metrics to measure success? How many students have been receiving All-In tutoring this spring?

Officer Note – We have shared this question on a [Back-to-School list](#).

- Budget / Instruction [from Broadus Wood; March 2024] – If small class size is a priority for younger grades, why are kinder and first grade classes allowed to get up to 25 kids per class before staffing decisions are made to lower the class size? The foundational skills that are taught in those grades (thinking emotional and social as well as literacy, etc) are next to impossible for these poor teachers to impart with such large numbers.

Officer Note – We will reask this question this school year when the class size report is posted to the school board.

- Principals [Sept 2023; Officer follow-up] – [Research](#) shows that principal leadership has a tremendous impact on the success of students in the school and that principal turnover has a negative impact on student outcomes & teacher retention. Could you please share data on principal turnover and moves between schools in ACPS?

Officer Note – We do not expect to get an answer to this question at this point, but may redirect to the school board if there is a related opportunity re: student achievement or teacher retention.

- Restroom Policy [Henley] – Does ACPS allow the implementation of restroom policies such as the "10/10" rule?

Officer Note – We advise redirecting this question to the Student Health Advisory Board with specific example... after discussing with the school principal, of course.

- Attendance [Woodbrook] – I have a lot of tension around absences. We are at 12 and after 10, we have to get doc appointments. If they could have a way to support students home sick with contagious grossness, it would make a huge difference to helping students stay on top of work while also not spreading germs at school. Not every sickness requires a doctors visit, nor does every parent have health insurance or the ability to take off work to take them. [Officer question] Family Council was told previously that doctor notes may be required by a school after 10 absences, but also that medical care is a major equity concern with limited access for many families. Does ACPS create a Health Care Plan for families struggling and/or provide support for families required to get doctor notes?

Officer Note – We assume that the lack of response is a “no”, but will bring this up to the School Health Advisory Board.

- Attendance [WAHS] – ACPS school board policy (JED-AP:F) refers to an appeal process for “Attendance Recovery” and Credit Recovery (IKFD), but we can’t find any information. Could you please share whatever division-level form exists, or better yet create a Google Form that is easily accessible to families who may not feel comfortable meeting with the school principal or are unable to arrange a meeting (e.g., work hours, power dynamics, language, etc)?

Officer Note – We remain puzzled by the lack of public access and are continuing to follow up for equitable solutions.

- Transportation [Crozet] – Why not create snow emergency stops... so those that live in areas that are more likely to be impacted, still may have a way to get to school if their parents can get them to that point?

Officer Note [original submission to ACPS] – Should this parent be interested in understanding the details of the previous plan noted below, who should she contact? We do note that practices have changed due to driver shortages, and now require more parents to drive students to a bus stop... and as the parent mentions, chronic absenteeism trade-off.

Why can't the school division require parents who live on unpaved roads to bring their children out to the main roads for bus travel to school?

A plan similar to this was in place for several years. However, repeated public concerns were raised in each instance of implementation. As a result, the plan was subsequently abandoned. The biggest objection to the plan stemmed from the necessity for constantly modifying those roads to be served. Seldom were all the roads previously identified for service under the plan, actually usable. The size and severity of the storm, the storm's eventual track, and the snow removal efforts by VDOT did not always facilitate service to pre-identified roads and areas of service.

Officer Note – The no-answer wasn’t a “no”, so if you’d like to pursue individually, we suggest contacting your school board member and/or head of ACPS transportation Jamie Gellner.