

## Questions From Board to Board Meeting (12/3)

### Student Population Forecasting/Data

- **How do you determine school population growth?**

We use a cohort survival method that accounts for school registration figures, historical cohort progression ratios, current and planned community land development and housing projects, and the most recent available birth data. A detailed overview of the process can be found in this document: [Enrollment Projections Methodology](#)

- **Is there any correlation between the 6-7% school growth prediction over the next 10 years and the overall county population growth predictions?**

Yes, both the population forecast and the student enrollment projections show growth. Student enrollment projections are growing more slowly than the population.

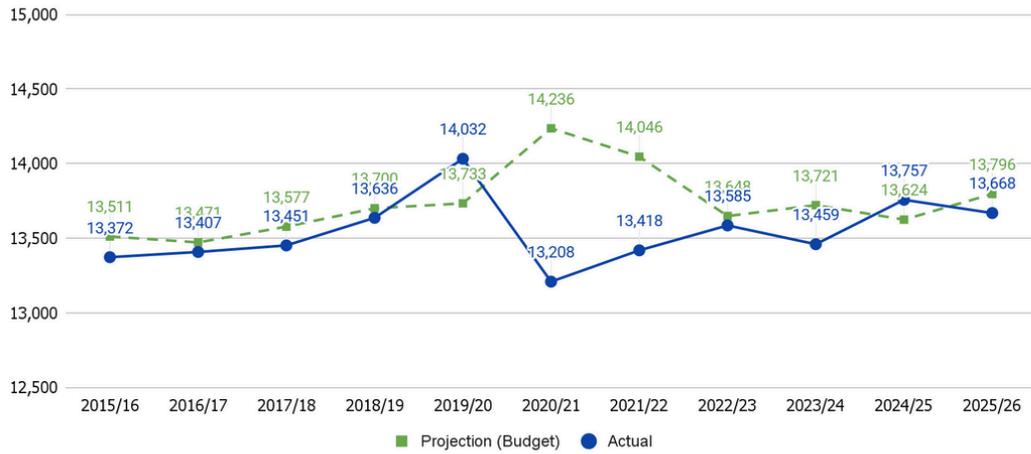
- **Why don't you contract the UVA Weldon Cooper Center and have them conduct analysis on school population growth predictions?**

We do. They provide us with annual enrollment projections. They have a methodology similar to ours, but do not account for upcoming development. It is not a detailed study. We have utilized them in the past for specific studies, though. For instance, they conducted a student yield analysis to help us determine yield rates for new developments. We will discuss with them which additional capabilities and analyses they can provide, as there appears to be interest from both Boards.

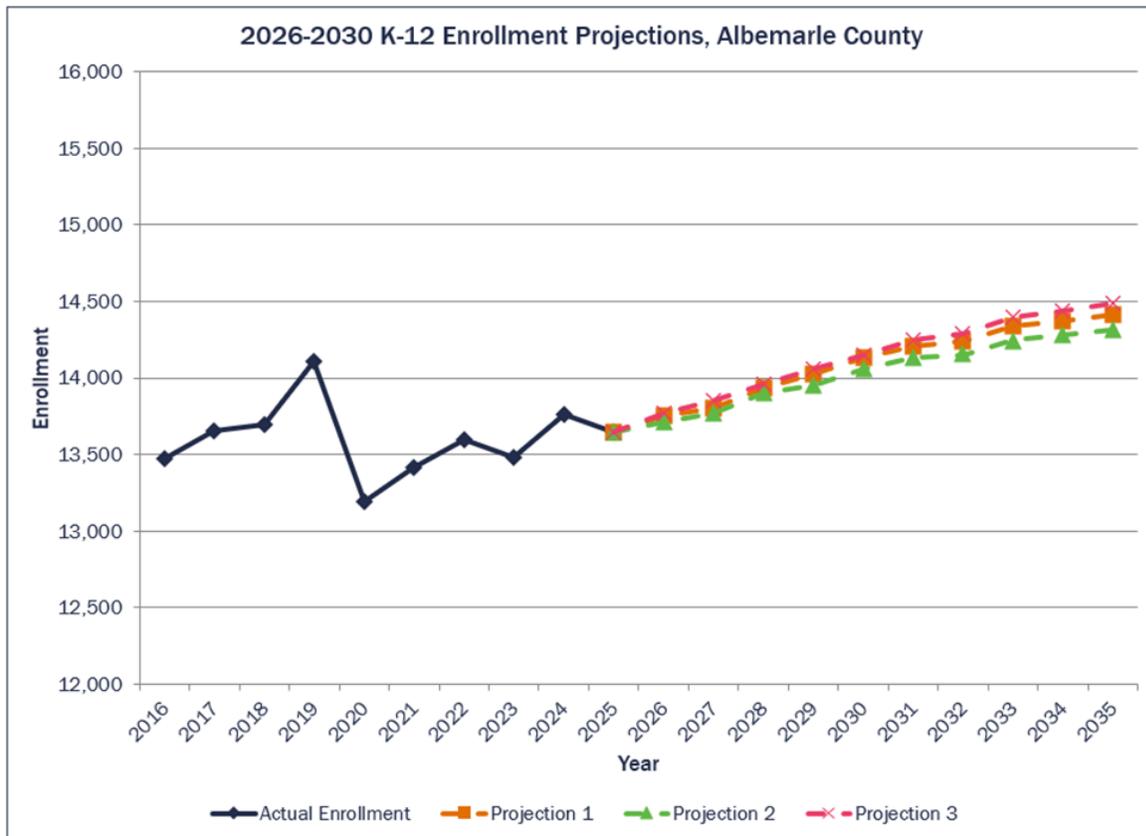
- **In 2018, ACPS had 13692 students. In 2025, you had 13644 students. Why should we believe that you are going to see growth?**

