

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Strategic Plan

The Journey to Greatness



Kevin M. Maxwell, Ph.D., *Superintendent of Schools*



Dear Students, Parents, Employees, and Community Members:

Anne Arundel County Public Schools has developed a new Strategic Plan to reach our primary goal: to be the premier school system in the state and one of the best in the nation.

This is, indeed, a very good school system. I, however, want us to be great. Reaching that pinnacle requires the setting of many other goals and targets. Those are laid out in this Strategic Plan, which serves as a blueprint by which we will chart our course over the next five years. We have chosen to focus our efforts on five main areas: Academic Achievement, Safe and Supportive Learning Environment, Community Collaboration, Workforce Quality, and Equity. Equity, it should be pointed out, is far from a goal unto itself. We have infused it throughout the other four goals as well, for the equitable application of our programs and policies is the cornerstone by which we will achieve true success.

Becoming the best also won't happen until we reach every child. The students who walk through our doors every day come from a variety of backgrounds. It is our responsibility to design and implement programs that are rigorous and relevant and that enable every child to learn.

The summary of our Strategic Plan is intended to give the reader a sense of the direction we will take to propel Anne Arundel County Public Schools to prominence in the state of Maryland and allow our community to monitor our progress toward that over-arching goal. The agenda is ambitious, to be sure. I believe in my heart, however, that through the hard work of our students, parents, employees, and community and business partners we can accomplish the task at hand.

Thank you for being a part of this journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin M. Maxwell".

Kevin M. Maxwell, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

KMM/bm

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Vision

Every Anne Arundel County Public Schools student will graduate from high school able to read critically, write coherently, think creatively, and solve complex mathematical problems. They will be equipped to become contributing, compassionate citizens of the United States as it resides in an increasingly global community.

Mission

It is the mission of the Anne Arundel County Public Schools to educate all students to the highest standards and to eliminate the achievement gaps among all student groups. We will do this by:

- Holding high expectations for all students;
- Building positive relationships with all students;
- Creating, delivering and monitoring a relevant curriculum;
- Providing appropriate academic and social development support;
- Holding ourselves accountable for the success of all students;
- Maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment;
- Supporting a quality workforce;
- Engaging our community; and
- Demanding equity.

Values

- Collaboration
- Results Orientation
- Shared Ownership of Every Student's Success
- Continuous Learning
- High Expectations
- Supportive Relationships
- Equity and Cultural Proficiency
- Innovation and Creativity

Strategic Plan Q and A

What is the Strategic Plan and how was it developed?

The Strategic Plan is Anne Arundel County Public Schools' process of defining its goals, determining what we will do to pursue these goals, and making decisions on allocating resources to meet the goals through 2012. It is built on the foundation of a central, clear, and aligned vision for the future of Anne Arundel County Public Schools and answers the questions:

- What do we want for our children?
- How might we provide it?
- How will we know that we've done it well?

The first question is answered by our system goals. These goals were developed through extensive discussions with school system employees, members of the Board of Education, parents, and community groups. Drafts of the goals – and the overall plan – were published during the development process and input was encouraged from all interested parties. That input helped guide revisions throughout the process.

The second question is addressed in depth by the strategies, tasks, and resources detailed in the Strategic Plan. Within each strategy are embedded tasks for development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs which are aligned and research-based and which have been selected to focus and direct Anne Arundel County Public Schools on a common path toward our goals.

To answer the third question, Anne Arundel County Public Schools has established rigorous standards (called "indicators" in the Strategic Plan) by which we will measure our progress toward the those goals. The indicators have targets that allow for progress to be monitored annually through 2012.

Why is a Strategic Plan necessary?

Strategic planning serves a variety of purposes in school systems, including to:

- clearly define the purpose of the organization and to establish realistic goals consistent with that purpose in a defined timeframe within the system's capacity for implementation.
- communicate those goals to all of the system's stakeholders (internal and external).
- ensure that the most effective use is made of the system's resources by focusing these resources on key priorities.
- provide a base from which progress can be measured and establish mechanisms for informed change when needed.

The Strategic Plan contains goals, indicators, targets, strategies, and action steps. What are they and how do they work together?

- A goal is a general and long-range statement of intended future results.
- An indicator is a long-range standard by which progress toward a goal will be measured.
- Targets identify the yearly progress Anne Arundel County Public Schools expects to make toward attaining our long-range indicators.
- Strategies are approaches to meeting our goals and indicators.
- Action steps are the specific activities that must be undertaken to ensure the effective implementation of each strategy.

