Executive Summary

This document summarizes the feedback received for Part II of Arlington Public Schools strategic plan development; Implementation and Monitoring elements. In the fall, input was collected from students, families, staff, and community on their [hopes and aspirations for APS](). Their input has continued to help shape the development of the APS strategic plan through all phases of the process. Throughout the month of April, APS engaged in the third phase of gathering stakeholder feedback on the next strategic plan. This feedback is being used to inform revisions to the draft **Implementation and Monitoring** elements (the final section of the 2024-2030 APS strategic plan) as teams prepare their recommendation to the Superintendent in May. The Implementation and Monitoring elements include the performance objectives, strategies, and key performance indicators (KPIs). (see part II to the right). The fall input provided by students, parents, staff, and the community supported all phases of the development process.

Strategic Plan Development Timeline | 2023-24

Part I Strategic Plan Foundations: Mission, Vision, Core Values, Priorities *What we aspire to for the students of APS*	Sept Oct Nov Dec	• Questionnaire on current foundations • Focus groups and community listening on aspirations for APS • Drafts of revised Foundations (10/19 – 11/3) • Steering Committee Drafts Completed (11/8) • Board Work Session (11/14) • Board Action on Foundations (12/14)
Part II Strategic Plan Implementation and Monitoring Elements. *What we will do and how we will measure success.*	Jan Feb Mar Apr Ma Jun	• Development of the implementation and monitoring elements including both strategies the district will take to improve student learning and revised metrics for success. • Additional feedback opportunities for families, staff, and community • Final plan is expected to be taken to the board for discussion and approval in June of 2024.

APS does a full review of its strategic plan every six years. 2023-2024 is a year for full review. In January 2024, work shifted to revising the Implementation and Monitoring elements after the revised Foundations were approved by the School Board in December 2023. This executive summary and report outline what we heard from the community that will inform revisions to the Implementation and Monitoring elements.

Who has engaged?

Community Engagement for Part II was again organized into three main strategies - administration of a **community questionnaire**, conducting virtual **community forums,** and engaging **focus groups.**

There were 1,237 total responses to the **questionnaire** including 252 students, 289 staff, and 696 parent/community members.

Focus Group Role	Number of Focus Groups Conducted
Students	13
Families	9
Staff	9
Community	15

Two virtual **Community forums** were held: one in English and one in Spanish. Two (2) people participated in the English-speaking forum. Four (4) participants engaged in the Spanish-speaking forum.

Focus groups were conducted with students in-person at all middle and high schools. Community, family, and staff focus groups were facilitated virtually with the goal of hearing from a diverse cross section of the APS community. Approximately 369 individuals participated in one of over 45 focus groups conducted this spring.

Highlighted Initial Takeaways

- The **majority of respondents support the draft Implementation and Monitoring elements** with approximately 5 out of every 8 respondents indicating agreement or very strong agreement in each of the strategic priorities (see page 6-19 for details).
- The open-ended responses for each strategic priority are summarized following each respective section and are organized by performance objective.
  - *Student Academic Growth and Success*: **Academic excellence** and **rigor** figured prominently in feedback related to Student Academic Growth and Success.
  - *Student Well-Being*: Perspectives centered on the **importance of SEL and the challenges** with staff capacity and time that SEL lessons occupy that was previously spent on other important activities from the perspective of students. In particular, feedback was evenly split between support for ensuring and identifying the needs of LGBTQ+ students and against it for multiple reasons a lack of inclusivity. Student suspensions also received mixed feedback with respondents indicating they recognized the need to reduce disparities versus a concern with taking away a strategy to maintain safety.
  - *Student-Centered Workforce*: **Compensation** for staff was viewed as critical to retention and recruitment.
  - *Operational Excellence*: This priority represented the category with the highest percentage of agreement. Community members called safe and quality learning environments, emphasizing the importance of resolving deferred maintenance, supported improving bus driver compensation, and ensuring that technology is available for instructional purposes.
  - *Student, Family, and Community Partnerships*: The greatest feedback themes in this strategic priority included **reconsidering the word "equal" with student partnerships** and focusing on **quality partnerships** with the community leveraged to improve student outcomes.
- Reducing teacher workloads and class sizes were two consistent themes noted across all groups from whom feedback was collected and across multiple strategic priorities.

- [Focus group feedback](#) generally aligned with what was heard in the questionnaire. APS will continue to gather feedback between May-June through Engage@apsva.us.
- The [community forums](#) were lightly attended and their feedback also aligned with what has been captured in the questionnaire.

FULL REPORT TO FOLLOW

Introduction

Arlington Public Schools has conducted three distinct opportunities for community engagement over the last year to inform the development of the 2024-2030 strategic plan. This has included an initial comprehensive approach to gather input on the community's aspirations for the division from students, staff, families, and community members. Engagement strategies included the administration of a broad community questionnaire, a series of community forums, and strategic focus groups conducted with students, parents, staff, and community group representatives.

The feedback captured in the first fall engagement was used by the APS Strategic Plan Steering Committee to draft the revision to the APS foundations (vision, mission, core values, and strategic priorities). The second questionnaire was conducted which asked community members to provide feedback on the draft foundations. The Steering Committee incorporated the feedback from the second questionnaire and submitted their final recommendation to the Superintendent in November. Superintendent Durán considered the committee's recommendation and presented the foundations to the school board which were officially adopted by the School Board on December 13, 2023. After the adoption of the foundations, the work shifted to the staff's development of the implementation and monitoring elements.

The implementation and monitoring elements define the performance objectives, strategies, and key performance indicators for the priority areas adopted by the School Board. These are

1. Student Academic Growth and Success
2. Student Well-Being
3. Student-Centered Workforce
4. Operational Excellence, and
5. Student, Family, and Community Partnerships.

APS organized five teams corresponding to each of the five strategic priorities, composed of between 15-20 district and school leaders, teachers, subject matter experts, and on some teams students. The Priority Teams convened beginning in February to work monthly on developing and refining the draft implementation and monitoring elements. The teams used feedback from the Steering Committee and school board to draft and refine the Implementation and Monitoring elements. They will use the final round of community engagement to finalize their draft and submit a formal recommendation to the Superintendent in May.

