

Feedback On Policy GCPA

I do not feel it is fair to look at classes, seminars, extra school hours, etc... in determining which staff to reduce/retain. Teachers have different times in their lives when they are able to offer more or less hours outside of the normal 9-10 hours daily. We do not keep track of hours spent at home every evening doing schoolwork, classwork, etc... or weekend hours at home or school. I would hate to think anyone would be penalized for spending time with family and young children, church activities, health activities, rather than taking classes, etc... Those without a spouse or children are able to take more classes, join more committees, etc... at this time in their lives, where others may not be, or already have.

I believe that people who are part time should have their service count for seniority, particularly if they have had continuous service for multiple years. This is especially true for those individuals whose positions are based on available monies--they should not be penalized for working part time when they would have preferred to be full time.

I am a first year Physical Education teacher and contracted for 70%. I have spent my first three years out of college doing everything under the sun for Albemarle County for my first real crack at teaching P.E. I was overjoyed to sign my first contract in hopes of many more years. Unfortunately, it seems as quickly as I have been given this wonderful opportunity, it is going to be taken away. I have made countless changes to my life (including buying my first home) because I had felt I have finally reached a comfort point in my life and ready to get adjusted to the 'teaching life.' I hope that considerable thought will go in before my position is cut. While I understand that I am being selfish about my own priorities, having to work as a PE TA and working 2 other jobs to support my mortgage, pay for a wedding and enjoy life and pray for another crack at a extremely difficult position will be a tough pill to swallow.

1. Intro: add the words "equitable" or "fair" somewhere, e.g. "Regulations have been developed to provide for an equitable general reduction in total personnel and for a fair redistribution of personnel within designated programs."; 2. on the first page listing the RIF criteria, items D & E are unclear. Does working at a small school increase or decrease your likelihood of being RIF'd? Since item E includes teachers, it seems to encompass everybody in the school other than administrators, so why is it listed here? ; 3. The Tier Two criteria (pp. 6-7) are unfair because teachers were not aware until now that these factors, such as Nat'l Teacher Cert., NETS*T cert., or involvement in extracurricular activities, would be considered for retaining their jobs. This set of outside-of-contract demands is being applied retroactively, which I think is illegal.; 4. This policy effectively abolishes the concept of tenure and you should say so.

This seems very well thoughtout and fair. I especially appreciate the credit given for non-contiguous service. Many people have been with the county for a long time, then work part-time or take time off for life occurrences, and then come back, better than ever. Thank you for honoring those situations. The only other feedback I have involves considering protecting some new teachers who are quite exceptional. I wonder if there is a way to add points based on parent/student feedback, principal recommendation, etc.

My question relates to the following segment of the policy: IV. REASSIGNMENT AND RECALL; A. Reassignment; 1. Employees who are proposed to be reduced shall be reassigned to vacant positions within the division for which they are qualified based on their recent experience, endorsements and education, among other factors.; Does that mean that if an employee is on the reduction list that they WILL be reassigned? This is my interpretation and I could be incorrect, but I'd like to know what that means and if we will have an option to decline a teacher if they are not the right fit for our building....Thanks!

Seniority Calculation for Part-Time Employment. Current full-time employees shall have any previous years of part-time employment with the division credited for seniority in the following manner: each year of part-time employment in the division, whether continuous or non-continuous, shall be given one (1) seniority point. Current part-time employees shall not receive seniority points for either current or prior part-time employment. Concerning the above passage, my question is: Can current part-time employees receive seniority points for years of full-time employment in the past?

I know of a teacher who spent a lot of time and energy to build her program in a school only to be rifted and have the program go down. I think that was a terrible loss of a teachers hard work, difficult for the school, and hard also for the person who tried to take her place.