Does the plan help underperforming students as well as those who are currently excelling academically?

Anne Arundel County Public Schools is absolutely committed to raising the achievement of all students – those who are exceeding standards, those who have not yet reached proficiency, and those in between. This plan focuses on rigor, relationships, and relevance in order to close achievement gaps and move all students to higher performance levels. The data show significant gains in elementary school performance in reading and mathematics, as well as increased student participation and performance gains in Advanced Placement (AP) and SAT programs over the past four years.

Our commitment to equity has led to movement toward closing the achievement gap in some areas. Since its inception, ninth-grade African American participation in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program has risen from 15% to 24%. New programs, procedures, and practices have been put into place to ensure that all students can make the choice to participate in post-secondary education.

Our Office of Equity Assurance and Human Relations has been instrumental in developing a systemic plan for Cultural Proficiency training, ensuring the infusion of equity throughout our Strategic Plan and making sure the letter and spirit of the mediated agreement between Anne Arundel County Public Schools and the Anne Arundel County NAACP, et al., is met. We have, indeed, made great strides toward realizing our vision of effectively meeting the needs of all students in our diverse community.

We recognize, however, that we have a way to travel on our Journey To Greatness. Expectations for students continue to increase, with the bar being raised higher each year. Programs are designed and modified to ensure that all students meet the goals. Eliminating the achievement gap for all students continues to be a primary focus for the system.

It is vital that we maintain our high expectations for all students as we continue to close the achievement gap. We cannot provide outstanding educational opportunities for some students and not for others. Our student performance data indicate that we are doing a good job of educating about 80 percent of our students. However, education is for all, and we need to find ways to meet the needs of the remaining 20 percent while continuing to meet the needs of the current 80 percent. We will need to focus our efforts on a limited number of well-researched and aligned initiatives, tenaciously monitor their implementation, and evaluate their effectiveness in order to be truly able to accurately gauge our success and make adjustments to our plans.

How can I find out if the targets set forth in the Strategic Plan are being met?

Information will be compiled and presented to the Board of Education on a regular basis. Progress updates will be posted on Anne Arundel County Public Schools' web site, www.aacps.org, as they become available. Parents will be notified of significant updates to information by letter or through the school system's automated telephone notification system.

Does the Strategic Plan tie into the federal No Child Left Behind legislation at all? If so, how?

The over-arching themes of Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Strategic Plan are closely aligned to those of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. The five goals of the legislation revolve around (1) proficiency for all students in reading and mathematics, (2) proficiency for English Language Learners in reading and mathematics, (3) highly qualified teachers in all classrooms, (4) safe and supportive learning environments, and (5) all students graduating from high school. Our Strategic Plan addresses each of these goals and goes beyond, with our emphasis on rigorous coursework, community engagement, and equity.

How will the Strategic Plan be managed?

Management of the implementation of Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Strategic Plan is critical to its success as a tool to move Anne Arundel County Public Schools closer to the attainment of its goals. Processes have been put into place to ensure that the Strategic Plan is being implemented, monitored, and evaluated, and that accountability is shared at every level of the organization. Anne Arundel County Public Schools has committed to new, substantive goals in the areas of Academic Achievement, Safe and Supportive Learning Environment, Workforce Quality, Community Engagement, and Equity. It is important to note that Equity is infused throughout the other four goals.

A systematic structure for managing programs and initiatives has been implemented. Each department in the Central Office has developed an Action Plan, which is aligned to and provides an avenue for feedback on the Strategic Plan. Each school has developed a School Improvement Plan, which is aligned to the Strategic Plan and brings that plan into the schoolhouse. The School Improvement Plan outlines the priorities of the school and provides a feedback loop to Central Office department plans.

The Superintendent's Executive Team monitors the system's progress toward goals and indicators at weekly team meetings, examining system and individual school data in order to determine the degree of progress schools and the school system are making toward our goals and indicators. Members of the Executive Team will report regularly to the Board of Education on the effectiveness of our implementation of the Strategic Plan, the resources being allocated to the plan's initiatives and programs, the progress being made toward our goals and indicators, and any adjustments that need to be made.

Is the complete Strategic Plan available for me to view?

Yes, the plan is on our web site, www.aacps.org. Look on the home page under "From the Superintendent."

Where can I find more information?

Contact the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Public Information Office at 410-222-5316.

