

2021-22

# School and Community Relations Annual Report

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## Introduction

In July 2020, as part of the superintendent's reorganization of the Senior Leadership Team, the Department of School and Community Relations (SCR) was created with the charge to fulfill ACPS' promise of instructional excellence while simultaneously taking into account equity for all. This charge includes effective and transparent communications and outreach to ensure that students, families and staff feel valued, heard and empowered through every step of their child's academic journey at ACPS. In an effort to fulfill that promise and elevate the importance of communications in the successful operation of the school division, the department brought together two vital components under one team: the Office of Communications and the Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement, led by the newly created cabinet-level positions of school and community relations

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chief (Julia Burgos), executive director of communications (Kathy Mimberg) and executive director of community partnerships and engagement (Kurt Huffman).

## **Background**

Together with dedicated professionals in the various areas outlined in this report, SCR has aligned its work to the four strategic plan goals most closely affiliated to the 2021-25 ACPS Strategic Communications and Community Engagement Plan supported by the School Board.

Representing SCR's first annual report, these pages are a compilation of visual snapshots depicting just a small sampling of the work that each team member has accomplished in the 2021-22 school year. The individual snapshots inform stakeholders of the various projects the two SCR offices have engaged in and facilitated and/or implemented throughout the year as the department strived to align its efforts with the department strategic communications and community engagement plan. Strategies relating to the work are clearly stated in each snapshot, in addition to a brief summary and the inclusion of what is referenced to as a "deeper dive," which provides a closer look at and understanding of a particular team's accomplishment and focus in 2021-22.

## **Conclusion**

We would be remiss if we did not highlight our hand holders — this section of each snapshot is where we acknowledge, recognize and thank the many internal and external partners with whom we collaborated to bring the broad spectrum of SCR projects to fruition. It is our hope that this visual recap of SCR accomplishments presents readers with a welcomed opportunity to become more familiar with the many and diverse ways SCR supports the ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan: Equity For All and its five core values that ensure ACPS is a Welcoming, Empowering, Equity-Focused, Innovative and Results-Driven school division.

# 2021-22 SCR ANNUAL REPORT

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### **2021-22 DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM MEMBERS**

Julia A. Burgos, Kurt Huffman, Kathy Mimberg, Taneika Tukan, Gladis Bourdouane, Lizette Torres, Tesfaye Amberer, Nassiba Benghanem, Alexandra Bourdouane, Cindy Centeno, Gustavo Decker, Jessica Deleon, Jaclyn Goddette, Claire Going, Angela Houghton, Tamiko Hudson, Bryanna Johnson, Barbara Kusak, Krishna Leyva, Marisol Morales, Kevin Morse, Adriana Olguin Alcala, Daniela Perez-Bravo, John Porter, Karina Ramos, Dawud Rawlings, Linda Rodriguez, Shanna Samson, Susan Thomas Hale, Gregory Tardieu, Jasmine Washington-Price, Avanda Williams-White

### **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS CONTACT INFORMATION**

1340 Braddock Place, Suite 610, 6th Fl., Alexandria, VA 22314

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Communications



## Alignment

- ★ **Strategy Number One:** Building, strengthening and systematizing communications in schools and departments.
- ★ **Strategy Number Two:** Reorganize the Department of School and Community Relations.
- ★ **Strategy Number Three:** Streamline all ACPS communications channels to better serve internal and external audiences.
- ★ **Strategy Number Five:** Develop rich, compelling and diverse stories showcased in multimedia formats that cast our students, staff and programs as the main characters with ACPS in the supporting role and build upon the ACPS brand.
- ★ **Strategy Number Six:** Design a media relations strategy to support storytelling, deliver timely key messages and utilize a proactive approach to sharing newsworthy information.
- ★ **Strategy Number Seven:** Establish a customer service system that provides consistent messaging across multiple channels.
- ★ **Strategy Number Eight:** Increase visibility by expanding intentional use of grassroots communications.



## Hand Holders

Thank you to ACPS students, staff and leadership for a successful year of communications and engagement with ACPS' community of internal and external stakeholders.