Community Engagement – Implementation and Monitoring Elements

The third and final phase of community engagement for the development of the 2024-2030 strategic plan mirrored the comprehensive approach taken in the fall with the purpose of soliciting feedback on the Implementation and Monitoring elements. It, again, included a community questionnaire, two virtual community forums, and strategic focus groups

conducted with students, parents, staff, and community group representatives. That information is summarized in the document to follow. The information collected during the community engagement provides feedback that is valuable to the Arlington Public Schools division at the strategic level as well as the operational levels of departments and schools. *The final draft of the Implementation and Monitoring elements will reflect* consideration of the feedback received*, as evaluated by APS staff serving on the Priority Teams and APS senior leadership. The feedback summarized in this report represents themes from all feedback collected (students, families, staff, and community) which are considered strategic.* Strategic, for the purposes of the plan, is meant to focus on those vital few areas that are both comprehensive in that they have the potential to impact multiple student, staff, and organizational outcomes and represent deliberate opportunities to impact outcomes not yet achieved by APS. *Feedback collected through this process not incorporated in the final 2024-30 APS Strategic Plan will be considered and, in many cases, included into the action plans of the strategic plan and in department and school plans aligned to the strategic plan*.

Participation in Community Engagement

Questionnaire

There were 1,237 total responses to the questionnaire including 252 students, 289 staff, and 696 parent/community members. Only 28 of the parent/community respondents **were not** APS parents/family members. The breakdown of participant race/ethnicity and representation by zip code are detailed in tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Table 1.1 Questionnaire Respondents by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Students*	Staff	Community
American Indian/Native American	0%	0%	0%
Asian	8%	5%	7%
Black or African American	6%	13%	6%
Latino or Hispanic	21%	11%	6%
Native Hawaiian	0%	0%	0%
Two or More	Reported as other	5%	7%
White	41%	65%	69%
Other	9%	0%	4%
Unknown	16%	0%	0%

Table 1.2 Community Questionnaire Respondents by Zip Code

Zip Code	# Respondents	Zip Code	# Respondents
22207	189	22202	48
22204	124	22213	18
22205	101	22209	13
22201	77	22242	1
22206	46	22211	1
22203	63	Prefer not to say	15

Community Forums

Community participation in the forums during the fall community engagement represented the lowest level of participation. Based on the differentiation in fall participation in-person versus the virtual forum (or hybrid option provided at the last in-person forum), it was decided that spring forums would be conducted to reduce the timeframe for engagement due to travel and the barriers posed by traffic. This was reinforced by the challenge of spring scheduling that exists because of the multiple year-end culmination events in the division and at individual schools. Virtual forums provided the most flexibility for family and community members who are managing multiple demands. Despite these modifications, forum participation remained lowest of the three engagement methods.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted in-person at each of the middle and high schools. Focus groups were conducted virtually with the remaining groups, again to offer the maximum flexibility to participants. The number of focus groups conducted by role is depicted in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3 Focus Groups Conducted by Role

Focus Group Role	Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Approximate Number of Participants
Students	13	146
Families	9	60
Staff	9	86
Community	15	77

Community Perceptions of Implementation and Monitoring Elements - Questionnaire

The community, represented by students, families, staff, and community members, responded to a questionnaire with a series of questions related to each draft priority area. Respondents were asked to review the Performance Objectives, Strategies, and Key Performance Indicators and respond to Likert-scale questions rating their levels agreement related to the alignment and impact of each component. The survey included graphics in English and five (5) languages (English, Spanish, Arabic, Amharic, Mongolian) which provided a graphical, summarized overview of each Strategic Priority enabling respondents to see and evaluate each holistically. The graphics (in their English version) are in Appendix A. The Likert-scale questions asked for each priority are listed below.

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft performance objectives are aligned to the priority listed above?
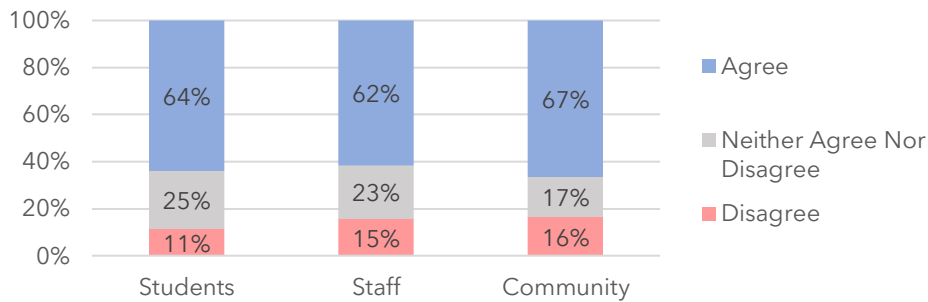2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft strategies will help APS achieve the performance objectives?

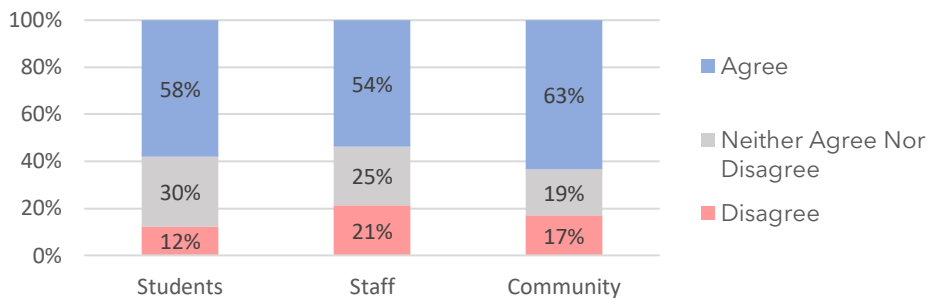3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft key performance indicators will help APS effectively measure and monitor progress toward achieving the performance objectives?

Figures 1.01-1.15 provide the level of agreement for each statement relative to its corresponding strategic priority area. *It should be noted that on average, 23% of community responses, 27% of staff responses, and 31% of student responses stated they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (taken as an average over all five strategic priorities).* In addition to the Likert-scale questions, respondents were also given the opportunity to provide comments or suggestions to improve the draft performance objectives, strategies or key performance objectives within each priority area. A summary of responses are in Tables 1.4 (Student Academic Growth and Success), 1.5 (Student Well-Being), 1.6 (Student-Centered Workforce), 1.7 (Operational Excellence), and 1.8 (Student, Family, and Community Partnerships).

Priority 1: Student Academic Growth & Success

APS will ensure each student achieves academic excellence through high-quality instruction and systems of support to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps.

The average disagreement for Student Academic Growth and Success across all groups and questions was 16%.

