



# Strategic Plan Update

*February 17, 2023*

***Department of School & Community Relations***

*Julia Burgos, Chief of School & Community Relations*

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WELCOMING

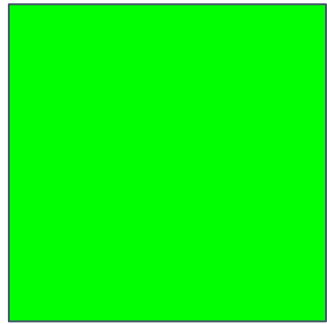
# Introduction

- This report provides highlights and progress towards the School & Community Relations Team's 2021-25 Strategic Communications & Community Engagement Plan.
- Each strategy from the plan is included in this report with details and milestones in completing the plan.

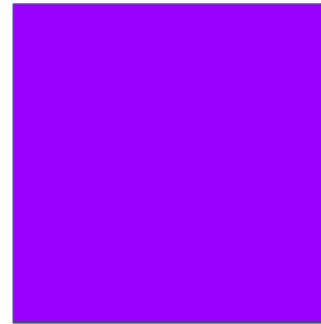


# Color Code Key to Status Updates

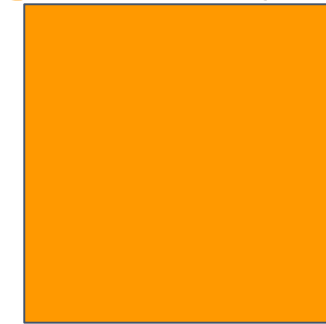
**Green** = Completed



**Purple** = In progress



**Orange** = Not yet started



**COMPLETE**  
**YET STARTED**

**IN PROGRESS**

**NOT**

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

**Strategy 2 - Reorganize the Department of School and Community Relations.**



## 1. Building, strengthening and standardizing communications in schools and departments.

- Held Listening Tours with all schools and departments to learn and be able to tailor communications to their needs.
- Built a library of template messages for faster delivery of pertinent information to families when incidents take place at schools.
- Supporting schools with family communications and media inquiries.
- Conducted media training for principals and senior leadership team.
- Standardized the format for school leadership bios.
- Providing professional, consistent portraits of all ACPS leadership for use on website and other materials on a quarterly basis.
- Use weekly Teaching, Learning and Leadership (TLL) department outreach tool to regularly share current communications updates with school administrators.



## 1. Building, strengthening and standardizing communications in schools and departments.

- Developed branding for ACPS Equity Climate Survey and use all communication channels to encourage stakeholder participation.
- Highlighting school and student successes throughout the year in the annual Measuring What Matters publication.
- Strengthening the school PR liaison program:
  - Provide ongoing training on social media guidelines, capturing photos, student privacy standards
  - Send detailed weekly guidance on opportunities to highlight school news
  - Broadening scope, beyond social media, to include news media
- Revitalized web liaison program by providing training and virtual office hours.
- Created checklists and processes for all functions to establish a Standard Operating Procedures manual for the Office of Communications.



## 2. Reorganize the Department of Schools and Community Relations.

### Office of Communications/Community Partnerships and Engagement

- Updated staff titles to more clearly reflect roles and responsibilities.
- Wrote or revised job descriptions for each position.
- Establishing a pool of vendors for broadcast of School Board meetings and other a/v services across the division.
- Created and filled new assistant director of communications position.
- Used ESSER funds and developed job descriptions for eight granted positions:
  - COVID Public Information Manager
  - Internal Communications Specialist
  - Video Production Specialist
  - Division Wide Family Liaison- Spanish Bi-Lingual
  - Welcome Center/Administrative Assistant
  - LINK Club Out of School Time Manager
  - Out of School Time Data Analysis
  - ESSER Grants Coordinator and Specialist
- Restructured the reporting relationships of the communications team
  - Digital communications—web, social media, video
  - Content creation—media relations, writing, internal communications



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

- Launched a redesign of ACPS website for better visuals, improved navigation and accessibility, stronger translation and ease of maintenance.
  - Coordinated stakeholder engagement for input during the design phase
  - Collaborated closely with vendor for design, style, features unique to ACPS
  - Partnered with schools and departments to update and migrate content
- Redesigned the ACPS Express and Insider newsletters.
- Transitioned monthly superintendent's written message to the monthly "Supe's Spotlight" video.
- Shifted media database contract to a new vendor for better organization of media lists, distribution of materials and news coverage analytics.