## Communications

Provides counsel, training and support to administration and schools on best practices in communication and assists in their implementation.

Creates and develops effective communications plans and strategies to support student achievement and community and family engagement, in alignment with school board priorities and the ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan: Equity for All.

Shares ACPS stories that demonstrate its mission and vision via a multitude of intuitive and user-friendly digital communication channels including email, weekly newsletters (*ACPS Express, Insider*), website, social media, webinars and professionally produced photos and videos.

Oversees that all content shared across social media platforms is presented in an appropriate, appealing and informative manner.

Responds and manages the flow of information communicated on a daily basis and during crisis situations, in collaboration with departments and safety and security personnel when necessary.

Prepares leadership and staff for interviews and speaking opportunities at public events.

Responds to media inquiries from local and national newspapers, television and radio stations.

Seeks, pitches and develops materials for interesting stories that highlight ACPS students and staff at work exemplifying ACPS core values of a welcoming, equity-focused and empowering school system.

Builds upon existing communication channels with English and non-English speaking families and community members to enhance engagement with ACPS and promote the growth of trusted relationships which instill confidence and credibility in the information shared.

Seeks opportunities to continually improve communication strategies that will encourage interactive and engaging interactions with all members of the diverse ACPS community.

Provides audio/visual support to schools, departments, School Board meetings and work sessions, as well as supports live streaming functions.

Facilitates and manages the implementation and logistics of various division-wide events, community meetings, VIP visits and budget forums throughout the year.

Manages and ensures all major communications are available in multiple languages, reflective of the ACPS community demographics, for the division and individual school websites in compliance with Federal Accessibility Guidelines and in accordance with ACPS' commitment to equity for all.



## Deeper Dive

As a result of our collaborative efforts, ACPS received 8 nationally recognized awards for its 2021-22 work projects.

- NSBA MAGNA AWARD
- 2 NSPRA GOLDEN ACHIEVEMENT
- 2 NSPRA MERIT
- 2 NSPRA EXCELLENCE
- 1 NSPRA HONORABLE MENTION





## Alignment

- ★ **Strategy Number Seven:** Establish a customer service system that provides consistent messaging across multiple channels.
- ★ **Strategy Number Eight:** Increase visibility by expanding intentional use of grassroots communications.
- ★ **Strategy Number Three:** Streamline all ACPS communications channels to better serve internal and external audiences.
- ★ **Strategy Number Fifteen:** Create and Implement new Family Engagement programs/initiatives that will fill information gaps and provide relevant information and strategies to help them navigate ACPS resources



## Hand Holders



# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement

### Community Outreach

We support the sense of community and trust among ACPS stakeholders by ensuring seamless access to information about division resources/initiatives and by increasing the division’s visibility across Alexandria City. Efforts rested in ensuring division messages reached the diverse segments of our community through direct outreach with Blackboard Connect and through facilitated two-way communication (COVID-19 Info Helpline, Ask ACPS, Direct Response, ACPS en Espanol via Facebook and ParentSquare). The gradual return to in-person activities over the course of the year enabled the team to participate in nearly 30 community events and campaigns, helping families connect to PowerSchool and strengthening relationships with families and partners outside of our school buildings. The unique hybrid environment in which the division operated also presented several opportunities for our team to coordinate virtual events with internal and external stakeholders. These in-person and virtual activities were complemented by two grassroots outreach campaigns – Vaccine Ambassadors and Simply the Best.

Want To Learn More? Contact: [Taneika.tukan@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Taneika.tukan@acps.k12.va.us)



### Deeper Dive - ASK ACPS

Ask ACPS, the division’s customer relations management system, was launched in October 2021 to help make it easy for families, students, staff and community members to engage with ACPS leadership on a range of division-wide issues. Since then, **450+ inquiries of varying complexities have been fielded by our community engagement team.** Asking questions and sharing feedback are signs of engaged families and staff and great schools. So, we are excited to engage stakeholders through this platform and continue working to promote its purpose so that it is widely known and used as a trusted resource.