Figure 1.01: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft performance objectives are aligned to the priority listed above?*"

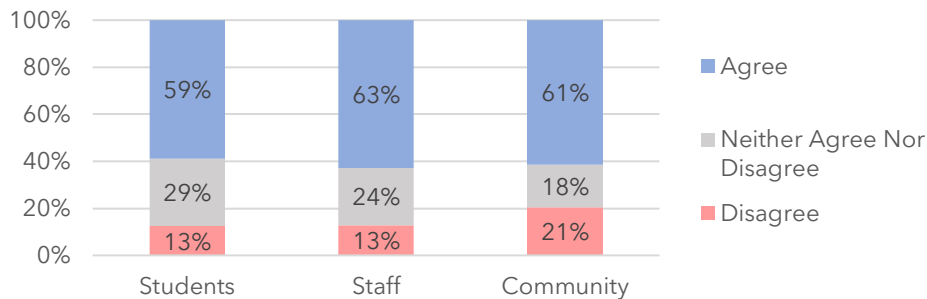**Figure 1.02:** Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft strategies will help APS achieve the performance objectives?*"
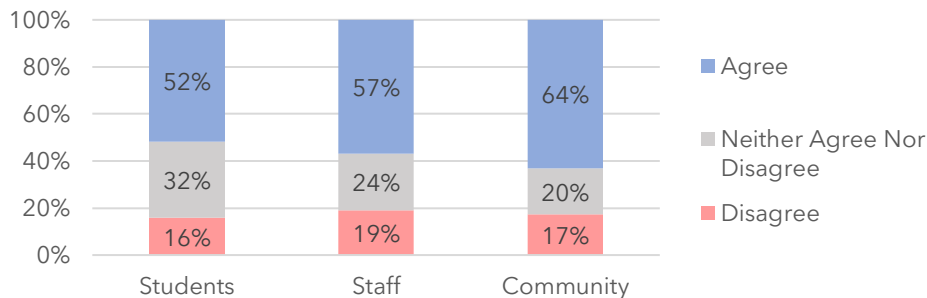

Figure 1.03: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft key performance indicators will help APS effectively measure and monitor progress toward achieving the performance objectives?*"
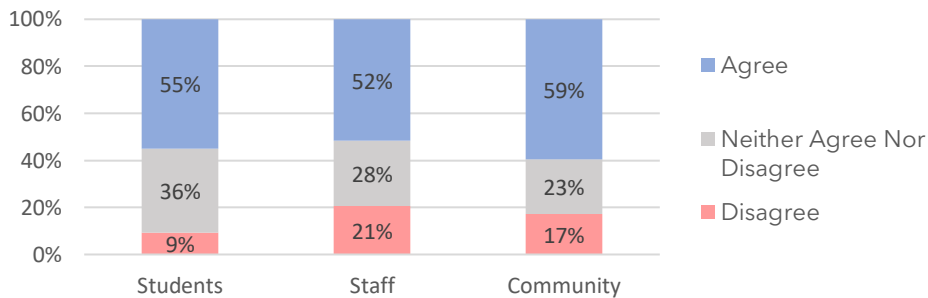
Feedback for Student Academic Growth and Success was reviewed and organized by performance objective. Themes within each performance objective were generated based on the frequency of responses. Themes are listed in Table 1.4 in order of the level of interest/energy they garnered in the open response related to Priority 1.

Table 1.4: Questionnaire Themes for Student Academic Growth and Success by Performance Objective

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback
1 - Academic Achievement	• Lack of emphasis on advanced students/students in the highest academic levels. • Lack of rigor (targets too low). • ELL student-specific strategies are needed; targets (particularly for levels 1-4) may be too high. • Over-emphasis on standardized testing in measures.
2 – Academic Growth	• NWEA is unclear; not reasonable to achieve 90% growth when NWEA growth is based on comparison to nationally normed students. • Suggestions to consider a year's worth of growth as well as concerns with growth measures mentioned • Concerns with using DIBELS/PALS scores.
3 – Inclusion of Students with Disabilities	• Placement of students in inclusion should be based on an IEP team decision rather than an arbitrary target. • Staff question the incorporation of the inclusion goal citing 1) lack of capacity of existing staff, 2) lack of special education teachers, and 3) inability to provide planning for co-teaching. Staff expressed concern that these resources have not historically been provided and are not provided in the current budget. • Staff consistently cite need for teacher planning time with inclusion teachers/co-teacher teams as a requirement to facilitate this goal. • All feedback refers to the need to reduce class size to improve student outcomes.
4 – College, Career, and Civic Readiness	• Narrow focus on college readiness; emphasis should include a broader approach to career and life skills. • Multiple pathways to accelerated learning and advanced coursework should be provided for career or college readiness. • Practical real-world skills should be integrated into the curriculum to enhance college or career readiness. • An expansion of vocational training and career and technical education opportunities should be contemplated.

Priority 2: Student Well-Being

In partnership with families and students, create an inclusive, safe and supportive environment that fosters all students' intellectual, physical, mental and social-emotional growth and well-being.

The average disagreement for Student Well-Being across all groups and questions was 16%.

Figure 1.04: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft performance objectives are aligned to the priority listed above?*"

Figure 1.05: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft strategies will help APS achieve the performance objectives?*"

Figure 1.06: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft key performance indicators will help APS effectively measure and monitor progress toward achieving the performance objectives?*"
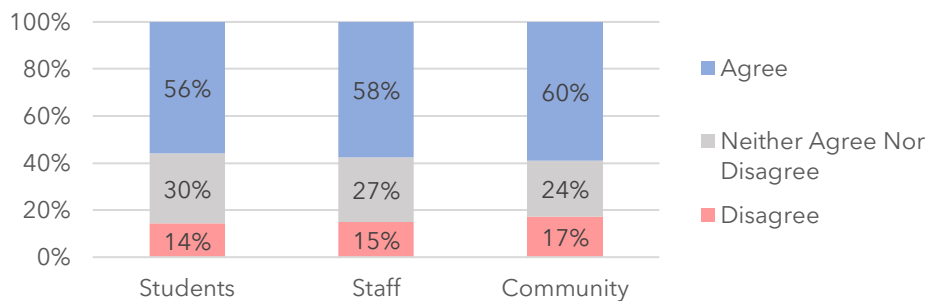
Feedback for Student Well-Being was reviewed and organized by performance objective. Themes within each performance objective were generated based on the frequency of responses. Themes are listed in Table 1.5 in order of the level of interest/energy they garnered in the open response related to Priority 2.