### 3. Streamline all ACPS communications channels to better serve internal and external audiences (cont.)

#### Office of Communications

- Developed tools and resources for improved internal collaboration with departments and schools, to enhance communications supports:
  - Year-round communications calendar with recognitions, events, announcements
  - Weekly editorial calendar and team meetings
  - Video production calendar and video plan template
  - Communications project request form
  - Revised emergency communications plan
  - Media tracking spreadsheet and quarterly reports on news coverage
- Establishing relationships and communicate regularly with communications team liaisons for Alexandria Police Department, Alexandria Fire Department and City of Alexandria.
- Standardized media relations process and broaden outreach to reporters.





### 3. Streamline all ACPS communications channels to better serve internal and external audiences (cont.)

- Emphasized core values on the ACPS website and standardize presentations division-wide with Powerpoint template designed to showcase ACPS strategic plan.
- Improved School Board meeting production services and audio/visual (A/V) services:
  - Standardized and documented procedures and best practices for these services
  - Collaborating with multi-media technicians and service vendor to ensure streamlined procedures for livestream, captioning and broadcast of Board meetings
  - Discarded outdated and obsolete TV studio equipment
  - Establishing an inventory structure for current and new A/V equipment
  - Auditing A/V equipment in schools and replace old equipment as needed
- Establishing a digital asset management system to improve use of photos and videos in all communication channels.
- Supported the implementation of ParentSquare platform at all schools, with 11 out of the 14 platform features in use and communications being delivered in 10+ languages.



4. Develop a plan to establish an internal communications structure that includes professional learning opportunities for staff that incorporates a communications and family and community engagement lens.

- Hired and onboarded an internal communications specialist.
- Held initial meetings with directors in HR, Finance, Tech Services and developed calendar of regular internal communication needs.
- Increased the number of distinct stories in ACPS Insider newsletter.
- Developing an internal communications plan to include intranet, texting, onboarding and more.
- Developed plan for intranet process w department liaisons.
- Assisting HR in reorganizing and planning the 2022-23 ACPS VIP employee recognition awards that are conducted quarterly.



## 5. Develop rich, compelling and diverse stories showcased in multimedia formats.

- Developed a yearly video production schedule to promote major initiatives and highlight monthly recognitions—ongoing.
- Develop video plans, scripts and storyboards for each video production.
- Developed criteria for captions and translations for video productions.
- Created a “Bright Spots, Glad Tidings and Good News Stories” submission form to highlight and recognize ACPS stories across the division using various platforms.
- Develop social media campaigns for major division-wide initiatives and monthly recognitions.
- Introduced an evaluation component for the school public relations liaison program, to further support their ongoing training and coaching.



## 6. Design a media relations strategy to support storytelling.

- Building relationships with local, regional and national news outlets.
- Managing communications with reporters in a timely, consistent manner and distribute press materials using targeted lists in media database system.
- Using consistent press release format and updated boilerplate.
- Established a review and approval process for press materials.
- Posting all ACPS press releases online for greater transparency.
- Holding school and community events with press attendance/news coverage:
  - Annual high school commencement ceremony
  - Annual first day of school press briefing
  - Alexandria Athletic Hall of Fame
  - Electric bus announcements
  - Mental health awareness with the Lyles Brothers Foundation
  - Ground-breaking for The High School Project
- Introduced interim superintendent with news coverage.



## 6. Design a media relations strategy to support storytelling (cont.).

- Strengthening relationships with local news outlets to share positive news about our schools, students and staff. Local news in The Alexandria Times, WJLA, FOX-5, WUSA-9, WTOP, Zebra Press, Patch.
- Featured in national news coverage and trade press: The Washington Post, Education Week, USA Today, NEA Today, Intl. Facilities Management.
- Expanding the reach of stories about ACPS schools, students, staff in the news:
  - Highlighting stories on new website
  - Sharing key stories via social media channels
  - Featuring new column in monthly *ACPS Insider* newsletter
  - Distributing news coverage to senior leadership team and School Board
- News media coverage from Aug. 24, 2021 through Sept. 30, 2022:
  - Media Inquiries: 371
  - Mentions: 3,822
  - 88-90% of news stories rated positive or neutral





## “Kids want to share”: Schools work to help students overcome mental health issues in the classroom

The U.S. Department of Education urges districts to utilize federal funding to support emotional well-being in schools.