## Alignment

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Communications

### Digital Communications

Manages divisionwide social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and meets regularly to determine content.

Promotes many ways for families to communicate with ACPS, including "Ask@ACPS" and Language Line Direct Response.

Shares messages from the superintendent to staff and community.

Redeveloped format for ACPS Express and Insider newsletters to share important updates and good-news stories with our stakeholders.

Launched superintendent's podcast, "Unapologetic Talk with the Supe," to explore issues of racial equity in education with the ACPS community.

Supports divisionwide surveys and ACPS recognitions, as well as shares stories from our newsletters on social media.

Re-expanded the role of social liaisons as "PR liaisons" to encourage sharing of stories, events, activities, photos for use in media outreach, newsletter publications and the website.

Provides schools and departments with tools and resources for consistent, efficient communications across the school division.

★ **Strategy Number One:** Building, strengthening and systematizing communications in schools and departments.

★ **Strategy Number Three:** Streamline all ACPS communications channels to better serve internal and external audiences.

★ **Strategy Number Five:** Develop rich, compelling and diverse stories showcased in multimedia formats that cast our students, staff and programs as the main characters with ACPS in the supporting role and build upon the ACPS brand.

★ **Strategy Number Six:** Design a media relations strategy to support storytelling, deliver timely key messages and utilize a proactive approach to sharing newsworthy information.

★ **Strategy Number Eight:** Increase visibility by expanding intentional use of grassroots communications.

## Hand Holders

## Deeper Dive



School PR Liaisons  
Senior Leadership  
Team

PLATFORM	TWEETS /POST	IMPRESSIONS	ENGAGEMENT	NEW	AVERAGE
Twitter	588	1.82 million	29,160	1243	+50
Facebook	716	1.64 million	129,176	617	+444
Instagram	300	301,305	14,711	472	+48

Statistics from time period of: **Aug. 24, 2021 to June 10, 2022**

**Impressions:** the number of times tweets, posts or stories were viewed

**Engagement:** the number of times users liked, commented, shared or interacted

**New:** the number of fans/followers lost or gained since last period



## Alignment

★ **Strategy Goal 5:** Building infrastructure systems and educator capacity for collaborating with families to bridge the divide and create equitable, productive relationships in schools and Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Community sites

★ **Strategy 15:** Create and Implement new Family Engagement programs/initiatives that will fill information gaps and provide relevant information and strategies to help them navigate ACPS resources.

★ **Strategy 17:** Conduct home visits to strengthen parent-family-school relationships and provide training on advocacy in the school setting.

★ **Strategy 18:** Provide professional learning and training for teachers, family-facing staff and school leaders to build systemic family engagement in all schools: Capacity Building for Staff & Families.



## Hand Holders



# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement

### FACE (Family Engagement)

The ACPS Family and Community Engagement team (FACE) provides meaningful opportunities and resources for all families and staff to work together as partners in education. FACE supports schools, staff, and community partners in the development of equitable practices linked to learning that support academic achievement, championing two-way communication between families and schools, and facilitating volunteerism and advocacy that promotes student learning.

FACE is also responsible for developing programs and strategies to support the meaningful division-wide engagement of families and community stakeholders. At the core of our work is expanding the capacity of schools, community-based organizations, and families to work together to create family-school partnerships that support students' academic success and social-emotional development. Our staff serves as cultural brokers and connectors to welcome all families and assist them in navigating the school system to support their students at home, at school, and community.

Want To Learn More?

Contact

[Krishna.levya@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Krishna.levya@acps.k12.va.us)



### Deeper Dive # of Bilingual FACE Support Calls

# 1,429

In alignment with the identified action step to support families through regular contact, meetings at school/community sites and phone calls, the FACE team connected with families through 1,429 personal bilingual phone calls to provide support and information. In addition, the FACE center served 2,543 adults through events, meetings and professional learning opportunities during the year.





## Alignment

**Strategy 9:** Work with ACPS building and department leadership, higher education, city and nonprofit partners to address the health, social service and academic needs of students and their families.