Comparing 2018 and 2025 is not a valid comparison because we lost about 800 students during the pandemic. As you will see in the chart of student enrollment history, the 1-year ACPS student enrollment projection model is generally 99% accurate. The outliers (2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22) reflect the significant impact COVID had on student enrollment. Even then, the growth trajectory before and after the pandemic is similar and continues to increase. Additionally, the housing development pipeline, as published by Albemarle County, shows population growth in the County, which will result in more students. Weldon Cooper's student enrollment projections also show student growth. So, there is no data modeling that one can draw upon to make the claim that growth is not going to occur in the Albemarle County student population.

### ACPS Student Enrollment History:



### Weldon Cooper Student Enrollment Projections:



- We are seeing lower birthrates, a boom in homeschooling and unschooling, and Albemarle County’s population growth has been folks 55 and older, that’s why we

**have all these retirement homes and facilities. Is that factored into your projections?**

Yes. Since the methodology is based on historical progression data, it captures consistent trends.

- **Albemarle High School is losing students, why do you argue that they are over capacity?**

In any one year, enrollment can increase or decrease in a school. That is why observing trends over time is necessary for effective planning. It's important to note that enrollment at Albemarle High School *currently* exceeds the building's capacity, and there is no evidence to suggest that numbers are naturally decreasing to alleviate the current overcrowding issues.

- **Where does the data come from in the Proposed CIP Booklet?**

Enrollment Data - ACPS

Housing Data - Albemarle County

Capacity Data - ACPS

Student Yield Rates - Cooperative Strategies (consultant study)

Facility Data - ACPS

- **Can you provide links to the research data in the presentation?**

- The “**NetZED Laboratory**” at the **University of Oregon** reviewed the existing literature on the effects of the built environment in K-12 schools and found that building modernization is associated with higher levels of student engagement and learning. They found that schools that are well maintained attract community use and build student and family engagement within the school, which leads to stronger student performance. Finally, student learning is enhanced through a strong spatial environment that allows greater classroom collaboration and prioritizes maintenance and operations to strengthen the classroom environment.  
<https://netzedlab.uoregon.edu/impact-of-school-facilities-on-student-engagement-and-learning/>
- The **Yale Department of Economics** found that bond authorizations supporting capital renovation projects that modernize facilities and address aging equipment and technology improve student test scores, while those funding the construction of new school facilities increase property values.  
[https://www.barbarabiasi.com/uploads/1/0/1/2/101280322/bilaschon\\_2023.pdf](https://www.barbarabiasi.com/uploads/1/0/1/2/101280322/bilaschon_2023.pdf)
- Research published in the **American Economic Journal: Applied Economics** found that students attending newly constructed schools experience significant gains in test scores and classroom performance. Additionally, students in newly built schools attend an average of four more days per academic year. They also found that house prices increased by 6% in neighborhoods that received new school facilities.