EDUCATION

## Meet Alexandria City Public Schools' new interim superintendent



Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt will officially start her post, overseeing the education of 15,000 Alexandria students, on Sept. 1.

ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

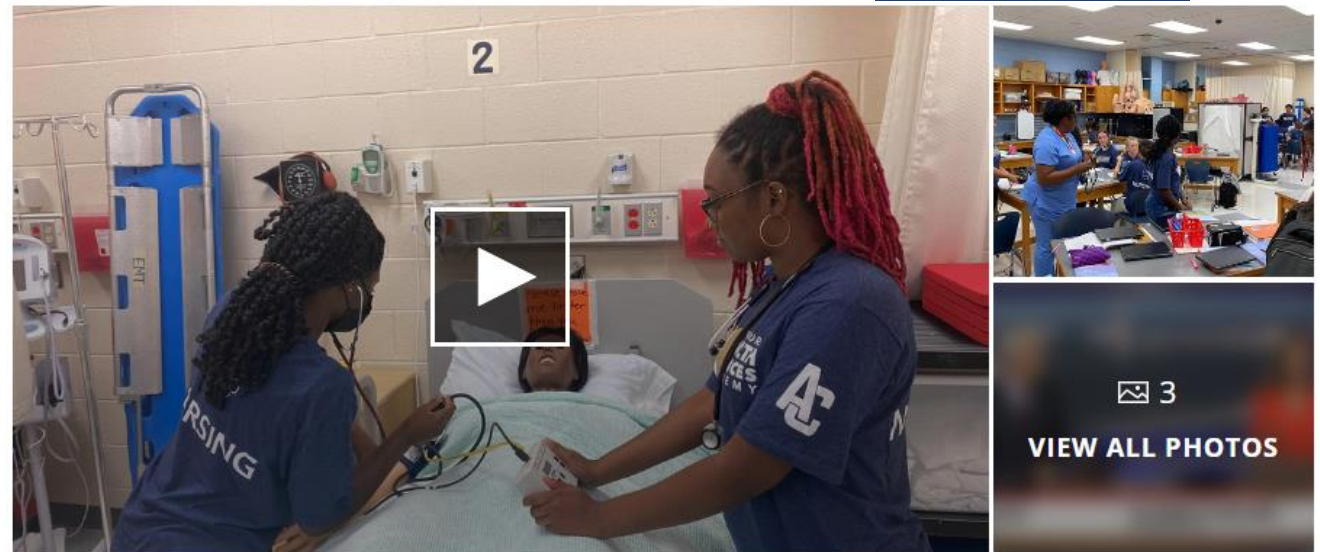
# ACPS school year begins

August 25, 2022



## Alexandria nurse aide program offers education and jobs for high school students

by Kim Jackson | Wednesday, September 14th 2022



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VIEW ALL PHOTOS

Alexandria City Public High students work on a mannequin, as part of their nurse aide training program. (7News)



## 7. Establish a customer relationship management system.

- Developed and maintain Ask ACPS platform to make it easier for families and community members to submit questions and comments on a range of division-wide issues and get a timely response. In Q1, stakeholders submitted 987 inquiries and comments to Ask ACPS primarily via email or webform.
- Maintain multilingual phone support for families through three bilingual family information lines staffed by FACE liaisons and staff.
- Promote Language Line Direct Response tool through distribution of beginning of school year materials and ongoing work of family liaisons.



## 8. Increase visibility by expanding intentional use of grassroots communication.

- Conducted outreach at 50+ targeted community events throughout the city of Alexandria and in alignment with special events, workshops and more at ACPS school buildings.
- Continue relationship-building with trusted community and cultural organizations including ALIVE, Casa and Communities in Schools.
- Created outreach tools and resources for PTAs, community organizations, faith-based organizations, neighborhood associations and realtors.
- Coordinated monthly “Simply the Best” presentations at School Board meetings to spotlight best practices/promising practices in place at each of our school buildings.
- Placing quarterly school profiles in Alexandria Times to spotlight best practices/promising practices in place at each of our school buildings.