Table 1.5: Questionnaire Themes for Student Well-Being by Performance Objective

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback
1 – Positive Student Experience	• Community feedback supports the belief that students should enjoy their time in school and that enjoyment comes from interactive, relevant, practical learning experiences aligned to student interests and real-world learning. • Some community members express concern that academic rigor is coming second to an over-emphasis or focus on well-being of students. They also worry that the over-emphasis on SEL/mental health has had the opposite effect of building student resilience. • Overall, staff support a focus on SEL for students and think it is needed. However, they cite concern about the increasing staff workload and whether there is enough support and staff to ensure fidelity of implementation. (Social workers and counselors mentioned most frequently; school psychologists also mentioned) • Students and some teachers point to SEL occupying time that was previously used for students and staff to discuss academic issues, challenges, and support (student perspective) or being one of many initiatives that take time away from the core work of teaching (staff perspective). Students want SEL to emphasize the importance of the relationship between teachers and students (particularly in terms of support, understanding, and trust). • Students point to overwhelming workloads as critical barriers to their overall well-being. • Measuring SEL is a challenge as many stakeholders 1) point to the perception of being "over-surveyed", 2) that perceptions noted in surveys aren't addressed, and 3) that student surveys aren't taken seriously by respondents.
2 – Chronic Absenteeism	• Community, staff, and students all indicate that regular changes in the academic calendar that create inconsistent school weeks contribute to some of the issues with school attendance. • All groups point to the need for supports for families to assist in remediating chronic absenteeism.

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback

	○ Family/communities point to the need for better communication to identify root causes.
	    ○ Staff ask for improved partnership with families and leveraging of community resources to provide supports.
	    ○ Students ask that they not be punished when family decisions often dictate their attendance patterns.
	• Students also recommend implementing incentives for good attendance and fair consequences for poor attendance

3 – Suspension Reduction	• Community wants to see evidence of consistent and fair application of disciplinary policies/processes - particularly across different groups of students. • Staff expresses consistent concern about the goal of "reducing suspensions" and the need for consistent policies/ processes/ consequences. • There is a tension between the community's desire for identifying alternative strategies to address discipline issues and staff's perfection of the challenge with learning and implementing restorative practices. • All groups are concerned about maintaining and prioritizing school safety. In particular, students want to focus on the causes of suspension which, in their perception, will improve management and support for students.
4 – Belonging and Connectedness	• Feedback is evenly split between support for intentionally ensuring support for and identifying the needs of LGBTQ+ students and against it for multiple reasons to include that BIPOC students are missing, fear of indoctrination, and feedback that it is an overemphasis. • Support for data that helps the division identify the needs of LGBTQ+ students to improve feelings of belonging and connectedness, while also maintaining confidentiality. • Ensuring that there are equitable consequences for harassment and bullying of LGBTQ+ students as other groups.
5 – Student Safety	• There is consistent support for stronger physical safety measures to include school security, access control in buildings, and the presence of school resource officers (this is shared by community, staff, and students)

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback
	• Community and students concur that bullying is an area where more work is warranted. Community members indicated that they want more anti-bullying programs and more timely responses to incidents. Students indicate they want more transparency to ensure that victims are centered when there are incidents of bullying and call for accountability for offenders. • Students and community members continue to acknowledge challenges with mental health. Community identifies the need for staff trained and accessible to students. Students want more genuine, engaging, and beneficial (not procedure) SEL programs and strategies. • Staff want timely and effective discipline for students (fair that don't compromise educational outcomes). Staff also reference the impact of class-size on student behavior.

APS Staff gather in their second of four development meetings to draft and revise the implementation and monitoring elements of the strategic plan.

Priority 3: Student Centered Workforce

APS will support and invest in a culture that attracts and retains skilled, talented, and effective staff committed to student success and well-being.

The average disagreement for Student-Centered Workforce across all groups and questions was 16%.

Figure 1.07: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft performance objectives are aligned to the priority listed above?*"
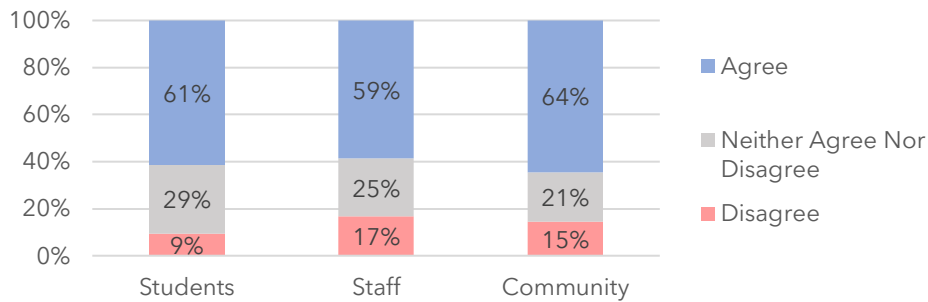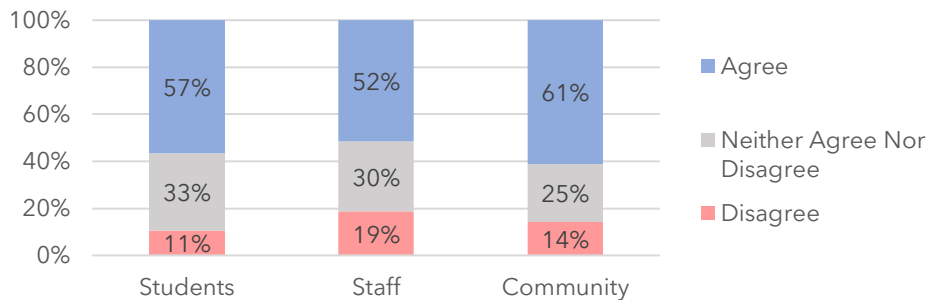
Figure 1.08: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft strategies will help APS achieve the performance objectives?*"

Figure 1.09: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft key performance indicators will help APS effectively measure and monitor progress toward achieving the performance objectives?*"
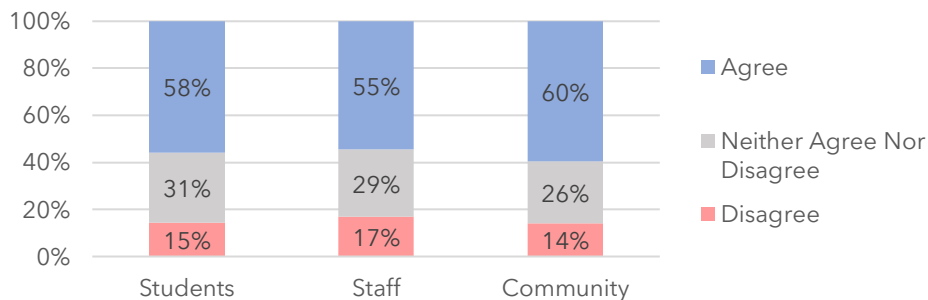
Feedback for Student-Centered Workforce was reviewed and organized by performance objective. Themes within each performance objective were generated based on the frequency of responses. Themes are listed in Table 1.6 in order of the level of interest/energy they garnered in the open response related to Priority 3.

