



Alexandria City Public Schools

School Board Election Cycle, Terms and Composition

School Board Work Session
May 18, 2023





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 and Governance Changes

Legal Basis

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

Governance Changes

City Charter amendment with revised terms for the School Board:

- Initiated by Council
- **Applies to School Board, not the City Council**
- Amendments to City Charter approved by General Assembly



School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Process

- ✓ Work Session – December 13, 2022
- ✓ Board Brief – January 28, 2023
- ✓ Work Session – February 13, 2023
- ✓ Survey – April 12-26, 2023
- ✓ Public Hearing – April 20, 2023
 - Work Session – May 18, 2023
 - Proposed Resolution – June 1, 2023
 - Adopt Resolution – June 15, 2023
 - City Council drafts charter revisions – Summer, 2023
 - Public Hearing on draft charter – Sept/Oct 2023
 - Draft legislation – October 2023
 - Insert draft legislation into candidate packets – January 2024
 - State legislature approves charter revisions – 2024 Session
 - First Elections – November 2024



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).



Superintendent Tenure and Election Comparison

Time period comparison is roughly from 1994 - present day with a couple exceptions where long-standing Superintendents started in 1978 (Richmond), 1985 (Arlington and FCPS), or 1987 (Prince William). See attachment for specific years of service.

Division	School Board Statistics				Superintendent Tenure	
	Term Length	Election Type	Members	Election Cycle / Members	Average	Range
Alexandria	3	Concurrent	9	Every 3 years	4.8 years	3-6 years
Arlington	4	Staggered	5	1st Year: 1 2nd Year: 1 3rd Year: 2 4th Year: 1	11 years	10-12 years
Fairfax	4	Concurrent	12	Odd years preceding presidential elections	6.5 years	3-8 years
Falls Church	4	Staggered	7	1st Year: 4 3rd Year: 3 Every 2 years in odd years	5.3 years	2-7 years
Loudoun	4	Staggered starting in 2023	9	1st Year: 4 3rd Year: 5 Every 2 years in odd years	10.3 years	2-23 years
Prince William	4	Concurrent	8	Odd years preceding presidential elections. 7 Districts and 1 at-large member	17 years	16-18 years
Charlottesville *	4	Staggered	7	1st Year: 4 3rd Year: 3 Every 2 years in odd years	3.25 prior to staggering terms 15 years after staggering terms	1-15 years
Richmond	4	Concurrent	9	Presidential election years	19 years	3-35 years

* Charlottesville switched to the staggered terms model in 2006. Prior to 2006, Charlottesville had 3-year terms appointed by City Council



Historical Voter Turnout

Alexandria Data (2012-2021)

Top of Ticket	Average Turnout	Range
US President	73.10%	68.23% - 78.95%
US Senator	52.34%	42.37% - 62.31%
VA Governor	49.71%	43.14% - 54.49%
VA Senator	29.91%	29.43% - 30.38%

- Currently, SB elections line up with each of these elections over a 10-year period.
- Average turnout in a SB election year is **53.84%** (range = 30.38% - 68.23%)
- Average mayor votes are **47.74%** of registered voters (range = 28.06 - 60.63%)
 - Drop off average is **6.11%** (range = 2.32% - 9.99%)



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



Key Questions and Decisions

Two Key Questions to inform the discussion

- Does the change improve Continuity of Operations?
- Does the change improve Resident Representation?

Discussion Points to inform the Resolution

- Three vs Four Year Terms
- Districts vs At-Large Representation
- Staggered Terms vs Whole Board Election
- Alignment with State and Federal Election Cycles
- Board Size



Survey Key Results

Findings

- 74% agree or strongly agree that staggering terms would improve continuity of operations
- 67% agree or strongly agree that aligning elections with federal- and state-level elections is beneficial to the community
- 52% agree that both district and at-large members could sufficiently represent Alexandria residents
- No other indicator is over 50% of agreement or disagreement



Survey Key Results

Considerations

- The results may not fully represent the opinions of Alexandria residents and ACPS staff
 - Low response rate (N=450)
 - Demographics do not represent Alexandria demographics
 - 64% of respondents were White, 7% were Black, 4% Hispanic
- The data shows a disproportionate number of Strongly Disagrees for any changes



Possible Models

Model A

- 3 Year Terms
- 9 Board members, three from each district
- One district each year
- Example Transition: In 2024, 3 members are elected for 1-year terms, 3 for 2-year terms. Registrar randomly selects which districts will be up for reelection.