After looking over the draft policy I was frustrated to see that there seems to be no consideration for part-time employment unless you are full-time as of now. I am a music teacher at one of the elementary schools. There are many part-time music and art teachers around the county because of the FTE given to those smaller schools only allows part time. I have been working at the same elementary school, part-time, for 6 years straight. I accepted this job as part-time, rather than full-time because the schedule for this school would not work out with another small school. I feel that it is important that children have as much continuity in art and music as possible. When these programs experience a change over in teachers every 2-3 years this continuity is lost and the program, in many cases, has to start over again. Many of these small schools can experience turnover due to the part-time job being offered. Many teachers strive to find a full-time job and leave once they have found that position. I think that there should be more consideration given to these specialized areas where part-time may be the only option for that position in that particular school. My frustration is that I have served the county for 6 years, this being my first teaching job out of college, and now my job doesn't seem to count among the tiers in this policy. Perhaps I have read the policy wrong, and if so, I apologize, but I want to express my feelings on this draft. Thank you for your consideration.

I wish the county would also include some recognition of years worked for the county in roles other than a teacher when considering seniority. Every job in the school is important and it is a shame not to give some recognition for that service. I have worked for public schools since August of 2000 in many positions including teaching assistant, afterschool teacher, homebound teacher, substitute teacher, and teacher. All but one year of that time I have worked for Albemarle County. The current way my seniority is being considered only gives me credit for three years as a teacher. I have two years continuous Albemarle County service and one year for Virginia service. I just wish that my commitment and dedication to the students and to Albemarle County for these many years could be considered as well as just the years teaching.

I think the changes are positive and I appreciate the hard work on this project. I think that seniority should be the first factor (years teaching in Albemarle county and other schools/states) followed by professional development and skills for the job. Thank you.

As a teacher who has been RIFed by this county before because another bumped me from my position, I am not happy with the proposed Reduction of Licensed Staff policy. I respect the Tier I policy with points awarded for service. I also understand trying to keep continuity within schools however the new policy doesn't seem to respect teachers who have worked for the county for a number of years by allowing them to move to another school during a time of need. The new policy seems like it would help newer teachers (which I am) but would also limit the opportunity to move to another school if they are RIFed and would have to play a wait and see game for a RECALL. It seems funny that we are reviewing the policy this year as we look at ways to reduce staff to make up for budget constraints.

Why is there no specific consideration in the "Educational Certifications and Honors" or other categories for advanced degrees in education or other fields? I am a first-year teacher and a licensed attorney with a successful work history spanning 20 years. I left a high-paying legal job and went back to school for my master's in education in order to fulfill a lifetime dream to follow my family's tradition and teach. I received a perfect score on my PRAXIS II exam. I have sterling performance reviews. For purposes of the chopping block, however, there is nothing specifically articulated in this proposed policy to differentiate me from a teacher fresh out of a four-year undergraduate program who has no work history, or from someone a year ahead of me on the tenure track who barely passed his or her qualifying exams. Shouldn't my advanced education, performance, and prior work experience count for something in the final tally, even if I am not implementing the mysterious eBook program so that I can be protected from reduction as "essential to school operations"? Additionally, please consider extending the tenure window for those of us who do end up "reduced." Consider allowing us two years to re-enter the Albemarle system before we lose the benefit of the year toward tenure that we have already accrued. These are tough times, and we deserve at least that incentive to return to our chosen system.

Comment re: Plan of Assistance -- "Current" plan is specified. Previous plans haven't always resulted in teacher improvement. If a teacher has been on a plan and does not demonstrate improvement following termination of the plan, this factor should be considered as strongly as a current plan situation. And let's face it: performance has to be pretty poor for a teacher to be placed on a plan in ACPS. Questions: 1) Re: Seniority -- for current full-time teachers, how about points for part-time employment in another school division? 2) I am confused by the dates on this "draft." There is no recent date on it. If the only changes are those in yellow, does that mean there has been a recall list in the past? If there was supposed to be one last year, it was not maintained...and therefore, maintenance of the list would have to be supervised.

