

# CYFCC Strategic Directions

*Notes from CYFCC December 2025 Meeting*

## Priority Area: Safety & Belonging

*Goal Statement: All youth feel valued, supported, and safe in the school and community.*

### Key Themes from the Discussion

- Students do not feel heard, even when reporting safety concerns
- Over-reliance on security can undermine trust with students
- Inconsistent policy enforcement across campuses is creating confusion and resentment
- Safety is deeply tied to belonging, dignity, and relationships
- Restorative approaches are promising but unevenly implemented
- Communication gaps between school leaders, students, and families are affecting trust

### High-Level Strategies the Group Identified

#### 1. Strengthen Student Voice in Designing Safety Measures

- Elevate student voice as a preventative safety measure
- Create formal, ongoing student safety advisory/committee structures
- Improve anonymous reporting and close the feedback loop so students see action

#### 2. Shift from Enforcement-Heavy Responses to Trust-Building Approaches

- Re-examine the role, training, and accountability of security staff
- Expand restorative practices and peer mediation, especially at the high school level
- Align safety practices with developmental needs rather than punitive responses
- Reconsider bringing back Lunch 'n Learn and keep kids engaged in purposeful activities

#### 3. Improve Communication and Family Partnership

- Increase transparency around safety policies and enforcement
- Clarify roles between ACPS and APD to reduce confusion
- Strengthen communication with families so they feel like partners

### Shaping this Group's Advocacy Agenda

Our next step will be shaping the Commission's advocacy agenda and identifying which CYCP strategies this group wants to champion and help steward.

- Which of these strategies still feel most urgent to you?
- How should this Commission help advance student-centered approaches to safety and belonging?
- What role can the Commission play in elevating student voice as a safety strategy?

### Next Steps

- What is one concrete action this Commission could take this year?
- What does meaningful progress on safety and belonging look like from a student's perspective?

# Priority Area: Supportive & Responsive School Conditions

*Goal Statement: All students deserve to learn in environments that are designed to support their learning and wellbeing every day.*

## Key Themes from the Discussion

- Clean, safe, and functional school environments are important elements for learning
- Barriers students named, such as access to basic needs, are often concrete and solvable
- Gaps exist between what students experience and what adults assume
- There is limited visibility into how facilities and cleanliness issues are reported and resolved
- Students want a voice in shaping daily school conditions (e.g., food, cleanliness, access)

## High-Level Strategies the Group Identified

### 1. Re-examine Systems That Shape Daily School Conditions

- Review custodial staffing models and contracts
- Assess whether current funding aligns with the realities students described
- Better understand existing reporting systems for cleanliness and facilities issues

### 2. Center Student Voice in Operational Decisions

- Create student advisory groups focused on specific areas (e.g., nutrition, facilities)
- Involve students, custodians, teachers, and principals in problem-solving together
- Learn from schools that are already doing this well

### 3. Treat Basic Needs as a Strategy for Supporting Academic Success

- Explicitly connect school conditions to academic outcomes
- Prioritize solving basic needs issues as a prerequisite to learning gains
- Frame this work as student readiness, rather than facilities management

## Shaping this Group's Advocacy Agenda

Our next step will be shaping the Commission's advocacy agenda and identifying which CYCP strategies this group wants to champion and help steward.

- Which school condition issues feel most actionable at a system level?
- Where could small changes have a noticeable impact on students' daily experience?
- How should the Commission help elevate student voice in operational decisions that affect school conditions?

## Next Steps

- What is one system-level question or practice we should push ACPS to examine?
- What would a student-ready school environment look like one year from now?
- What is one concrete action this Commission could take in the next 6–12 months to help create supportive and responsive school conditions?

# Priority Area: Affordability for All

*Goal Statement: Every family has what they need to live with stability and thrive in Alexandria*

## Key Themes from the Discussion

- Housing insecurity overshadows all other needs
- Financial stress consumes students' mental bandwidth
- Food access and healthcare are more immediately actionable than housing costs
- Families often lack awareness of existing resources
- Strong interest in partnership-based solutions (businesses, nonprofits, health systems)

## High-Level Strategies the Group Identified

### 1. Reduce the Burden of Basic Needs Through Partnerships

- Expand access to food, healthcare, and preventive services in schools
- Partner with businesses, nonprofits, and health providers
- Explore incentives for private-sector participation
- Align with housing-focused commissions and efforts

### 2. Strengthen Access to Existing Supports

- Increase awareness of homelessness protections (e.g., McKinney-Vento)
- Build capacity so families know what resources exist and how to access them
- Position schools as hubs for support

### 3. Advocate for Youth-Centered Affordability Solutions

- Elevate youth impacts in broader affordability conversations
- Frame affordability as an issue that impedes student success

## Shaping this Group's Advocacy Agenda

Our next step will be shaping the Commission's advocacy agenda and identifying which CYCP strategies this group wants to champion and help steward.

- Which of these strategies still feel most urgent to you?
- How can this Commission help align partners, policies, and resources to better address the impacts of affordability on youth and families?
- Which solutions do you personally want to help move forward this year?

## Next Steps

- What is one concrete action this Commission could take in the next 6–12 months to elevate youth impacts of affordability?
- What would success look like one year from now?