Julien Lafortune and David Schönholzer. The Impact of School Facility Investments on Students and Homeowners: Evidence from Los Angeles. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. Vol. 14, no. 3, July 2022 (pp. 254–89)

<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.20200467#:~:text=Abstract,DOI:%2010.1257/app.20200467>

- Nielson and Zimmerman of the **Yale Department of Economics** found that new elementary and middle school construction raised reading scores, home prices, and public school enrollment.  
Christopher A. Neilson, Seth D. Zimmerman. The effect of school construction on test scores, school enrollment, and home prices. *Journal of Public Economics*, Volume 120, 2014 (Pages 18-31).  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0047272714001765>
- **Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy** evaluated investments in New Jersey public school construction and found that \$5.4 Billion invested over five years resulted in 9,357 jobs-years annually, \$1.5 billion in income, \$3.3 billion in GDP, \$369 million in federal tax revenues, \$72 million in state tax revenues, and \$87 million in local tax revenues.  
[https://edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/Newsblasts/EconomicImpactofSchoolConstructionProjects\\_07\\_08\\_08.pdf](https://edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/Newsblasts/EconomicImpactofSchoolConstructionProjects_07_08_08.pdf)
- **Wright State University, Center for Urban and Public Affairs**, found that a \$159.1 million school facility project in Huber Heights, OH, generated a total of \$258.3 million in sales, 1,944 jobs, \$92 million in labor income, and \$4.5 million in state and local sales and income tax revenues over the 30 months of the project.  
[https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/cupa\\_econdev/7/#:~:text=Description,sale%20and%20income%20tax%20revenues](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/cupa_econdev/7/#:~:text=Description,sale%20and%20income%20tax%20revenues).
- **The International Economic Development Council (IEDC)** encourages communities to “invest in the basics,” such as public schools, to attract companies, noting that poor schools are a primary reason businesses bypass communities for location.  
[https://www.iedconline.org/index.php?src=blog&srctype=blog\\_detail\\_archive&refno=3258&category=Archive](https://www.iedconline.org/index.php?src=blog&srctype=blog_detail_archive&refno=3258&category=Archive)

- **Slides 34-35, where are the sources for the data?**

In the report, you can find detailed information by building, including the date of original construction and the date of significant improvements beginning on Page 35.

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1763755438/k12albemarleorg/kaeolinfskguwrwcz2ze/2025LRPACReport-SBApproved.pdf> (pages 35-46)

- **On Slide 40, it shows circles with Crozet. I'd like more data on that for how we say what's coming.**

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1763755438/k12albemarleorg/kaeolinfsguwrwcz2ze/2025LRPACReport-SBApproved.pdf> (pages 31-32) Source: Albemarle County

- **Looking at demographics of the county, what's the actual buildout - not just projected?**

Building Activity Reports are a comparative analysis of the number of new building permits and the new dwelling units generated from these permits. Statistics are analyzed by school district, magisterial district, and comprehensive plan areas.

<https://www.albemarle.org/government/community-development/view/building-activity-reports>

- **What explains the difference in population growth between the county and the schools?**

Several factors could explain differences in overall population growth in the county and in student population growth in ACPS. *FutureEd* published an article highlighting much of the national trend data. Lower birth rates reduce the number of students entering school each year. For those families with school-aged children, there is a national trend, which is particularly prevalent throughout Virginia, to “[unschool](#)” or homeschool their children, and there are a significant number of private school options in the Albemarle County area where many of our residents send their students. Also, the Board of Supervisors has prioritized age-restricted communities for individuals aged 55+ and also multi-family housing, which tend to have fewer school-age children per dwelling unit than single-family or townhome communities.

## Preschool Facility

- **Where do you plan to build the proposed preschool center? Is the Brookhill site the only one you've considered?**

The Brookhill site seems to be the most feasible solution, but no decision has been made. This is being studied. The Brookhill site is centrally located, and it has the advantage of reducing overall costs, given that the land was proffered as a condition of its permits.

- **Will the Preschool Center provide greater capacity for PreK offerings, or is it simply to relocate existing students to free up capacity in Elementary Schools?**

Both.