If a principal recommends a staff member for reduction, there is nothing in the policy that requires the employee to be informed of the recommendation prior to the school board making a decision. A conference can be held, if requested by the employee, per the new policy, except that the employee may not know that he/she has been recommended for reduction.

I think that the new policy looks great and really does reflect the feedback that we gave our teacher advisory representative. Thank you for listening to the voice of the teachers and devising a clear plan that we can all understand and prepare for in our future with ACPS. I am happy to see the tiered 1 and 2 levels for RIF consideration. Our cohort of teachers strongly felt that some of the listed criterion seemed of heavier importance than others and I appreciate your consideration of that in this revised RIF policy. Thank you for listening to our voices and directly making the necessary changes.

My worry is for veteran teachers with this new no bumping rule. Due to student enrollment changes or new fiscal reductions, several staff members are at risk. For example, a special ed or regular ed teacher with 15 years or more tenure in the county could potentially lose their job to another teacher in a different school with less than 3 years experience because there are no vacancies. This would seem to be true for art, music and PE teachers, too. That just doesn't seem fair to me. Experience and commitment to the school division should count for something.

Positives: Probationary teachers are/should be the first to be cut, seniority scores seem fair, reassignment, and recall sections give hope. Negatives: Part-time employees don't have much protection for their positions, this draft is extremely overwhelming with so many different criteria (I just need to know where I'll stand with my job).

It seems unfair NOT to allow a teacher with higher scores from one school to take a position held by a person in another school, just because the RIF'ed teacher happened to be assigned to that school. We are employees of the Albemarle County Public Schools, not a particular school within the system. If a teacher has completed three years of annual contract satisfactorily with no black marks in his/her record, that person should be able to replace another annual contract teacher with fewer years credit.

I like that we are assessing more than just last hired in terms of who is RIF'd. I also like that we can now answer criticisms of an educational policy that in the past, rewards potential incompetence by virtue of hiring date. I do feel that asst. principals are bearing AN UNFAIR BURDEN of reduction savings. We can't balance the budget on their backs alone. A sense of FAIRNESS is NOT in play where our asst. principals are concerned. Give us all a reduction in pay; do not single out one component of a successful school!!

A RIF policy based solely upon seniority is antiquated. The division could be forced to RIF employees based upon random calendar factors that include timing of an interview, submission of paperwork to HR, or the timing of School Board meetings. To find a balance in the RIF policy that includes seniority and areas of certification is much more sensible. To stop the bumping of people from one level to another is also imperative. There are few similarities in being a high school teacher and a middle school teacher. Thanks for considering the new policy. It will make our division stringer in the future since the most important part of a school system is its highly qualified teachers.

I think a lot of thought has gone into this document, and I basically agree with its contents except one criteria. It may or may not apply to elementary school teachers. The criteria is contributions to programs and activities afterschool. I take care of my granddaughter from 4 til 10 4 nights a week and all day Saturday so my daughter can work. That leaves me no time to participate in after school events. My other concern is though I have taught 32 years, I am not in a financial position to retire, nor am I ready to give up a career I find satisfying. I have some fears that people eligible to retire will somehow be forced to through reduction despite the criteria listed. Is there a safeguard for those in my position if we wish to keep teaching?

Just a couple clarification questions. Why are the School Psychs being classified as teachers yet on a different pay scale? Does a teacher on probationary status mean that they are simply not tenured yet? What does probationary status mean?

I think there should be consideration of performance in order to make sure we keep the strongest teaching staff. This will be particularly important if class sizes are larger and teachers are expected to do more. As I read this policy, a teacher with endorsement in Special Ed. (for instance) who has 10 years experience but may lack enthusiasm for the job and uses primarily worksheets under these guidelines will be kept over an enthusiastic teacher with the same endorsement with only 2 years who is using best practices. I am not a young teacher, in fact I have over 30 years under my belt, but there are those teachers who meet your criteria to stay who should go. Principals need to be able to consider performance per evaluations to ensure we keep our best staff.

