



Alexandria City Public Schools

School Board Election Cycle, Terms and Composition

School Board Work Session
December 13, 2022





School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Current Framework

- 3-year term begins January 1 following November election
- 9 Board Members, 3 districts (A, B, C), each electing 3 members
- Board Members serve concurrent terms
- Board terms coincide with City Council terms
- 1994: First ACPS elected board. Previously appointed by Council.
- 2012: Elections transitioned from May to November
- Next election: November 2024



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Legal Basis

I. Code of Virginia

- Cities and counties have different legal standards.
- Elected vs. appointed School Boards have different legal standards.

§§ 22.1-57.3, 24.2-222, 24.2-223: Elected School Boards (Cities)

- Elections coincide with governing body's elections
- School Board term = governing body's term (1-4 years)
- School Board terms of office defined by City Charter
- Board Member terms staggered only if governing body's terms staggered
- Exceptions have been granted for several counties

II. City of Alexandria Charter

§§ 3.01, 10.01, 15.10: Council and School Board Elections

- 3-year concurrent terms for Council Members and Mayor
- City Council elections held in November 2015; every 3 years thereafter
- School Board elections held every 3 years; coincide with Council elections



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Legal Basis

Code of Virginia – Exceptions for certain School Boards

§ 22.1-57.3:1

The school boards of Bath, Pulaski, and Rockbridge Counties shall be elected as provided in § 22.1-57.3 except that all members shall be elected for four-year terms and the school board elections shall alternate biennially between the election of three members and the election of the remaining two members to ensure staggered terms.



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Legal Basis

Code of Virginia – Exceptions for certain School Boards

§ 22.1-57.3:1.1

The school board of Loudoun County shall be elected as provided in § 22.1-57.3, except that upon a majority vote of its members the terms of school board members may be staggered as provided in this section. At the November election immediately preceding the end of the board's term, and upon the board's prior vote for staggered terms, the members from four of the nine districts, inclusive of the at-large district, to be determined by lot by the electoral board of the county prior to its meeting immediately preceding the deadline for candidate filing, shall be elected for four-year terms, and the remaining districts' successful candidates shall be elected for two-year terms. Thereafter, all members shall be elected for four-year terms, and the school board elections shall be conducted biennially for staggered terms.



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Legal Basis

Code of Virginia – Exceptions for certain School Boards

§ 22.1-57.3:1.2

The school board of Pittsylvania County shall be elected as provided in § 22.1-57.3, except that all members shall be elected for four-year terms and the school board elections shall alternate biennially between the election of the members from four districts and the election of the members from the remaining three districts to ensure staggered terms.



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Comparison of Local Jurisdictions

School Board	Arlington County	Fairfax County	Falls Church City	ACPS
Term	4	4	4	3
Staggered/ Concurrent	Staggered	Concurrent	Staggered	Concurrent
Election Cycle:	1 st Year : 1 2 nd Year: 1 3 rd Year: 2 4 th Year: 1	Odd years preceding presidential elections	1 st Year: 4 3 rd Year: 3 (Every 2 years in odd years)	Every 3 years, beginning in Nov. 2012

- Statewide:**
- Approximately 2/3 of School Boards serve staggered terms.
 - Only 3 city School Boards in Virginia serve concurrent terms.
 - 121 School Boards serve 4-year terms.
 - 14 School Boards serve 3-year terms.
 - 1 School Board serves a 2-year term.



INNOVATIVE

ACPS School Board Election History and Change in Superintendency

Year	Term	New Members	Change in Superintendent During Term	Months between Inauguration and Change in Superintendency
1994	1994-1997	6	Yes	-23 (days)
1997	1997-2000	4	No	
2000	2000-2003	2	Yes	14.2
2003	2003-2006	5	No	
2006	2006-2009	8	Yes	10.7
2009	2009-2012	3	No	
2012	2013-2015	7	Yes	7.9
2015	2016-2018	5	Yes	16.4
2018	2019-2021	5	No	
2021	2022-2024	6	Yes	5.2



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Transition Benefits

ACPS Data

- Since 1997, on average **five** (56%) School Board seats have changed each election cycle.
- In the 28-year period since switching to an elected School Board, ACPS has seen **six** Superintendents resign with interim Superintendents filling time in between.
- On average in ACPS, Superintendents resign **nine months** after a new School Board takes office (range = -23 days to 16 months).
- Since 1994, four of the five superintendents left when the School Board turnover was **five or more members**.
- On average, the tenure of a Superintendent since 1994 when Alexandria switched to elected School Boards is **5 years** (range = 3-7 years). This is a **2.75 year decline** from the tenure of ACPS Superintendents from 1963-1994 (range 3-14 years).