- **What is the specific capacity that will be freed up in the Urban Ring elementary schools?**

150 to 170 students at Agnor, Greer, and Woodbrook.

- **Will construction of the Preschool Center allow you to reduce class sizes in the elementary schools (or at least keep you from having to increase class size)?**

Current class sizes are not affected by capacity constraints at this time; they are driven by operational budget constraints. Moving preschool classrooms to a centralized location will ease capacity issues and allow the division to maintain current class sizes, but reducing class sizes would require additional operational funds.

- **How many students will the preschool facility be designed to serve?**

200-300

- **Will the new PreK center address current demand for those eligible for PreK services?**

It will likely not meet the full demand. Depending on whether you factor in demand from 2- and 3-year-olds, demand for early childhood education is high. However, there is also a limit to the size of such a center to ensure it is manageable.

- **What are the net effects of building the Preschool center?**

A preschool center would free up 11-14 classrooms in our urban ring elementary schools, easing capacity issues there, and a dedicated preK center would also provide academic benefits for our students. Building a centralized Pre-K Center strengthens student outcomes by creating a coherent, high-quality early-learning experience while improving efficiency and equity across the system.

For students, a Pre-K Center allows the division to concentrate specialized staff, instructional coaching, and developmentally appropriate resources in one place. This leads to more consistent implementation of evidence-based early-literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional practices—critical foundations for later academic success. Purpose-built spaces support play-based learning, early intervention services, and family engagement in ways that are often difficult to replicate in scattered classrooms.

Compared with offering preschool separately at individual schools, a Pre-K Center reduces variability in quality, staffing, and programming. It avoids isolating preschool from related supports such as special education, language services, health screenings, and family services. Centralization also improves continuity of services, professional collaboration, and transitions into kindergarten, while freeing elementary schools to focus space and staffing on K–5 instruction.

In short, a Pre-K Center delivers stronger early learning outcomes for students while creating a more equitable, sustainable, and aligned system.

## Center Model

- **Has ACPS abandoned the Center Model? Because between March 17th and now, it appears you all have abandoned it.**

No. The center model was adopted for both capital and academic reasons. While the centers will ease capacity issues, they are designed academically to provide focused learning experiences for our students. Initially, we considered moving what were our academies (at least MESA and the Health and Medical Sciences Academy) to the center at LLC, but with the parallel development of the Scholar Studios, housing them at the centers was a logical fit.

Continuously developing a contemporary high school model while also addressing aging facilities and overcrowding is not a matter of choosing one priority over another. Both are necessary and will enhance the learning opportunities for ACPS students.

In Albemarle County Public Schools, high school redesign has always been about expanding opportunity, relevance, and equity for students, through career academies, centralized learning opportunities, updated programs of study, and a clear Profile of a Graduate that emphasizes relationships, relevance, and rigor. At the same time, the division must confront very real physical constraints: aging buildings, enrollment growth, and capacity pressures that, if left unaddressed, limit access to those very opportunities we are working to create.

Modernizing facilities and alleviating crowding are not separate from instructional redesign; they are enabling conditions. Contemporary learning requires flexible spaces, specialized labs, shared centers, and transportation systems that allow students to access programs beyond their base schools. Likewise, addressing overcrowding protects the quality of instruction and student experience while giving the division room to innovate rather than simply manage scarcity.

ACPS's trajectory recognizes that future-ready learning environments and responsible stewardship of facilities must advance together. Doing both intentionally and in parallel is how we ensure that today's and tomorrow's students benefit from schools that are equitable, engaging, and built for the future: [Albemarle County Public Schools High School Facilities Planning Study Final Report, December 2017](#).

- **The Board of Supervisors told residents the reason we were not building a comprehensive high school is because the School Board believed that the center model was the best way to address capacity issues. What has changed?**

The notion that the Center Model was simply a response to high school overcrowding is inaccurate. The model was adopted to support ACPS's *High School 2022* initiative, which aimed to expand learning opportunities through project-based learning,

interdisciplinary instruction, alternative paths to credit, culminating experiences, student ownership, internships, and work-based learning (School Board Agenda Item Summary, December 14, 2017). This work ultimately evolved into the ACPS *Scholar Studios* learning model.