I think this is the way to go!

This policy is very unfair. There is no loyalty to hard working, excellent teachers that have committed themselves to this county and paid their dues to get tenured. Winning awards, presenting at conferences, having a good reputation in the community and school division, none of this matters! I am a 10 year ACPS teacher who is danger of losing my job and there are first year teachers in the county that, although they may be good teachers, have not given of themselves as I have for 10 years. Why should they get to keep their job. Tenure should mean something!!! Loyalty in return gets loyalty. If you eliminate "bumping" or whatever nicer word you want to call it, you will have very upset teachers, parents and students on your hands. Even if the quality of education is 'saved', you are losing all the morale of your staff. Try having a 'quality educational system' with bad morale and unhappy employees, employees that know their time is not respected and they can lose their job at any moment because there is no loyalty from the county. You are asking for trouble. If Virginia were a union state, this would never fly!! That is because it is WRONG, and you know it. Are you just trying to get rid of higher paid teachers. Cuts should not affect each school individually, we are a county, and all for one and one for all until something goes bad, is that the new philosophy of Albemarle county public schools. Everyone watch your backs. how sad.

The revised RIF policy sounds basically fair, with two exceptions 1. Assigning seniority solely on past employment as a TEACHER prevents principals from considering teachers' past other employment that relates directly to their teaching position. For example, if a biology teacher spent 10 years working as a biologist prior to entering the teaching profession, it seems that those years should be included when computing seniority. If a school psychologist spent 5 years as a clinical psychologist, that, too, should be included when computing seniority. 2. Using extracurricular activities as a RIF criteria is unfair and wrong. Doing so discriminates against excellent teachers who have post-employment commitments that prohibit them from taking on extracurricular duties or activities. We should not penalize teachers for time spent with their families, maintaining their health, or caring for dependents. PLEASE take this criteria out of the policy!

This policy seems more fair than the current policy. I feel that part-time service should be calculated at the same rate the person worked, for example if a person is .6 part-time, then the service should be calculated as .6 times 4 for the full-time county rate. Thanks for accepting comments.

Members of the School Board, Our county faces great challenges. We stare into a daunting future and budget. We have n choice but change. We must complete reconsider our way of business. This budget requires us to look at every aspect of our school system and ask can we do better? A proposal has been made to restructure Albemarle County Reduction in Force policy. This policy needs to be revised. The current policy, based solely on seniority, is greatly flawed. Seniority is not a measure of quality. A good teacher deserves to be judged on their teaching. The AEA is concerned that these revisions are too subjective. A policy which is purely objective is ineffective. A teacher must be judged on more than their years of service. Changing this policy is the only way our schools can recruit, retain and develop a diverse cadre of the highest quality teaching personal. The factor that has the greatest impact on a child's achievement is a good teacher. A good teacher can make all the difference in a child's academic life. If we do not do everything within our power to try and retain the best teachers, we are not serving our children. The proposed revisions to the RIF policy now provide principals with the power to retain their highest quality teachers, not simply their most senior teachers. Progress is not easy, nor is it always popular. It is, however, necessary. We are faced with many challenges but that should not stop progress. We must do what is best for our children. We must change this policy so that it protects more than the longest serving staff. We must change the RIF policy to protect our best teachers.

Absolutely FOR these new revisions to the RIF Policy. We must protect our new teachers as well and handle this crisis in the most fair way possible for all licensed staff. Teachers having higher degrees should be taken under consideration as well when thinking of credentials. (i.e. Masters)