Year	District A	District B	District C	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	3	3	3	9	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	3	0	0	3	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	0	3	0	3	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	0	0	3	3	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	3	0	0	3	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	0	3	0	3	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	0	0	3	3	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Possible Models

Model B

- 3 Year Terms
- 9 Board members, three from each district
- One member from each district each year
- Example Transition: In 2024, person from each district with the lowest voter count is elected for a 1-year terms, person with 2nd highest voter count in each district is elected for a for 2-year term.

Year	District A	District B	District C	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	3	3	3	9	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	1	1	1	3	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	1	1	1	3	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	1	1	1	3	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	1	1	1	3	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	1	1	1	3	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	1	1	1	3	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Possible Models

Model C

- 4 Year Terms
- 9 Board members, three from each district
- One representative from each district each year
- Example Transition: In 2024, three members serve a one-year term, three serve two-year term, and three serve 4-year terms. Registrar randomly selects candidate term length.

Year	District A	District B	District C	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	3	3	3	9	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	1	1	1	3	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	1	1	1	3	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	0	0	0	0	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	1	1	1	3	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	1	1	1	3	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	1	1	1	3	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Possible Models

Model C

- 4 Year Terms
- 9 Board members, three from each district
- One district each year
- Example Transition: In 2024, one district elects for 2-year terms, one for 3-year terms, and one for 4-year terms. Registrar randomly selects which districts will be up for reelection.

Year	District A	District B	District C	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	3	3	3	9	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	0	0	0	0	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	3	0	0	3	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	0	3	0	3	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	0	0	3	3	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	0	0	0	0	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	3	0	0	3	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Possible Models

Model D

- 4 Year Terms
- 9 Board members, three from each district
- Elections on even years
- Example Transition: In 2024, 4 members are elected for 2-year terms, 5 for 4-year terms. Registrar randomly selects which elections will be for which initial terms.

Year	District A	District B	District C	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	3	3	3	9	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	0	0	0	0	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	1 or 2	1 or 2	1 or 2	4	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	0	0	0	0	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	1 or 2	1 or 2	1 or 2	5	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	0	0	0	0	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	1 or 2	1 or 2	1 or 2	4	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Possible Models

Model E

- 4 Year Terms
- 7 Board members, two from each district and one at-large
- Elections on even years
- Example Transition: In 2024, two elected from each district and one at large. One district elects for a 1-year term, one for a 2-year term, and one for a 3-year term. At-large is a 4-year term. Registrar randomly selects which elections will be for which initial terms.

Year	District A	District B	District C	At Large	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	2	2	2	1	7	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	2	0	0	0	2	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	0	2	0	0	2	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	0	0	2	0	2	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	0	0	0	1	1	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	2	0	0	0	2	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	0	2	0	0	2	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Possible Models

Model F

- 4 Year Terms
- 9 Board members, two from each district and three at-large
- Elections on even years
- Example Transition: In 2024, two elected from each district and three at large. One district elects for a 1-year term, one for a 2-year term, and one for a 3-year term. At-large are a 4-year term. Registrar randomly selects which elections will be for which initial terms.

Year	District A	District B	District C	At Large	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	2	2	2	3	9	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	2	0	0	0	2	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	0	2	0	0	2	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	0	0	2	0	2	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	0	0	0	3	3	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	2	0	0	0	2	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	0	2	0	0	2	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Possible Models

Model G

- 4 Year Terms
- 9 Board members, all at-large
- Elections on even years
- Example Transition: In 2024, nine board members are elected. Four for 2-year terms, five for 4-year terms. Registrar randomly selects which elections will be for which initial terms.

Year	At Large	Total Turnover	Other Elections	Average Voter Turnout
2024	9	9	US President, US Senate, US House, City	73.10%
2025	0	0	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2026	4	4	US Senate, US House	52.34%
2027	0	0	VA House, VA Senate, City	29.91%
2028	5	5	US President, US House	73.10%
2029	0	0	VA House, Governor	49.71%
2030	4	4	US Senate, US House, City	52.34%



Key Questions and Decisions

Two Key Questions to inform the discussion

- Does the change improve Continuity of Operations?
- Does the change improve Resident Representation?

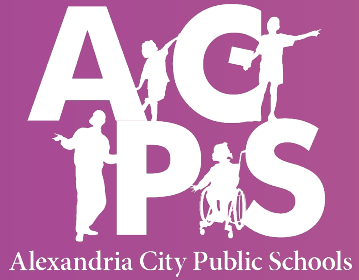
Discussion Points to inform the Resolution

- Three vs Four Year Terms
- Districts vs At-Large Representation
- Staggered Terms vs Whole Board Election
- Alignment with State and Federal Election Cycles
- Board Size



Next Steps

- Resolution for Information
 - June 1, 2023
- Resolution for Action
 - June 15, 2023



Questions?

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