As part of this *High School 2022* initiative, the School Board commissioned a comprehensive study in 2017 to examine high school capacity and renovation needs necessary to advance the strategic direction. The study evaluated multiple options, including a new comprehensive high school and high school centers, assessing cost, equity, disruption, and long-term impact.

The School Board ultimately advanced a phased strategy that paired the construction or leasing of space for high school centers across the county with significant renovations and expansions of the three comprehensive high schools. The estimated cost for the first center and renovations was under \$90 million over five years. This approach was intended to serve approximately 4,000 high school students countywide and was considered the least disruptive option. Additional centers could be added over time based on enrollment and demand.

The High School Center was originally planned to open in 2021 and have 600 seats. However, the Board of Supervisors changed the schedule and the School Board reduced the size due to overall CIP funding limitations. The project is now opening five years after the original scheduled date and is  $\frac{2}{3}$  the original planned size. To date, renovations to the existing high schools have not been fully funded.

It is also important to note that a new comprehensive high school is neither a new nor an emerging priority. In 2021, the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee (LRPAC) included an additional high school center in its Capital Needs Assessment recommendations. In its 2023 report, LRPAC added a placeholder project titled *High School Capacity*, identifying the long-term need for additional high school seats and acknowledging multiple possible approaches, including an additional center, expansions to existing schools, or a new comprehensive high school. The School Board subsequently included planning for this project in Year 5 of the Capital Improvement Program and ranked it as the tenth-highest priority.

***2023 Capacity Projects Requests (Timeline):***

		5-year CIP FY25 to FY 29						CNA				
		23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/32	32/33	33/34
Funded	MVES Expansion	Mid-year open										
	Center 2	Design	Construction		Center Open							
	SFP ES	Design	Construction		School Open							
LRPAC Request	NFP ES	Redistricting Study	Redistricting Phase I		Design	Construction		School Open				
	Land Acquisition		Land Acquisition									
	HS Project						Design	Construction		Project Open		
	Middle School Study		Middle School Study Recommendations									

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In Fall 2024, the School Board included this placeholder project in its CIP for years 4 and 5 and ranked it 8th in priority. In 2025, the Board received [greater detail](#) of the three options and ultimately decided the comprehensive high school was the best solution to the current capacity issues. The project is now prioritized first and is proposed for years 2-5 of the CIP. This represents a one-year acceleration of the project start within the overall CIP planning work (while keeping the original opening year).

So, the idea that the proposed new comprehensive high school project came out of the blue is inaccurate. This is the first year the specificity of the project was included in the School Board’s proposed CIP, but the need has been identified in the plan for some time.

- **What are the enrollment projections for Center I and Center II for Fall 2026?**

We are currently projecting 83 students per day (166 total students) at ACE Academy Seminole Place (Center 1) and 292 students per day (584 total students) at ACE Academy Lambs Lane (Center 2). Student course registration for the next school year is currently underway, and initial data indicate we will likely exceed that projection. Due to recent recruitment efforts, the 9th- and 10th-grade cohorts at both locations are larger, and as they progress through high school, total program enrollment will increase. In addition to these students, we will seek to maximize building utilization given the proximity to Albemarle High School. The admins of both locations will collaborate on student attendance at the center where possible.

- **Are we still expecting a significant draw down from other comprehensive high schools to the centers?**

For Lambs Lane (Center II), we have always expected a significant drawdown from Albemarle High School. When we researched other localities that opened centers like

this, about 10% of students would move from other schools. We think that is a conservative estimate.

Thus far, we have doubled the number of students in Scholars Studios, rising from 9th and 10th grade this time last year to 9th and 10th grade this year.

- In December of 2024, we had 168 rising 9th, so far this year, we have 359.
- In December of 2024, we had 126 rising 10th, so far this year, we have 265.

This is positive news because last year, between December and March, an additional 80 rising 9th graders were added. So, we anticipate continued student interest. In addition, we have already hit our ACE Academy Lambs Lane cohort target for 9th (240 with a target of 200). We are close to hitting our cohort target for 10th (185/200). We believe that we are on the right track to hit our staffing goals for these cohorts.

As another reference point, since 2020, we have seen growth in our students' attendance at CATEC: 81 to 120 students from Albemarle, 55 to 119 from Monticello, and 45 to 64 from Western attend CATEC.