Table 1.6: Questionnaire Themes for Student-Centered Workforce by Performance Objective

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback
1 – Professional Learning	• Professional development should respect the expertise of teachers and provide support with the most challenging issues that staff (particularly teachers) confront (addressing difficult discipline issues, cultural competence, etc.)
2 – Workplace Climate	• Teachers want to have a voice in decision making and want to feel as they are invested in by their schools and the division. • Community and staff reference the importance of school-based leadership in defining the climate and culture of schools and recognize the difference that this makes in retention. Staff specifically reference the importance of administrative support with student disciplinary issues.
3 – Employee retention/ attrition	• Compensation is of critical importance to all staff and there is a perception among some that it is not competitive and a barrier to being able to live in Arlington and work in APS. • Community members support improved and competitive compensation while also acknowledged by some community stakeholders as tightly tied to budget constraints. • Teachers, in particular, point to increasing workloads and lack of adequate planning time as barriers to retention.
4 – Staff Safety	• Staff point to consistent handling of discipline as tightly connected to feelings of safety. • Staff want to feel heard by the division, from human resources, and receive the same levels of customer service extended to them as they are expected to deliver to families/students. • Staff perceive that division leadership/central office needs to understand the context of school realities when setting policies and expectations. • There are consistent questions related to the division's ability to implement the strategic plan from the point of view of scaled implementation and budgetary or resource constraints.

Priority 4: Operational Excellence

APS will plan and implement efficient, effective, sustainable system-wide operations to support student, staff, and our community's success.

The average disagreement for Operational Excellence across all groups and questions was 16%.

Figure 1.10: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft performance objectives are aligned to the priority listed above?*"
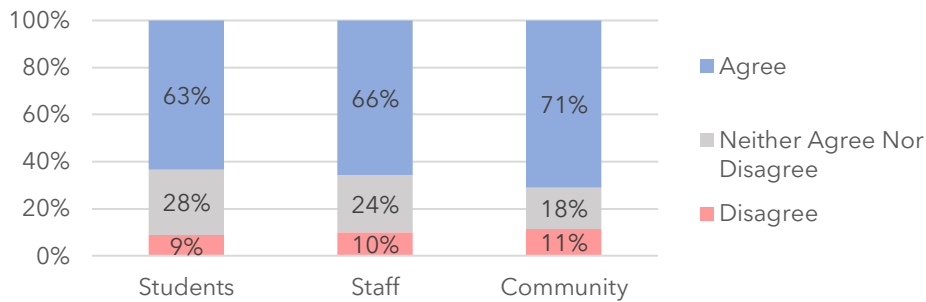

Figure 1.11: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft strategies will help APS achieve the performance objectives?*"
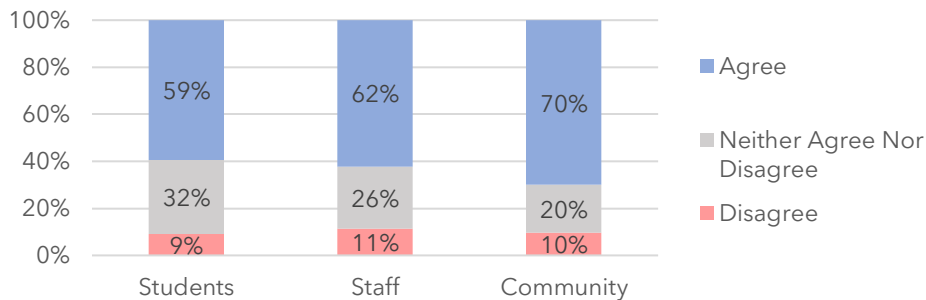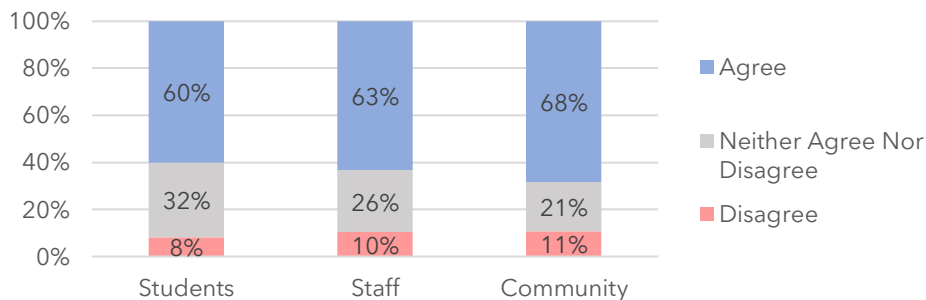

Figure 1.12: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft key performance indicators will help APS effectively measure and monitor progress toward achieving the performance objectives?*"

Feedback for Operational Excellence was reviewed and organized by performance objective. Themes within each performance objective were generated based on the frequency of responses. Themes are listed in Table 1.5 in order of the level of interest/energy they garnered in the open response related to Priority 4.

Table 1.7: Questionnaire Themes for Operational Excellence by Performance Objective

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback
1 – Capital Improvement	• There's a consistent call for improving school facilities, specifically the older buildings and removing trailers. The quality and safety of school facilities are a recurrent concern. • Perceptions also note that the division should focus on deferred maintenance (to include security upgrades) to bring all buildings up to a common standard for learning environments rather than new facilities. • Many responses focus on the need for prudent budget management, citing perceptions of excessive spending on administration and underutilized studies, and suggesting funds be redirected to essential educational and facility needs.
2 – Transportation and School Nutrition	• All groups comment on the importance of neighborhood/ walkable school attendance zones • Feedback on transportation include taking opportunities to partner with Arlington Transit to improve efficiency and reduce costs. • There is general agreement of the need to improve driver compensation to reduce vacancies and delays with transporting students to school on time. • A majority of responses reflect support for free meals for all students (some include staff in offering free meals), a smaller group suggests free meals only be provided to those eligible. • Food quality was also an area noted for improvement. • Split transportation and school nutrition performance objectives into two separate objectives.
3 - Technology	• Many concerns noted perceptions of an over-reliance on devices and screens to provide instruction. [May be more relevant for Priority 1]. • Families/community and staff suggested APS balance the use of technology to facilitate and genuinely enhance learning rather than serve to distract students. • Staff and students emphasize that devices should be available when needed by students and staff (i.e., providing loaners in the event of damage/technical issues so that when needed they are accessible for all students equitably).