**Strategy 11:** Improve alignment and communications and increase opportunities between out-of-school-time program activities and state learning standards to support the academic success of ACPS' most vulnerable students.

**Strategy 13:** Support teachers, departments and community partners/members in acquiring grants and community funding for unmet student needs.



## Hand Holders

Although all internal departments support the grant process in various ways, the following are frequent hand holders for the grants team:

Finance works with the grants team for all realignments needed in order to ensure guidelines and requirements of the ESSER grants.

Community Partnerships and Engagement team worked together on the action plans, forms and internal communication regarding all grants.

HR and position control assist greatly with the information of newly funded grant positions by informing at the exact moment positions are requested.

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement

### GRANTS

- Develop formal agreement process from initiation through execution.
- Maintain and share internal ACPS partner database information.
- Utilize additional grant funds to pilot project-based, experiential curriculum/activities.
- Strategically collaborate with ACPS departments by identifying and applying for grant opportunities.
- Meet with community partners to provide grant application expertise and serve as liaison for grant identification opportunities using Ecivis software for monthly email outreach.
- Facilitate Donor's Choose opportunities and provide data and information to ACPS staff.
- Support the newly acquired ACPS federal grants.

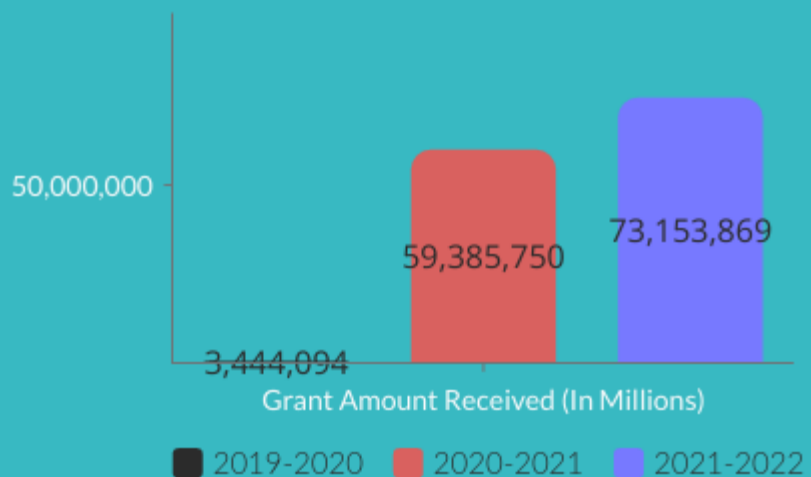
Want To Learn More?

Contact: [Gregory.Tardieu@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Gregory.Tardieu@acps.k12.va.us)



## Deeper Dive

### GRANT SUPPORT FUNDING







## Alignment

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

Office of Communications



### Strategy Number One:

Building, strengthening and systematizing communications in schools and departments.



### Strategy Number Three:

Streamline all ACPS communications channels to better serve internal and external audiences.



**Strategy Number Six:** Design a media relations strategy to support storytelling, deliver timely key messages and utilize a proactive approach to sharing newsworthy information.

## Media Relations

Develops and disseminates clear, concise and timely messages that reach and inform target audiences and align with the ACPS brand and strategic plan.

Leverages *Alexandria Times* op-eds to share pertinent information with Alexandria community.

Builds trust and strong relationships with reporters and correspondents with local, regional, national and industry-specific media.

Identifies, crafts and pitches storylines that resonate strongly with media outlets and ensures messaging is being shared with a wider audience.

Responds to media inquiries in a timely and organized method through collaborative work with content leaders.

Utilizes the media database system *Cision* to its fullest potential to reach all media reporters to pitch stories and track media mentions more thoroughly.

Shares media coverage with senior leadership team and School Board through weekly news media round-up newsletters.