## School Busses

- **Do your buses run on diesel? I've seen projections on all the school buses you need, but going forward, have you done any analysis to consider alternative purchases as you plan for the future, like moving to electric or hybrid buses? Have you considered how you might build the new bus facility to accommodate electric buses in the future?**

Yes, the majority of our buses are diesel. We have four electric buses and two charging stations that were funded through grants. The current cost of electric vehicles is prohibitive, however, and adding to the fleet would require a County wide charging station plan. The four EV buses are in use primarily in the northern feeder pattern due to them being tethered to charging stations on the Lambs Lane Campus. When we submitted the needs request to address our aging bus fleet, we stated EV's need to have separate funding due to their significant cost over a traditional unit. Since additional funding was not provided, using existing school bus replacement funding to add EV's would significantly reduce the number of units we could replace annually. Grant opportunities are becoming more and more rare while prices are continuing to climb vs. the projection that they would drop in price with more production and demand.

We utilized a grant opportunity last year through CALSTART, partnering with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation. The focus was to develop a charging infrastructure plan within our division's footprint that would maximize EV utilization. The result was a three-depot charging model, one at each high school. The study provided an estimated investment of \$210M to electrify the

majority of the fleet (~25 buses would not qualify for EV usage due to the length of the route on an overnight and midday charge). The study also estimated only a 22% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to our current fleet due to Dominion's "dirty grid". The full study can be reviewed here:

 CALSTART CBPA FTP\_Albemarle\_Final.pdf

We have also explored propane-fueled units. Barriers include managing multiple fuels at our sites, the life of those units is similar to gasoline engines, 8-10 years, which would impact our fleet replacement and, and we are limited to only one OEM that provides a propane option, which is not a preferred vendor. Lastly, our terrain is unfavorable because the engines have limited ability to navigate inclines.

- **Why does ACPS allow rusted school buses to be in operation? Why not paint them?**

Perhaps you are referring to buses whose hood paint is peeling. From 2012-2020, Bluebird buses had fiberglass hoods, and the paint and primer were not good quality. After about 4-5 years out of warranty, the hood paint begins to peel.

Of the 83 buses in this age range, 56 require repainting. We have tried various remedies and have now identified a process that appears effective. Last year, we successfully repainted 20 hoods, subject to available funding. We are working to secure additional funding to sustain progress. Rather than painting every bus regardless of its lifespan, we are prioritizing repairs based on the vehicle retirement schedule and will not repaint vehicles scheduled for replacement within the next two years.

## Learning Cottages/Trailers

- **How many trailers are not being used by students currently?**

Of the 76 units, only 12 are not being used by students. Here is a summary of trailers by location and their use:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SWC2U-a-82TE1hljj27HEnpCIN-rPuJ/view?usp=sharing>

- **How many trailers will be removed in the next year or two?**

The equivalent of 12 classrooms will be removed next year. After completion of Mountain View Upper Elementary, we will remove the 8-classroom unit and the 4-classroom unit at Mountain View Elementary. However, we are evaluating the need to relocate the 8-classroom unit to Western. After the completion of ACE Academy Lambs Lane, one of the 8-classroom units at AHS will be removed. The other 8-classroom unit that is currently there will remain.

## Benchmark Counties

- I'd like a more detailed picture of the benchmark counties. We need more data on comparison jurisdictions.

Jurisdiction	Albemarle County	Stafford County	Hampton City	Hanover County	Montgomery County	Williamsburg/James City County	Frederick County	Roanoke County	Rockingham County
University Presence	UVA	Mary Washington	Hampton, CNU	VCU, Richmond, Randolph Macon	VaTech, Radford	William & Mary	Shenandoah	Roanoke, Hollins	JMU, EMU
Independent City	Charlottesville	Fredericksburg	Hampton	Richmond	Radford	Williamsburg	Winchester	Salem, Roanoke	Harrisonburg
Population	118,769	168,919	138,036	116,425	98,862	98,202	98,109	97,405	87,675
Student Population	14,173	31,275	19,657	16,890	9,534	11,485	14,600	13,799	11,600
Student Pop as % of Total	11.9%	18.5%	14.2%	14.5%	9.6%	11.7%	14.9%	14.2%	13.2%
Sq. Miles Land	721	515	54.7	459	387	150.94	414	250	849
Students/sq mile	19.66	60.73	359.36	36.80	24.64	76.09	35.27	55.20	13.66
Number of High Schools	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	5	4
Average HS Building Age	50.00	26.00	60.75	48.00	13.00	33.67	34.00	53.20	31.75
Avg # Students / HS	1457.67	2114.25	1494.00	1382.75	747.75	1245.33	1559.33	919.40	907.75
Average HS Student:Teacher Ratio	14.67	11.25	14.75	14.50	12.00	16.67	13.33	15.20	14.75