Priority 5: Student, Family, Community Partnerships

APS will strengthen and develop partnerships built on trust with students, families, community members, organizations, and local government to support student learning.

The average disagreement for Student Well-Being across all groups and questions was 11%.

Figure 1.13: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the **draft performance objectives** are aligned to the priority listed above?*"
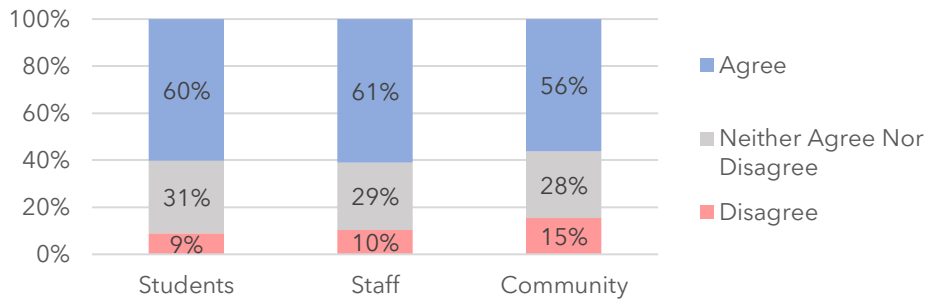

Figure 1.14: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the **draft strategies** will help APS achieve the performance objectives?*"
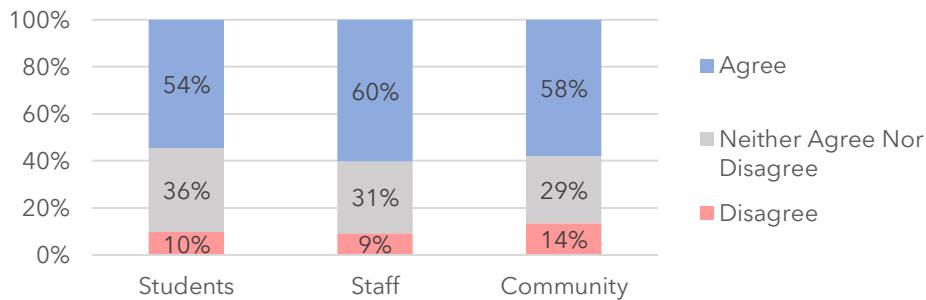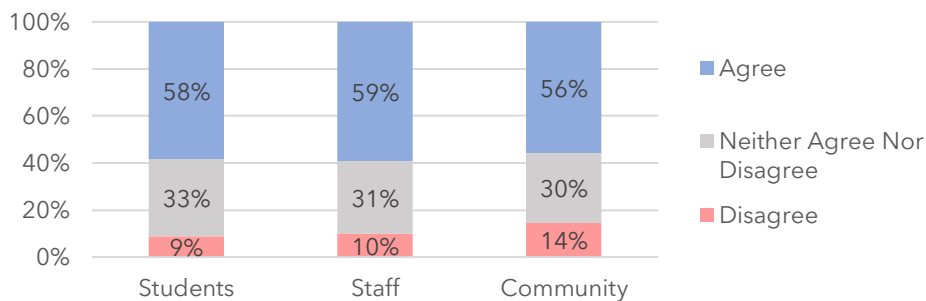

Figure 1.15: Percent **agreement** with the statement: "*To what extent do you agree or disagree that the **draft key performance indicators** will help APS effectively measure and monitor progress toward achieving the performance objectives?*"

Feedback for Student, Family, and Community Partnerships was reviewed and organized by performance objective. Themes within each performance objective were generated based on the frequency of responses. Themes are listed in Table 1.5 in order of the level of interest/energy they garnered in the open response related to Priority 5.

Table 1.8: Questionnaire Themes for Student, Family, and Community Partnerships by Performance Objective

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback
1 – Student Partnerships	- Students, staff, and community perceive that partnerships should not be "equal" with students. They also believe that there should be an assertion of educational authority and structures. - Despite some resistance to the idea of equal partnership, there is an acknowledgment of the need for students to be more involved and engaged, suggesting that schools find ways to meaningfully include students in discussions and decisions that affect their education. - Staff members desire clear objectives for student partnerships to measure effectiveness. - Students expressed a need for genuine involvement in decision-making processes within the school, not just ritualistic engagement. They want their voices to be heard and to have a real impact on policies and practices that affect their educational experience. They also question how their feedback is managed, feeling that it is often disregarded.

Performance Objective #	Themes in Feedback
2 – Staff Partnerships	• Many comments indicate a need for improved communication between schools and families, suggesting that current methods like surveys are insufficient and that schools should offer more direct and meaningful interactions. • There is a sentiment that family contributions are often overlooked or not taken seriously by schools, with a call for schools to better acknowledge and utilize the input from families to improve educational outcomes. • Staff highlighted the critical role of active family engagement in student success and stressed the need for better communication strategies to involve all families, especially those who are less active in their children's education. • Staff and Students reference the need for consistent and equitable engagement of multilingual families and an acknowledgement of the diverse backgrounds of families which would improve engagement and support. • Students noted significant discrepancies in parental engagement, which they feel impacts educational outcomes. They call for more efforts to engage all parents, particularly those who are less involved, to create a more supportive educational environment.
3 – Community Partnerships	• There was overwhelming agreement that the focus on community partnerships should center quality over quantity (i.e., genuine engagement in and support of community partnerships that are formal and represent active, ongoing interaction benefiting students directly). • Concerns were noted about equitable treatment and inclusion across different community groups, with some community members feeling that certain groups are prioritized over others. • Staff expressed a desire to see a more strategic use of community resources that aligns with educational goals, including targeted involvement that supports specific educational outcomes or addresses particular student needs. • Students suggest partnerships that offer tangible benefits, such as mentorship programs, internships, and extracurricular activities that extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

Community Perceptions of Implementation and Monitoring Elements – Focus Groups

Focus groups were asked questions similar to those in the questionnaire which were modified based on the audience. The themes identified in those questions are organized by role in the table below.