I understand the difficulty of this process and hope that the final process will attempt to have the best teachers and not just the most seniority. I also hope that there will be an attempt to maintain the integrality of the individual schools and not end up with wholesale transfers and bumping so that some schools may end up with extremely large influxes of new teachers. I think this policy is an attempt at both of those goals although my understanding of the latest draft leads me to question if "bumping" has become favored compared to the earlier drafts. I would hate for us to say that seniority is more important than effective teaching. I have several concerns about the proposed RIF policy. The way the current policy is written, a principal can RIF a senior teacher with a less senior teacher if reasons can be documented - such as multiple endorsements or a special skill. Many senior teachers do not have the national endorsements called for in the new RIF policy (NTC, NETS). Yet they have classroom experience which is extremely valuable. A national certification does not indicate a top notch teacher. As these additional endorsements are costly, many teachers will not be able to pursue these as salaries are frozen and there is little professional development money for teacher use. Many teachers may also find themselves looking for part time jobs now, which will impact their ability to take classes, as well as serve on school committees. Trying to support a family and have a personal life outside of school are not reasons to penalize a good teacher. "Special Skills" need to be clearly defined, otherwise it is left up to the discretion of principals. Do special skills include languages, artistic abilities, ability to play an instrument, connecting with students? Who decides what skills are special? Before additional endorsements or special skills are considered as a reason to RIF an employee, plans of assistance should be looked at. Principals are moved around frequently in this county. A teacher may have a good working relationship with a principal, or a principal has knowledge of a teacher's past work on behalf of a school and it's students. If a new principal is moved in, s/he could decide to RIF a teacher based on a lack of endorsement or special skill, with little to know experience with that individual as a professional teacher. At times teachers need to step back from giving all their time to the school to give some time to their own interests, such as church or family. How is this teacher guaranteed his/her position which could be given to a more active teacher at that point in time. In addition, several teachers at my school have expressed a fear of speaking out on this and other policy out of fear that they might be reduced because their opinions are not in line with proposed county policy. How will outspoken teachers be protected? At a time when morale is so low among school employees, seeking to revise the RIF policy which affects employee job security is further evidence of a lack of respect for the fine teachers in this county.

Thank you for asking for input in regards to the RIF policy. I have specific concerns on how this RIF policy will affect support teachers such as art, counselors, gifted, music, and physical education. The tier one criteria for full-time service does very well at covering the scope of seniority. This should help define for the principal within a building which employee will have seniority. I am concerned that this RIF policy will have an adverse affect on support teachers in particular elementary physical education. As support staff these positions are tightly tied to the enrollment of the school and the standards of quality. If the board of supervisors reduces the budget to Tier 3 this will lower physical education to standards of quality. This will impact current veteran teachers to part time status. Although preference may be given for an interview in another building these veteran teachers would lose their full time jobs. Albemarle County will lose some of their most experienced teachers. In 1996 Albemarle County suffered a similar budget crisis. Support staff teachers were reduced but veteran teachers were assured a full time job. It may not have been in the same building but they were assured a job in the county. With this policy as written a teacher with less experience in another building will retain their position. Is this what is best for the county? Is this the intent of Albemarle County school board? I ask you to

please be sensitive and thorough with your decision on this policy. Teachers are very anxious about which positions will be cut at all levels and who will make these cuts.;