Highlights

Goal 1

All students will reach high standards, as established by Anne Arundel County Public Schools, and State performance level standards in English/Reading/Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Achievement disparities among all No Child Left Behind (NCLB) groups of students will be eliminated.

1. Plan, develop, and implement magnet, signature, and consortia programs

Magnet programs offer a specialized curriculum and draw students across school boundary lines in accordance with established criteria and admission processes.

Signature programs offer a theme specific to a school. Signature programs are available only to students enrolled at that school. If a signature program is not school-wide, acceptance into the program may be by established criteria and admission processes.

Consortia programs group magnet programs serving schools within a contiguous geographic area and provide students the opportunity to attend a magnet program in the designated school consortium.

Purpose:

- School choice for students and their families
- Relevant curriculum
- Extracurricular extensions
- Career paths

Resources:

- Facilities
- Interdisciplinary curriculum
- Professional development
- Materials of instruction
- Technology
- Transportation
- Community, business, and higher education partnerships

2. Develop relevant curriculum documents that incorporate real-world applications to engage students

Purpose:

- Engage students in their own learning
- Help students see connections between school and the real world

Resources:

- Curriculum framework
- Community and business partnerships
- Professional development

3. Develop and implement a Literacy Plan

Purpose:

- Provide a plan for literacy instruction for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and beyond
- Design and deliver professional development to enable teachers in all content areas to incorporate literacy instruction into their lessons
- Forge partnerships with the community and with higher education

Resources:

- Shared responsibility by all teachers for students' literacy
- Professional development
- Materials of instruction

4. Implement vertical alignment of schools into cluster (a group of elementary and middle schools feeding into a high school)

Purpose:

- Establish more communication between and among schools within a high school feeder system
- Create better transitions and support for all students
- Provide a clear, consistent sequence of instruction from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade

Resources:

- Cluster meetings for principals
- Professional development

5. Develop, plan, and implement dual credit/dual enrollment programs at Anne Arundel Community College and Sojourner-Douglass College.

Purpose:

- To provide alternative education options and pathways for students

Resources:

- Agreements with Anne Arundel Community College and Sojourner-Douglass College
- Implement and evaluate results of Accuplacer to identify eligible candidates
- Develop a list of courses meeting dual credit criteria
- Enroll eligible students in AACC courses for dual credit

Goal II

All students will be educated in a safe, positive, and supportive learning environment with a focus on security enhancements that support system-wide safety and discipline standards. AACPS will eliminate disparities among all No Child Left Behind (NCLB) student groups in the referral, suspension, and expulsion rates for violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

1. Implement Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)

Purpose:

- To establish a team-based process for systemic problem-solving and planning
- To provide schools a framework to create safe, supportive, and predictable environments
- To provide training in systems change, effective management principles and practices, and application of research-validated instruction and management practices

Resources:

- Facilitator of PBIS
- Commitment to school-level implementation
- Commitment to system-wide professional development
- Commitment to large-scale implementation and sustainment

2. Implement Decision Making Rooms (DMR) in all secondary schools

Purpose:

- To provide timely and systematic academic and behavioral interventions for students receiving discipline referrals

Resources:

- DMR staff
- Staff development model

3. Implement and monitor six-year plans for all students in grades 7-12.

Purpose:

- To assist students in long-range planning and career development for their future including taking rigorous courses, and college readiness exams such as PSAT, SAT, ACT, and Accuplacer

Resources:

- Six-year plans developed and forwarded to schools for implementation by school counselors
- Test participation data by school and student groups
- Data for number of students accessing "My College Quickstart," a web-based college exploratory search program

Goal III

Anne Arundel County Public Schools will ensure and maintain a work environment of respect and mutual collaboration by attracting and retaining a quality workforce that demonstrates a commitment to providing a positive learning environment, values diversity, and reflects the diversity of the county and the relative labor market.

1. Increase coverage of issues of diversity on our cable television channel.

Purpose:

- To attract a diverse workforce by sharing employment opportunities
- To highlight employees who represent the desired diversity

Resources:

- Allocation of time for the TV recording studio, air time, staff/supervisory support

2. Work to create and develop collegial partnerships with historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) and minority colleges.