## 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.

- Creation of an official ACPS online partnership portal to serve as an information connector for partners and ACPS including maintenance of database and web pages.
- Lead monthly Partnership Council meetings to discuss topics and current initiatives with ACPS.
- Conduct quarterly partnership relationship meetings with large scale partners to check implementation and progress of agreements and Memorandums of Understanding.
- Continue to develop formal agreement process from initiation through execution.
- Based on school improvement plans and reflection meetings, provide each school and department analysis and information of current and potential newly aligned partner opportunities.
- Advised new/existing partners to ensure their services appropriately align with the goals of ACPS.
- Connected partners to aligned school/department leadership through email and partner introduction meetings.



## 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.

- Scheduled and facilitated yearly check-ins with each official partner to reflect on current year and visionary planning for upcoming year.
- Continued to support various organizations and committees by attending meetings, being on agendas as needed and actively participating.
- Invite, through outreach, new partners to connect with ACPS through an updated partner information webpage.
- Provide quarterly achievement data reports to community partners.
- Maintain and share internal ACPS partner database information.
- Maintain and develop new partnerships with higher education universities. (e.g., George Washington-Governor's Health Science Academy, Virginia State-Teachers For Tomorrow, George Mason-Facility Student Intern Program, Virginia Tech-Innovation STEM programming)



## 10. Provide support and faster growth of the ACPS volunteer program to ensure high levels of community volunteer engagement.

- Provided clear volunteer application guidelines and updated volunteer opportunities through the ACPS volunteer webpage.
- Verify newly screened volunteers, conduct background checks and collect signed Code of Conduct forms.
- Facilitated monthly collaborative discussions with internal and external educational stakeholders, to identify outreach and volunteer engagement opportunities.
- Collaborated, through discussions and action planning, with Volunteer Alexandria to help identify and increase the effectiveness and diversity of community volunteers.
- Facilitated meetings each quarter with community partners regarding ACPS volunteer programs, processes and practices.
- Work with ACPS Technology and Health, Safety and Risk Management teams to provide support (resources, guides, information, tools) for staff and the community regarding the new Raptor volunteer system.
- Provide volunteer management training and ongoing support to school-based family liaisons.
- Create recruitment opportunities by working with family liaisons, school volunteer coordinators & administrators.
- Maintain all volunteer database entries and records.
- Continue to engage in a broad-based needs assessment to establish priorities for the division's volunteer needs.



## 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.

- Collaborate with the ACPS Office of School Improvement to identify specific reading and mathematics intervention strategies.
- Utilize additional grant funds to pilot project-based, experiential curriculum/activities.
- Coordinate with the Office of School Improvement, school administration and improvement coaches to assess 21st CCLC program learning needs and accomplishments quarterly.
- Ensure 21st CCLC teachers utilize students' WIDA tests scores and IEPs at a Glance to individualize support for the students.
- Developed a monitoring form to be used by 21st CCLC site coordinators to assess the performance expectations for all activities provided by community partners.
- Collaborated with the City of Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) to pilot teen leadership programs.



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.

- Provide 21st CCLC site coordinators the opportunity to participate in a Life Skills facilitation training to develop skills necessary to facilitate leadership activities.
- Incorporate the City of Alexandria's Kids Are Terrific (KAT) Camp, which focuses on social, emotional and leadership skills development) into 21st CCLC summer programming for elementary students.
- Quarterly, allow students to provide 21st CCLC program feedback and participate in decision-making opportunities as a part of community circles.
- Improve communications with out-of-school-time program stakeholders to ensure a common vision and enhanced collaboration through meetings, progress reports, social media engagement and collaboration with FACE.



## 12. Develop a sustainability plan to supplement 21st CCLC programming requirements.

- Collaborate with ACPS Grants & Partnership Management to identify and solicit additional funding sources.
- Deep dive into current funding from ESSER and 21st Century Community Grant to provide data for sustainability into future years.
- Meet with ACPS leadership (i.e. Office of School Improvement/Title I) to identify supplemental funds necessary to sustain 21st CCLC programming.
- Use the 21st CCLC as a model of success and, in alignment with ACPS 2025, design a plan of extended day program support for students throughout the division in collaboration with aligned department leadership support.
- Collaborate with new and existing community partners to strengthen and grow city-wide opportunities for accessible, high-quality out-of-school time programming.
- Align work with the City of Alexandria/ACT for Alexandria Youth Support Network.