Table 1.9: Focus Group themes by Strategic Priority Area

Strategic Priority	Students	Parents/Families	Staff	Community
Student Academic Growth and Success	• Mastery of Curriculum and Retaining Information • Teaching Methods and Engagement • Supporting Learning Needs	• Focus on academic excellence – rigor, relevance, and relationships • Support for students with special needs – appropriate and balanced • Assessment beyond standardized tests – quantitative and qualitative-	• Addressing achievement gaps • Over-emphasis on standardized tests – incorporate qualitative measures • Equity in academic opportunities (excellence and barriers for under-represented students) • Quality instruction	• Career Readiness and Academic Preparation • Academic Inclusion and Equity • Curriculum and Instruction
Student Well-Being	• Safe and Inclusive Environment • Mental Health and Emotional Support • Chronic Absenteeism and Engagement	• Focus on mental health as foundational to student success • Safe and inclusive environments fostering belonging and connectedness • Enhance Physical Health – Including Outdoor Activities	• Mental health and emotional support • Safety and inclusiveness • Physical health and wellness	• Safe and Inclusive Environment • Mental Health Support and Resilience • Support Systems and Resources
Student-Centered Workforce	• Positive Workplace Climate • Teacher-Student Relationships	• Prioritize student-centered workforce as critical to student success	• Staff retention and support – prioritizing compensation and satisfaction	• Teacher Retention and Professional Development

Strategic Priority	Students	Parents/Families	Staff	Community
	• Teacher Quality and Training	• Professional Development and Growth • Workplace Climate and Support	• Professional development and growth • Workplace climate and safety	• Workplace Climate and Culture • Staff Support and Resources
Operational Excellence	• Technology and Infrastructure • Transportation and Facilities • Meals and Food Quality	• Operational excellence that includes efficiency and environmental sustainability • Support for Special Needs and Individualized Learning • Transparent and Effective Communication, Build Trust Around Operational Decisions	• Efficient operations, technology functionality, and environmental sustainability • Support for special needs and inclusion (planning, co-teaching) • Transparent and effective communication	• Technology and Facilities • Sustainability and Environmental Impact • Operational Efficiency and Improvement
Student, Family, and Community Partnerships	• Student Voice and Choice • Family and Community Engagement • Mentoring and Support	• Family Engagement and Partnerships as Necessary to Student Success • Build and sustain strong quality partnerships with community organizations • Engage students as partners in their education – valuing their voice and agency • Collaboration to Solve Big Challenges (Absenteeism, Mental Health, Academic Support)	• Family engagement and partnerships – particularly focusing on diverse families • Strong, quality partnerships with community partners to support student success • Collaboration to support student success	• Student Voice and Agency • Family and Community Engagement • Partnership Quality and Impact

Community Perceptions of Implementation and Monitoring Elements – Community Forums

Finally, two (2) virtual community forums were conducted to provide open opportunities for community members to provide feedback directly to RTI/APS on the draft implementation and monitoring elements. There was a forum conducted in English on Tuesday, April 30, 2024, and a forum conducted in Spanish on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. Both forums were advertised through Arlington Public Schools communication channels multiple times. Participants were asked to register for participation. Similarly, to the fall community forums, participation was low. Specifically, two (2) people participated in the English forum (1 community member and 1 parent) and there were four (4) participants in the Spanish-language forum (all family members).

Feedback from the participants aligned with what was gained from the questionnaire and focus groups with more specificity provided for support to multilingual students in the Spanish-speaking forum.

Figure 1.10 Community Forum Themes

April 30, 2024	May 1, 2024
• Taxpayers are concerned by the increasing costs of education and the impact on the tax rate.	• Students and families need engagement, support, and resources provided in their native language whenever possible. • Families noted that students should be assessed in their native language whenever possible to reduce bias suggesting that students speaking English as a second language do not have the same or similar levels of subject area proficiency.

Appendix

Appendix A – Strategic Plan Graphical Representation by Priority Area

Student Academic Growth and Success

	APS will ensure each student achieves academic excellence through high-quality instruction and systems of support to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps.			
Performance Objectives	By 2030, at least 85% of APS students meet/exceed proficiency on VA SOLs; reporting groups will meet/exceed APS annual targets to close gaps.	By 2030, at least 90% of elementary, middle school, and Gr. 9 students will annually meet defined growth targets in math and reading	By 2030, at least 80% of students with disabilities will be regularly exposed to rigorous and scaffolded instruction, alongside their peers, at all levels.	By 2030, at least 95% of graduating students will have met at least one of the College, Career, Civic Readiness Indicators (CCCRI).
Strategies	• Deliver APS adopted curriculum aligned to VA SOLs • professional learning to teachers and instructional assistants to improve the performance of all students with a deliberate focus on historically marginalized groups • Structures to build collective efficacy (PLCs) • Teacher incentives at high-turnover schools • Increase co-taught sections of classes.	• Implement Science of Reading • Personalize math and reading instruction to meet diverse needs • Provide accelerated learning opportunities • Inform, encourage, monitor enrollment in secondary intensified classes proportional to student enrollment	• Master schedule approaches that enable co-teaching and co-planning • Co-planning and co-teaching strategies to scaffold rigorous instruction	• Career interest inventories by beginning of 7th grade • Regular, at least annual, academic counseling beginning in middle grades • Inclusive career pathways for all students • Variety of learning opportunities to align knowledge, skills, and personal interests
Key Performance Indicators	% of all/marginalized students passing Gr. 3 Reading, Gr. 8 Reading, Gr. 11 Reading, Science, Math, Social Studies	% students meeting NWEA MAP Math Growth, % students meeting NWEA MAP Reading Growth, % elementary students meeting DIBELS growth	% of students with disabilities who spend at least 80% or more of the school day in a general education setting	% of graduating students who achieved CCCRI by reported student group

Student Well-Being

In partnership with families, staff, and students, APS will create inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environments that foster all students' intellectual, physical, mental, social-emotional growth and well-being.