## Hand Holders



Department content leaders, Network of local, regional and national media contacts



## Deeper Dive

### Media Inquiries

252 requests  
2679 total mentions

### Media Requests

April - 10 of 12 fulfilled  
May - 9 of 9 fulfilled  
June - 14 of 17 fulfilled

### Media Events

(1) High School Graduation



## Alignment

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Communications

### Multimedia Communications

**Strategy Number One:** Building, strengthening and systematizing communications in schools and departments.

**Strategy Number Three:** Streamline all ACPS communications channels to better serve internal and external audiences.

**Strategy Number Five:** Develop rich, compelling and diverse stories showcased in multimedia formats that cast our students, staff and programs as the main characters with ACPS in the supporting role and build upon the ACPS brand.

**Strategy Number Six:** Design a media relations strategy to support storytelling, deliver timely key messages and utilize a proactive approach to sharing newsworthy information.

**Strategy Number Eight:** Increase visibility by expanding intentional use of grassroots communications.

Continue working to make it easier for stakeholders, especially underrepresented populations, to engage with ACPS on division-wide issues that are important for all students and the future of the school division.

Connected directly with 90% of students, families and staff through new and streamlined communications channels that provide timely, relevant and transparent communications.

Provided training for school-based staff including photo training and tip sheet for PR liaisons and best practices for web content editors.

Implemented a new brand campaign of “Simply the Best” to promote ACPS’ instructional best practices and student and staff achievements through regular posts across channels.

Developed a new ACPS website that launched on July 1, 2022.

## Hand Holders



Tech Services,  
ACHS Audio Visual  
Studio

## Deeper Dive

### Top ACPS Video Releases

Video Title: Welcome Back!  
Date Created: 8/18/21  
Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/589083513>  
Video Plays: 1,011

Video Title: ACPS Staff Health & Safety Measures  
Date Created: 8/18/21  
Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/589022568>  
Video Plays: 969

Video Title: ACPS Teacher Appreciation  
Date Created: 5/4/22  
Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/706137908>  
Video Plays: 476

Video Title: Are you Ready for Winter Break?  
Date Created: 12/16/21  
Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/657482603>  
Video Plays: 404



# Alignment

★ **Strategy Number 11:** Improve alignment and communications and increase opportunities between out-of-school-time program activities and state learning standards to support the academic success of ACPS' most vulnerable students.

★ **Strategy 12:** Develop a sustainability plan to supplement 21st CCLC programming requirements.



## Hand Holders

To ensure success of the program, all internal departments and many community partners provide essential support and hand holding. Below are just a few of the examples:

Family and Community Engagement (FACE) collaborates with LINK Club to implement culturally competent practices to connect with families of the participating students.

Community Outreach helps to set up language specific email and text lists for culturally-responsive outreach.

Teaching, Learning and Leadership supports site and grade-specific curriculum development, identification, implementation and training of teachers.

School principals and administrative teams serve as collaborators in managing logistics and ensuring quality services for students.

Student Services supports RULER Club implementation and training of teachers/staff in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and restorative practices.

Nutrition Service helps to counter food shortage by providing nutritious snacks and dinner at LINK Club sites.

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement

# OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMMING

As part of ACPS out of school time programming, LINK Club is ACPS' afterschool program designed to provide high-quality after-school services with an emphasis on academic support, enrichment, social-emotional support and family engagement to our division's most vulnerable students and their families. LINK Club operates Monday-Friday between the critical hours of 3 p.m.-6 p.m. when many families are still at work and students are unsupervised.

Over 800 students are served annually at LINK Club sites located across Alexandria at Title I schools or at community sites located in high-need communities. LINK Club is made possible through federal, state and local grants and in collaboration with the City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Homes for America and Community Lodgings, Inc.

Want To Learn More?

Contact: [Marisol.Morales@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Marisol.Morales@acps.k12.va.us)



## Deeper Dive

### LINK CLUB # of Students Served



FTD	100	FCH	100
JH	75	ARHA/Ruby Tucker	15
Brent Place	40	Community Lodgings	90
PH	30	NEW for 2022-CK	90
NEW for 2022-JA	75	NEW for 2022-WR	90
NEW for 2022-GW	90		





## Alignment

★ **Strategy 9:** Work with ACPS building and department leadership, higher education, city and nonprofit partners to address the health, social service and academic needs of students and their families.