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

- Strategically collaborate with ACPS departments by identifying and applying for grant opportunities with aligned department leadership.
- Meet with community partners to provide grant application expertise and serve as liaison for grant identification opportunities using eCivis monthly email outreach.
- Facilitate, as needed, data and fiscal discussions with aligned department and building leads to ensure high level of grant requirements are being met.
- Maintain ACPS grants website that provides information and opportunities for staff & community partners. Facilitate Donors Choose opportunities and provide data and information to ACPS staff.
- Attend and provide monthly updates to the City and Schools Commission regarding current and potential new grant opportunities.
- Support the newly acquired ACPS federal grants - Manage allowable spending through identified fiscal portals.
- Support, through discussions and correspondence, aligned departments to ensure federal compliance.
- Compile all department spending for federal auditing, compile all department measured objectives for federal auditing.





14. Provide support to community members/organizations to encourage donations that enhance the educational experiences of students.

- Provide community donation support.
- Deliver donation submission information to community stakeholders through various outreach methods.
- Manage the Community Funded Facility Project submissions.
- Maintain the ACPS Community Funded Facility Project and ACPS donation webpage.





## 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.

- Created a framework, establish goals and key messages and implement a Parent Ambassador Program. This includes recruitment, kick off and reflective meetings, training and creation of a resource hub.
- Creation and implementation of a newcomer program. This includes: develop guidance, procedures, system and a data collection process, training, timeline creation, monthly reflection meetings and implementation monitoring, metrics - evaluation and survey, visual support (posters, flyers), collaborate with communications, EL office and partners, welcoming school environment assessment tool, toolkits, family liaison best practice supported workshops/events and school sessions.
- Instituted Academic Parent Teacher Teams to enhance parental/family self-efficacy and capabilities to support their children's learning at home and social-emotional development. This includes: workshops and training for families that are linked to learning to increase their knowledge on how to support their children, collaboration with school leadership and community partners to strengthen understanding and support of the Academic Parent Teacher Teams, developing multi-layered, division-wide family engagement tool kits and outreach plans and materials.



## 16. 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.

- Created a school Family Engagement Action Team (FEAT) to develop and monitor a school-wide comprehensive plan that supports family engagement activities and strategies to strengthen the school and the achievement of all students - FACE Blueprints.
- Developed a tool to guide schools on how to develop Family Action teams in their schools.
- Planned meetings with school teams to collaborate and co-create yearly building family engagement best practice action plans.
- Utilized the Family Engagement Evaluation findings and family feedback to guide planning and initiatives.
- Establish opportunities for parents/families to build their own skills and deepen knowledge regarding how to support students learning at home.
- Provided guidance about effective family engagement practices aligned with the FACE Dual Capacity-Building Framework.
- Provided technical assistance and support to schools and community sites regarding family engagement practices and implementation.



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

- Facilitated family engagement home-visit training for teachers and school-based staff.
- Provided professional learning for staff on how to build relationships and empower immigrant and refugee families.
- Collaborated with registrars, the student support team (SST) and the office for English learners (EL) to ensure families are connected to family liaisons or the identified “connector” at each school.
- Provided a toolkit on how to build relationships with families.
- Collaborated with ACPS’ SST, Special Education, EL and Teaching & Learning offices to provide relevant information about re-entry and grade level transitions.
- Increased family participation in decision-making.
- Provided families with training on how to become advocates for their children and work with school administrators and division leadership.
- Empowered families to become involved in policy making and participation in various community and school committees through training.



## 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 and Families.

- Integrated family engagement professional learning sessions into yearly ACPS staff professional learning days.
- Created a tool kit for educators and staff to work in partnership with families.
- Redesigned Family and Community Engagement (FACE) webportal where staff can access resources, training and information.
- Collaborated with English learner (EL) language access office and communications to offer information to support learning in accessible formats and languages.
- Trained family liaisons to facilitate family engagement training for staff in their buildings.



## 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 and Families.

- Provided professional learning opportunities to strengthen staff knowledge of family engagement and welcoming environment best practices, including using language line, webportal to request interpretation and outreach strategies.
- Worked with ACPS Talent Development to develop and implement family engagement professional learning sessions (Canvas portals, in person) for staff throughout the division.
- Created a Family Engagement Academy to build family's skills and knowledge on how to support student learning and to become connectors in their communities.
- Created a rubric and planning with examples and levels of family engagement practices for buildings to assess and plan activities/events aligned with the FACE dual capacity-building framework.



# Questions?



**Interim Superintendent**  
Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt

**School Board**  
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