	Albemarle	Comps	Difference
Average # students/HS	1458	1356	102.22
Average HS Student:Teacher	14.67	14.06	0.61
Average Number of High Schools	3.0	4.1	1.1
Average HS Building Age	50.00	38.29	11.71
Median # students/HS	1,458.00	1,330.00	128.00
Median HS Student:Teacher	14.67	14.63	0.04
Median Number of High Schools	3	4	1
Median HS Building Age	50.0	35.0	15.0

## Mt. View Elementary

- Is this a new model ACPS is considering: building primary and upper schools to increase capacity?

No, this is specific to the Mountain View community due to population density, the inability to establish equitable boundaries, and the proximity of the two parcels. This model for Mountain View was recommended by focus groups of parents and teachers. Not only was it preferred educationally, but it was the least disruptive. Having two elementary schools would have required significant redistricting.

## Comprehensive High School

- How can you propose a new high school when you haven't even made a decision on a site?

Currently, the only property owned by Albemarle County that could potentially support a new comprehensive high school in the Northern Feeder Pattern is the Berkmar property.

Despite significant environmental and topographic challenges, we can site a high school there and are currently taking the next steps to further evaluate it. However, before identifying potential alternative sites, the Board of Supervisors must first approve the high school project as a priority. To go through the process of identifying potential sites, analyzing feasibility, and negotiating land sale agreements without a defined project or budget would not be fiscally responsible.

- **Has a decision been made on the Berkmar proffered site?**

No decision has been made on the Berkmar site. However, the proffer identifies it first as a possible site for a high school. We have conducted preliminary research on siting a comprehensive high school on the property and have identified challenges that must be addressed going forward. Even with the contemplated mitigation measures we would need to address, though the Berkmar site has nearby utilities and, by eliminating land purchase costs, may be the least expensive site option for a high school so it is being seriously considered.

- **Has ACPS conducted an operational impact analysis for a new high school?**

Yes,

<https://esblogin.k12albemarle.org/attachments/f93bb6a5-cec6-4bcc-9cd0-a2b36f40ffa5.pdf> \$6.3M for a high school, \$2.8M for a new center, minimal costs for an addition.

- **What changed from last year to this year to make a comprehensive high school the top priority?**

Community and staff feedback and further study.

- **How can you make this a top priority, but you haven't even done a full-on financial impact for five and 10 years yet?**

High schools are currently over capacity, and that will only increase. A new high school is the most effective way to address the challenges of overcrowding, aging infrastructure, and accessibility. It is clearly the highest priority if we are to address these critical unmet needs.

The five-year pause on CIP construction projects and the significant reduction in size of the ACE Academy - Lambs Lane have exacerbated the current challenges. As we presented to the Board of Supervisors, ACPS has developed cost estimates for the project (including inflation) and operating cost estimates. We have a clear understanding of the likely financial impact, which is the issue under debate.

- **How does a comprehensive high school and the center model coexist?**

It is important to begin by grounding this conversation in history and context. Center models are not new in Albemarle County, and they were never designed to replace comprehensive high schools. For decades, comprehensive high schools in Albemarle County have operated under a center model. The original vision was not three high schools *or* a center, but three high schools *and* a center: CATEC. If a fourth comprehensive high school is added, then there would be four comprehensive high schools working in partnership with centers. There are technical centers throughout Virginia, the U.S., and the world, so this is not a novel concept.

In Albemarle, students who elect to participate in a center remain enrolled at their base school, where they have access to support staff and can participate in club and extracurricular/co-curricular activities. However, they attend their center every other day rather than daily. The center provides a different learning environment from the base school. With specialized spaces, equipment, and materials; a hands-on instructional approach; and experiences aligned with students' interests, career exploration, and future pathways, centers are not solely about addressing capacity; they are about opening broader career pathways for our students. The modest capacity increase is an added benefit for our base schools, but it does not meet the current or future demands.