## Hand Holders

For a successful partnership program to reach its highest potential, it takes a collective collaboration with multiple internal and external stakeholders. This includes various ACPS departments, all school building leadership and staff, other community partners and city organizations.

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

## Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement

### Partnerships

As part of its charge, the Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement continues to focus on building and strengthening broad-based, innovative partnerships that strengthen all ACPS students' education. Through these partnerships, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) inspires civic engagement in students and encourages lifelong learners. This commitment to building strong partnerships has resulted in being able to provide the ACPS educational community with the supplemental resources and high-impact support needed, even through the past and current pandemic challenges. In alignment with our goal of continuous improvement and best practices, we are exploring and implementing strategies and tactics that will provide additional clarity for our partners, community, schools and departments.

Want To Learn More?

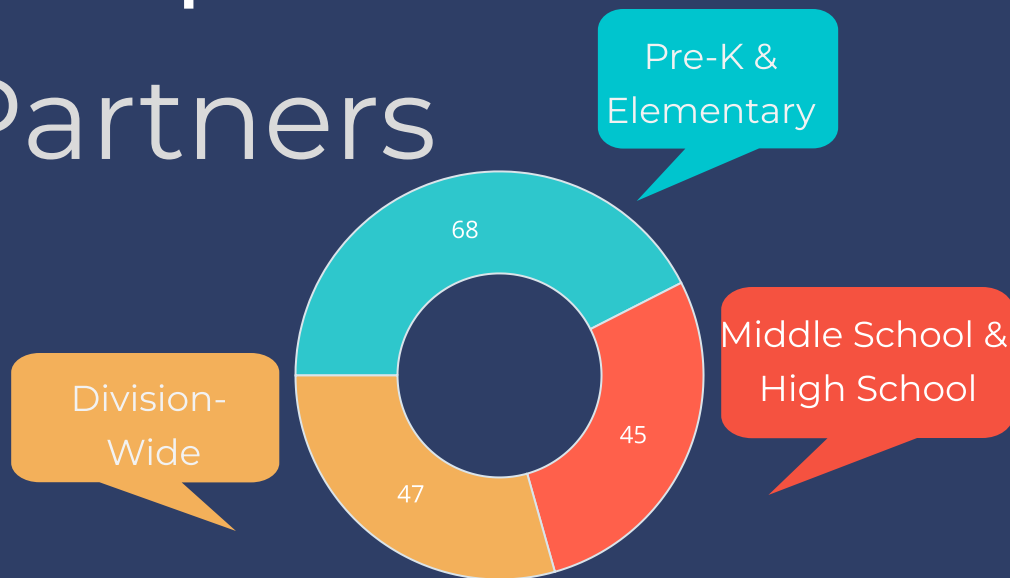
Contact: [Kurt.huffman@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Kurt.huffman@acps.k12.va.us)



## Deeper Dive

# 160 Partners

ACPS supports our students, staff, families and community through 160 small and large scale community and national partners.





## Alignment

**★ Strategy Number 10:**  
Provide support and foster growth of the ACPS volunteer program to ensure high levels of community volunteer engagement.



## Hand Holders

The volunteer program at ACPS relies on having strong relationships with internal building leadership, family liaisons and aligned staff along with external community partners. Our strong relationship with other volunteer organizations, such as Volunteer Alexandria, provide a collaborative approach to meet our volunteer goals.

# ACPS School and Community Relations Department

Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement

## Volunteers

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) encourages and welcomes volunteers in our schools. We invite parents, families, community members, and our many partners to get involved and support students throughout the year. Our volunteer activities vary from school to school, and volunteers can get involved and make a difference by helping with a wide variety of activities. We provide outreach support through the application process and alignment with current division needs for our potential volunteers.

Want To Learn More?

Contact: [Angela.houghton@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Angela.houghton@acps.k12.va.us)



## Deeper Dive Volunteers



18,000

Current approved volunteers in Alexandria City Public Schools