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Transition Benefits

Benefits of Staggered and Extended Terms:

- Ensures retention of institutional knowledge as a continuing body by avoiding large-scale turnover
- Ensures **continuity of policy** instead of frequent changes in focus
- Members have more time to gain **experience** before running for reelection
- Allows voters to **focus** on local issues/schools more frequently
- Increased voter **interest**: allows voters to focus on fewer candidates/election
- Members **better able to serve** public/constituents
- Good government practices: more **effective** and more **efficient**
- Non-partisan
- Improved relationship with the Superintendent



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Transition Drawbacks

Potential Drawbacks:

- Voters must **wait longer** to change direction of elected body's policies/priorities if desired
- May be easier for organized groups to **oppose** individual candidates



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Governance Changes

Requirements:

- City Charter amendment with staggered 4-year terms for the School Board:
 - Initiated by Council
 - **Applies to School Board, not the City Council**
 - Amendments to City Charter approved by General Assembly
- Code of Virginia amendment with staggered 4-year terms for the School Board:
 - Initiated by Alexandria Representative
 - **Applies to School Board, not the City Council**
 - Amendments to the Code of Virginia approved by General Assembly



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Process

Process:

- 2023
 - Establish desired changes
 - Stakeholder listening and feedback
 - School board passes a resolution with desired changes
 - Council holds hearings on city charter change
 - Update the Alexandria City Charter
 - Collaborate with City Council on a joint request for Code of Virginia amendments
- 2024
 - Code of Virginia changes
 - Exception for Alexandria City School Board
 - November election of all School Board Members (current schedule) with staggered terms starting in future years depending on model.



Possible Models

3-year term options:

A. One district up for election every year

2024: Election (all members are up for election)

2025: First district up for election (selected randomly by the registrar prior to the 2024 election)

2026: Second district up for election

2027: Third district up for election

2028: First district back up for election

B. One person up in each district each year

2024: Election (all members are up for election)

2025: Person with the lowest voter count from the 2024 runs in A, B, and C

2026: Person with the second lowest voter count from 2024 runs in A, B, and C

2027: Person with the top voter count from 2024 runs in A, B, and C

In the event of a tie within a district, order would be determined by the registrar.



Possible Models

4-year term staggered option:

2024: Election

2025: No election

2026: First district up for election (selected at random by the registrar prior to the 2024 election)

2027: Second district up for election

2028: Third district up for election

2029: No election

2030: Rotation starts again



Possible Models

At-large options for 4-year terms:

A. Reduce the size of board to 7 members and have 2 per district and 1 at large.

2024: Election (all members are up for election) - 2 in each district and 1 at large person.

2025: First district up for election (selected randomly by the registrar prior to the 2024 election)

2026: Second district up for election

2027: Third district up for election

2028: At-large position up for election

2029: Rotation starts



Possible Models

At-large options for 4-year terms:

B. Maintain 9 members and have 2 per district and 3 at large positions

2024: Election (all members are up for election) - 2 in each district and 3 at large positions.

2025: First district up for election (selected randomly by the registrar prior to the 2024 election)

2026: Second district up for election

2027: Third district up for election

2028: At-large positions up for election

2029: Rotation starts



Possible Models

All At-Large Positions

C. Move all positions to at-large

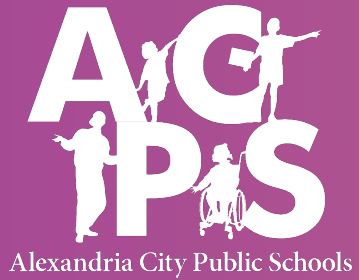
2024: Election (all members are up for election)

2025: No election

2026: 5 members up for election (selected randomly by the registrar)

2027: No election

2028: Remaining 4 members up for election



Questions?

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