Albemarle County did not invent this model. We have operated center-based learning for decades through the Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Education Center (CATEC), which serves students from all of our high schools. CATEC operates alongside comprehensive high schools to provide hands-on learning, job-skills development, industry credentials, and community partnerships that are difficult to replicate in a traditional high school setting. That coexistence has been stable, intentional, and successful.

We also see this same logic play out just up the road at Piedmont Virginia Community College. When the Bollock Advanced Manufacturing Center was built, there was very little public debate about whether it should exist or whether it somehow competed with traditional college preparation or the region's comprehensive high schools. Students from across Albemarle County and beyond attend the Bollock Center because they have a clear interest in advanced manufacturing, engineering, and applied technical fields. It is widely understood as a *value-added*, unique opportunity for students with a particular passion and a clear vision for their future.

The Virginia Department of Education has embedded career development in Virginia's public schools through the Virginia School Board Regulations and the Standards of Accreditation and Accountability. Yet, questions sometimes arise, particularly from a long-standing mindset that equates success almost exclusively with a single college-preparatory path.

That mindset no longer reflects the world our students are entering.

Across the United States and around the world, high-performing school systems intentionally operate comprehensive schools alongside specialized centers. For example...

- In Germany, comprehensive secondary schooling coexists with technical and vocational centers that prepare students for highly skilled careers.
- In Singapore, applied learning programs and specialized institutes operate alongside comprehensive secondary schools to meet diverse student interests and national workforce needs.
- In the United States, one nationally recognized example is the Tolles Career & Technical Center, which serves students from multiple comprehensive high schools while maintaining strong academic outcomes and deep employer partnerships.

These systems do not debate whether comprehensive schools and centers can coexist. They assume they must.

Closer to home, Albemarle County has lived this reality through our academies. The Math Engineering Science Academy, the Environmental Science Academy, and the Health and Medical Sciences Academy all faced skepticism at their inception. Over time, as these programs matured and demand increased, they demonstrated an important point: high schools do not lose their identity by offering specialized experiences. They strengthen it.

Those academies are now being integrated into the Scholar Studio instructional program to expand access and reduce barriers, ensuring that more students can benefit from these opportunities. This is not a retreat from comprehensive high schools. It is an evolution designed to better meet student needs.

At the heart of this work is a simple reality about adolescents. High school students are young adults. They want relevance, agency, and authentic choice. When we do not provide those opportunities within our public schools, students and families seek them elsewhere. Centers allow us to meet students where they are while keeping them connected to a comprehensive high school community.

So the real question is not whether comprehensive high schools and centers can coexist. They always have, here and elsewhere. The more important question is how comprehensive high schools can thrive in the future without access to centers and specialized learning environments.

From that perspective, this work is not a departure from Albemarle County's direction. It is a continuation of a long-standing model, informed by decades of local experience and

aligned with what contemporary school systems and postsecondary institutions already do to prepare students for a complex, rapidly changing world.

- **How does the priority list play out if you push back the comprehensive high school?**

The LRPAC and School Board recommended making the new high school a top priority. Even if the timeline were pushed back, it would remain the first priority.

- **Has ACPS thought about ways to fund this? Have you come up with how we can get to the capacity we need to do this and what mechanisms the Board of Supervisors can pull?**

Yes. We understand that the cost of a new comprehensive high school is significant. However, the need remains, and costs continue to rise. We believe it is essential to develop a plan now. When the School Board first considered a new high school in 2016 and 2017, the estimated cost was \$120M. We believe a new high school is warranted, and we can work with the BOS to determine the best financing approach.

There are certainly ways to fund the project. The question is not one of budget *capacity*, it is one of budget *priority*. To identify what actions to take, ACPS recommends greater clarity and transparency in the budget process to make plain where funding is prioritized and what the ultimate cost would be to the taxpayer - not simply for this project, but for all government and school budget items.

We encourage ongoing dialogue with the Board of Supervisors regarding the current formula-based revenue allocation. It is possible to fund a project like this if it is prioritized over other funding requests.