I write to you as a current teacher in Albemarle County who is not in jeopardy of losing my job under either the new or the old Reduction in Force Policy. I have read both policies very closely and would like to share my thoughts on this outstanding issue. I would like to speak to the benefits of revising the current RIF policy, as I feel that not only will the benefits of the current policy be preserved, but improvements that are crucial to maintaining highly qualified, competitive teachers will be added. As the current policy stands, seniority would be the sole factor in determining whether or not a teacher will be able to continue to hold their position. I recognize that the theory behind tenure and seniority protects veteran teachers from losing their jobs to younger, less expensive new teachers. I also recognize that it is very important in times of severe budget cuts that veteran teacher's jobs are not in jeopardy solely due to the fact that they cost the county more money to employ. Under the new proposed policy, seniority continues to be a major factor in the decision making process, eliminating the fear that a person could lose their job strictly because they cost the county more money than a rookie teacher. Although the new policy improves on the old one in that it allows principals to secure the jobs of veteran teachers based not only on years in the county, but also his/her value to the system according to certification, endorsement areas, contribution to the schools, special skills and training, etc. I believe that the additions to the new policy not only continue to protect veteran teachers, but help us recognize that a senior teacher continues to be a benefit to the system not based on their years employed, but based on their overall value to the system. One major flaw in the current system is the practice of bumping. Not only does the practice of bumping create a trickle effect or snowball effect that endangers the security of a system as a whole, it also has a direct and specific impact on some schools more than others. In Albemarle County one of our major focuses is Professional Learning Communities and it takes time for a machine to operate efficiently. Under the current policy, the process of bumping will not only be likely, it will be imminent, causing a system-wide disruption in school communities. What has taken many years to accomplish in building school communities, trust and professional learning environments could potentially be destroyed by the interruption of bumping. According to the new policy, bumping will be replaced by reassignment which guarantees a reduced employee the opportunity to be reassigned to a vacant position within the division for which they are qualified based on recent experience, endorsements and education among other factors. Additionally, the new policy accounts for reduced teachers to be placed on a division-wide list for recalled teachers for a period of one school year. The previous statements quoted directly from the revised Reduction in Force policy demonstrate that the division is exhausting all efforts to protect the employment of reduced staff without then forcing the entire system to absorb the effects of a particular schools need to reduce staff. Another note of concern is that the current policy does not allow for administrators to have the autonomy to use their expertise and leadership to determine the best fit for teachers in their school. Many would argue that autonomy opens the decision making process up to subjectivity. But on the contrary, the revised policy sets forth a specific protocol to ensure that decisions are not strictly based on subjectivity, rather, it allows for an administrator to consider seniority along with other characteristics in order to use their best judgment when selecting teachers eligible for reduction with comparable years in service. Finally, I would like to comment about the future of our schools. Everyone in education understands that we are a part of a continually evolving field and that change is inevitable. We recognize that without change, growth is not possible. We have all heard the phrase, If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten. How can we expect to close the achievement gap, recruit, retain and develop a diverse cadre of the highest quality teaching personnel (as per the Albemarle County Public Schools goal) and leave no child left behind if we are not willing to take what we have and decide to reform and evolve in accordance with the times? I personally would be offended if the only reason that my school system was keeping me on as an employee was due to the fact that I had worked a certain number of years, rather than the fact that I was a highly qualified teacher, a contribution to the school based on my skills

and training and a valuable member of the school community. I beg you to consider the revised Reduction in Force Policy as a better alternative to ensure that Albemarle County continues to strive for excellence in education. I thank you for your time.

Our county faces great challenges. We stare into a daunting future and budget. We have no choice but to change. We must completely reconsider our way of business. This budget requires us to look at every aspect of our school system and ask. Can we do better? A proposal has been made to restructure Albemarle County's Reduction in Force policy. This policy needs to be revised. The current policy, based solely on seniority, is greatly flawed. Seniority is not a measure of quality. A good teacher deserves to be judged on their teaching. The AEA is concerned that these revisions are too subjective. A policy which is purely objective is ineffective. A teacher must be judged on more than their years of service. Changing this policy is the only way our schools can recruit, retain and develop a diverse cadre of the highest quality teaching personnel. The factor that has the greatest impact on a child's achievement is a good teacher. A good teacher can make all the difference in a child's academic life. If we do not do everything within our power to try and retain the best teachers, we are not serving our children. The proposed revisions to the RIF policy now provide principals with the power to retain their highest quality teachers, not simply their most senior teachers. Progress is not easy, nor is it always popular. It is, however, necessary. We are faced with many challenges but challenge should not stop progress. We must do what is best for our children. We must change this policy so that it protects more than the longest serving staff. We must change the RIF policy to protect our best teachers.

I have dedicated my life's work to education and at the end of my career find that I have no real protection as a tenured teacher. It is devastating.