Performance Objective	By 2030, APS students and staff will have a positive school experience to include a climate of trust and relationships as evidenced by at least 80% of students and staff responding favorably to the School Climate prompts on the YVM.	By 2030, APS will reduce chronic absenteeism at all schools so that no more than 8% of students are chronically absent and reduce over-representation of student groups (race/ethnicity, SWD, EL) to no more than 5% based on group's enrollment.	By 2030, APS will reduce suspensions for all students by 50% and reduce over-representation of student groups based on race/ethnicity, SWD, and ELs to no more than 5% based on the group's enrollment.	By 2030, identify all gaps in belonging/connectedness for LGBTQ+ students and increase sense of belonging and reduce risk behavior by X %.	By 2030, XX% of students and staff will report feeling safe at school/ workplace as measured by % of students and staff favorably responding to YVM school safety questions.
Strategies	• Evidence-based, culturally responsive materials to help students maintain and/or improve their physical, social, emotional, and mental health • Identify/train staff on evidence based SEL curriculum, • Ensure students have one school-based adult who support and encourage their academic and personal growth • Increase student access to nature	• Develop/implement a tiered system of support and evidence-based strategies to improve attendance (train staff, identifying challenges/ barriers and implementing interventions for specific groups • Develop consistent, regular two-way communication about services/supports available to students/families to address challenges impacting attendance	• Implement evidence-based restorative practices to repair harm, empower students to resolve conflict, support strategies that prioritize attendance • Provide training/support to educators to implement equitable/ consistent beh. management strategies (core classroom expectations/ processes, early interventions, restorative practices, approaches individualized to classrooms	• Develop reliable & confidential data sources for LGBTQ+ reporting to improve belonging, reduce risk behavior • Provide evidence-based prof. dev. to staff on strategies to enhance LGBTQ+/all groups sense of belonging and connectedness • Provide forums by student groups to improve connectedness and belonging	• Communicate/ improve tiered behavioral interventions • Assess/improve school-based processes for proactive behavioral instruction and interventions • Continue to enhance threat assessment process • Create and maintain a culture of trust and relationships where concerns are reported
Key Performance Indicators	% favorable responses on the Your Voice Matters (YVM) survey Social, Emotional, Mental Health (4-5, 6-12), School Climate (4-5, 6-12), Self-Management (3-5, 6-12)	% of students who are chronically absent overall and by student reporting group and school	% suspensions relative to % student pop by student reporting group; % risk of student groups being suspended compared to peers by group	% favorable responses to the school climate question around "sense of belonging" on Your Voice Matters (YVM) by students ident as LGBTQ+ (4-5, 6-12)	% bullying incidents by reportable group; % threat assessments; % of serious incidents; % students/staff responding favorably to YVM (Safety)

Student-Centered Workforce

APS will support and invest in a culture that attracts and retains skilled, talented, and effective staff committed to student success and well-being.

Performance Objectives	By 2030, XX% of all staff will respond favorably that professional learning improved their professional practice, by employee scale.	By 2030, APS staff will respond favorably to their workplace climate by XX% and staff engagement by XX% on the Your Voice Matters survey.	By 2030, APS will retain at least 93% of staff to maintain continuity, improve student achievement, ensure human resources prioritized on school progress.
Strategies	• Develop vision and definition of quality professional learning in APS • Develop and implement competency-based professional learning and evaluation framework • Incorporate evidence-based recruitment, retention, and development practices to advance a quality, diverse, workforce • Develop and sustain multiple professional learning pathways to advancement	• Prioritize time spent on students and student learning • Develop/implement integrated HR initiatives that enable student-centered, inclusive climate • Employee reward and recognition processes aligned to APS strategic plan • Two-way communication system to build understanding, collaborate, raise/resolve concerns, align to division strategic plan priorities	• Study, develop, and implement competitive total rewards package to recruit & retain HQ staff in all scales. • Engage staff in providing input, feedback, and continuous improvement of APS employee total rewards package • Implement structures to include staff in decision making for the improvement of learning and operations in APS. • Study/analyze innovative staffing models
Key Performance Indicators	% school-based & all staff responding favorably to YVM/Frontline survey question that school-based/division-wide PL improved professional practice	% favorable responses by staff on the YVM survey category Engaged Workforce: Staff Engagement & Workplace Climate; # employees participating in 1 wellness initiative	% of staff responding favorably to YVM Engaged Workforce: Compensation and Benefits by employee scale; % of staff retention by employee scale

Operational Excellence

	APS will plan and implement efficient, effective, sustainable system-wide operations to support student, staff, and our community's success.		
Performance Objectives	By 2030, APS will achieve 80% of projects in the CIP to provide quality, safe, environmentally sustainable learning environments	By 2030, APS will support the learning/development of students by ensuring 100% of schools able to provide free meals to all students and reduce student transportation delays by 10%	By 2030, APS technology systems and operational services will be functional and available for use by students, staff, and community 99.9% of the year.
Strategies	• Develop/implement a long-range plan to renovate facilities and shape current/future CIPs • Progress maintenance processes to prevent disruption to instructional operations • Systematically assess/ address facility safety and remediate issues • Employ environmentally sustainable learning environments that support progress towards Arlington sustainability goals	• Investigate, obtain, implement all resources from federal, state, local gov to provide free meals • Employ strategies to recruit, train, retain bus drivers • Leverage transportation technology to improve safety, routing, maintenance, efficiency • Partner with Arlington gov./community to provide efficient/safe alternatives to student transportation to improve access to academics and supports	• Implement processes for review and deployment of operational technologies • Implement technology infrastructure plan to maintain/improve efficiency and effectiveness of APS operational/ business systems/ infrastructure • Establish/ improve processes to ensure students/ staff consistent and equitable access to instructional/ information technology
Key Performance Indicators	% of annual capital improvement projects completed	APS school meal participation rate; % of APS on-time school transportation; APS bus driver turnover rate; # of preventable APS bus transportation accidents	% Up-Time Core Technology; % Student Devices Not Functional; % Digital Resources On-Time; % Up-Time Core Information Services

Student, Family, and Community Partnerships

APS will strengthen and develop partnerships built on trust with students, families, community members, organizations, and local government to support student learning.

Performance Objectives	By 2030, XX% of students will report perceptions that they are equal partners with school staff and families in their educational experience.	By 2030, at least XX% families will respond to the YVM survey; at least 90% will respond favorably for category of Partnerships: Family Engagement	By 2030, increase the number of community partnerships from ___ to ___ that are aligned to the division's strategic plan.
Strategies	• Develop/implement equitable school and classroom practices to authentically engage students in decision making to improve learning outcomes. • Refine, expand access, and consistently communicate explicit pathways to post-secondary success and careers for students • Systematically orient/induct students new to the country to US/APS public education culture, expectations, processes, opportunities	• Employ the APS Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Policy and policy procedures to establish conditions for equitable family-school partnerships to foster student achievement and school improvement • Develop FACE consistently across APS in elementary, middle, and high schools • Create/implement a division-wide tool to inventory family engagement events	• Define community partnerships, set expectations, monitor performance, and ensure quality aligned to student and staff outcomes • Continue to improve partnerships with advisory committees, nonprofits, gov. agencies to strengthen family engagement and provide wrap-around services • Equitable system of private-public-sector partners for career exploration/ work-based learning \
Key Performance Indicators	% of students who respond favorably to survey questions on teacher-student partnerships	% favorable responses by families on YVM category Partnerships: Family Engagement; # families responding to YVM survey by student group, % staff completing FACE PL	# of Community Partnerships