

MEMORANDUM:
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON TEACHING AND LEARNING
INPUT to inform PLANNING FACTOR STUDY

To: Funmi Haastrup, Co-Founder, Equity Journey Partners
Regis Anne Shields, Co-Founder, Equity Journey Partners

From: Jenny Roahen Rizzo (ACTL Chair), Katie Cochran (ACTL Vice Chair), Anne Paris (ACTL Co-Secretary), Mike Cieslack (ACTL Co-Secretary)

CC:¹ Cristina Diaz-Torres, School Board Chair & ACTL Board Liaison
Dr. John Mayo, Chief Operating Officer
Dr. Gerald Mann, Chief Academic Officer
Sarah Putnam, Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Kerri Hirsch, Director of Curriculum & Instruction

Date: October 17, 2023

BACKGROUND

The Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning (ACTL) is a standing committee of the APS School Board. Per Policy B-3.6.30, ACTL “assists in the review of various aspects of the teaching and learning program and in the development of recommendations for instructional improvement.” ACTL is made up of two components:

1. The ACTL Council has 40-50 members who are representatives of school PTAs and Board-selected community groups.
2. ACTL Subcommittees focus on specific topics and have 5-25 members each:

Arts	Gifted Services
Career, Technical & Adult Education	Mathematics
Dual-Language Immersion	Science
Early Childhood	Social Studies
Educational Technology	Student Services
English Language Arts	World Languages
English Learners	

Additionally, the Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC) and the School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) report up to the School Board through ACTL for recommendations relating to teaching and learning.

Subcommittees and school representatives of ACTL have provided the following input about potential considerations for APS planning factors.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input. Please contact Jenny Roahen Rizzo, ACTL Chair, at ACTLchair@gmail.com with any questions or to be connected with the subcommittee chairs and school reps listed below.

GENERAL INPUT

In addition to the population-, program-, and school-specific input described below, there is broad interest among ACTL reps regarding the planning factors for **counselors, social workers, and psychologists**.

Furthermore, input given for this study as well as received over time emphasizes the importance of **interventionists and other staff who work directly with students**. This is highlighted by anecdotal evidence of school staff in coach and coach-like positions instead being used to deliver direct supports to students.

Finally, a suggestion made by one school rep that is relevant to all schools is that the **Reading Skills planning factor should include** not just free- and reduced-price meal percentages and Title I criteria, but also **a school's reading achievement levels**. (reference: pg. 4 of [FY2024 Adopted Budget Planning Factors](#))

INPUT FROM ACTL SUBCOMMITTEES & SCHOOL REPS

Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) Chair: Maggie Slye

In order to provide a “base level of equity and consistency,” PreK students should be included in all elementary planning factors. From the APS website: “The purpose of planning factors is to provide a base level of equity and consistency for personnel, equipment and supplies to meet instructional goals and to adequately deliver instruction, to provide predictability regarding budgetary planning and to assure compliance with state standards.”

- **Currently, PreK students are not included in the counseling planning factor.** ([pg. 1](#)) In order to provide PreK students with access to school counseling supports, they must be included in the planning factor. This is a critical area where we want all students to have access to the human resources that they need.

- Some planning factors indicate “students” while others indicate “K-5 students” and some show “PreK-5 students”. **Anywhere that currently says “students” or “K-5” students ideally would be changed to say “PreK-5 students” in order to provide additional clarity in the planning factor and to include PreK where they are not currently included.**
 - Example: Currently, 1.0 math coach is allocated to each elementary school. Additional clarity should be provided here to ensure PreK teachers have access to the supports provided by the math coach. ([pg. 3](#))
 - Example: Regarding Reading Skills staffing, it would be helpful to clarify that this position supports PreK-5. ([pg. 4](#))

While including PreK students in the planning factor wouldn’t necessarily lead to additional FTEs in ALL elementary schools, for several APS schools, including many of our Title 1 schools, the impact would be significant and would certainly result in new FTEs.

English Language Arts Advisory Committee (ELAAC) Chair: Mike Merrill

English Language Arts classes for grades 6-12 should be capped at a maximum of 24 students. ([pgs. 7 and 12](#))

- The [Code of Virginia](#) states that English classes in grades 6-12 should be capped at 24.
- Such student maximums are essential to teachers being able to provide the robust feedback on writing assignments that students need in order to make progress in their writing skills. Assigning a research paper and more meaningful essays do not, on their own, improve student outcomes. Teacher feedback on how to improve is essential to student growth in writing.
 - For example, if the average high school teacher sees about 130 students, and if the average amount of time to read and provide feedback on an extensive research paper is about 20 minutes each, then that teacher will need to spend more than 43 hours to provide feedback on such an assignment.
 - Even shorter, more frequent essays take about eight minutes each to read and provide feedback. Eight minutes per essay times 130 students equals over 17 hours of work.

Joint input from:

Dual-Language Immersion Sub-subcommittee to the English Learners Advisory Committee

Sub-subcommittee Chair: Paula Cordero Salas

Claremont Immersion School PTA President: Ali Goldwater

Escuela Key Elementary PTA President: Erin Aylor; ACTL Rep: Mike Cieslak

The unique instructional environment and needs of Dual-Language Immersion (DLI) elementary schools may necessitate putting Claremont and Escuela Key into their own Planning Factors category, as the Montessori programs and Arlington Traditional School are.

- In the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Planning Factors, Montessori programs and Arlington Traditional School are subject to their own Planning Factors, including maximum class sizes by grade that are lower than those of all other APS elementary schools
- Specifically, it would be useful for the study to explore adjusting planning factors for DLI elementary schools to reflect **the additional challenges teachers face in providing instruction in two languages (additional planning needs, student support, high levels of EL students, etc.)**

Each DLI elementary school needs one English-language reading specialist and one Spanish-language reading specialist.

- This was a core recommendation of the Immersion Visioning Task Force (see Recommendation 4 on page 41 of the [Framework](#)).

The study might also explore how the smaller candidate pool of teachers who are qualified to teach core content courses in Immersion Spanish (such as Science taught in Spanish) and Immersion Spanish Language Arts classes might justify adjusting Planning Factors to retain such teachers in those cases where projected class sizes in a given grade are "on the border" between, for example, having three class sections or having four class sections. If a Spanish teacher is shifted to another assignment or let go, and then more students enroll than expected and an additional teacher is needed on short notice, it is more difficult to recruit a qualified Spanish teacher than a qualified English teacher. (This recommendation would be relevant to all Spanish-immersion classes at Claremont, Escuela Key, Gunston MS, and Wakefield HS.)

*[*Chair's note - The above recommendation would be relevant for any student-facing position for which the pool of candidates is typically small. It would also be relevant for schools that have particularly transient populations.]*

Taylor Elementary ACTL Co-Reps: Katie Sunderland & Jocelyn Gould

The planning factors should have variability based on the classroom size (physical space) and the quality (inability to reduce distractions because of an absence of dividing walls or doors). Taylor's "classrooms" are very small and do not have walls. It is extremely difficult to teach large class sizes in this environment and is very distracting for students.