Purpose:

- To recruit a diverse workforce and promote equal opportunity employment opportunities in AACPS
- To enrich the educational experience of all students

Resources:

- Funding for regular and frequent travel to HBCUs to develop relationships with candidates early in their educational careers
- Availability of staff, particularly teachers/staff from HBCUs already employed by AACPS, to travel

3. Ensure that all non-school-based hiring authorities and recruiters participate annually in Cultural Proficiency and/or diversity training

Purpose:

- To ensure that staff engaged in recruitment activities on behalf of AACPS must represent the position of the system, which is that the BOE recognizes and values persons with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences, and strives to create a diverse workforce

Resources:

- Access to training for staff; to include funding for training

Goal IV

All Anne Arundel County Public School students will be educated in schools that are family-friendly, welcoming environments. Anne Arundel County Public Schools will eliminate disparities in parent and community representation and participation in traditional and non-traditional school-community activities.

1. Create and utilize tools to assess school climate and effectiveness of communications with students, parents, and employees, and diversity of parent participation in schools and feeder systems.

Purpose:

- To determine if schools and Central Office are “family-friendly and welcoming” environments
- To determine if the schools communicate effectively
- To implement strategies for improvement
- To ensure the participation and involvement of parents in traditional and non-traditional parent involvement opportunities that reflect the school and feeder system student demographics

Resources:

- Community Engagement Team (CET) with representation from the offices of Equity Assurance and Human Relations, School Performance, School and Family Partnerships, and School Counseling, as well as Principals, and parent organizations
- Review of 2007 Climate, Bullying, and Apple Customer Service surveys
- Tools to assess school climate, effectiveness of communication with students, parents, and employees
- Tools to determine diversity of parent participation and parent involvement activities
- Ideas, proven strategies, and “best practices” to increase diversity and parent involvement
- Assessment of individual school successes and challenges

Goal V

Anne Arundel County Public Schools will address the diversity that students and staff bring to the learning environment and organize schools and classrooms to support the academic achievement and success of all students.

- 1. Work with offices to monitor the indicators in the areas of academic achievement, special education identification and placement, and discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions and other areas where disparities are indicated; engage the community in providing support outside of school; and regularly inform the community of progress and challenges in achieving parity for all student groups.**

Purpose:

- To develop strategies, initiatives, and interventions to eliminate the achievement gap between and among all “No Child Left Behind” student groups
- To improve the school climate of high expectations for all students
- To improve the overall success of all students

Resources:

- Terms and goals of the Office of Civil Rights Memorandum of Agreement (2005)
- Data from each indicator that requires parity for all NCLB student groups
- Data dashboard or other monitoring tools to determine if all student groups are meeting or exceeding the standards set in the Strategic Plan
- Criteria to determine “Equitable Schools”
- Partnerships with parents and community organizations
- Parent and community public forums
- Bias motivated behavior reports

Glossary

Accuplacer	a community college placement adaptive test; provides useful information about academic skills in math, English, and reading; results used by academic advisors and counselors to determine course selection; used by Anne Arundel Community College
Bullying survey	survey to determine the extent and nature of bullying in the schools, so that schools can plan targeted interventions to address challenges in this area; administered to grade 4 – 10 students, parents, and staff
Climate survey	a survey given to parents, students, and staff in an effort to gauge perceptions of a school or district’s strengths and needs
Consortia	a group of magnet programs serving schools within a contiguous geographic area that provides students an opportunity to attend a magnet program in the designated school consortium
ELL	English language learner
Feedback loop	a process for returning information to stakeholders
Interagency Targeted Interventions	a multi-system collaborative effort with Anne Arundel County child-serving agencies which are comprehensive, community-based, child-centered, and family-focused
Magnet	a program with specialized curriculum or one with emphasis on instruction that is different from that generally offered in other schools throughout a designated geographic area, drawing students in accordance with established criteria and admission process that may, or may not, comprise a school’s entire curriculum offering
NCLB student group	student groups defined by the No Child Left Behind Act, including race/ethnicity and special services, such as special education, English language learners, and Free and Reduced Meal Services
OEAHR	Office of Equity Assurance and Human Relations
OSI	Office of School Improvement
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports – a compilation of effective practices, interventions, and systems-change strategies designed to achieve important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students
PSAT/NMSQT	Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test – National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test
SAT	an assessment frequently used by college admissions offices to indicate a student’s readiness for college work
Signature	a program theme specific to a school; signature programs are available only to students enrolled at that school, which may or may not comprise a school’s entire curriculum offering; if the signature program is not school-wide, acceptance into the program may be by established criteria and admission process



ANNE ARUNDEL
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The Anne Arundel County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or familial status in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs.

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