



Alexandria Children & Youth Community Plan (CYCP)

Strategy-Shaping Session with the Youth Services Coordinating Council





Today's Purpose

By the end of today, we aim to identify early action opportunities for us to work on together and agree on how partners continue shaping the CYCP together.



How We Got Here:

Youth Needs Assessment & Follow-Up Engagement with Youth

Between Fall 2024-Fall 2025:

- **90 youth and adults** were trained to engaged
- **1,800+ middle and high school students** through
- **137 Youth Listening Sessions**
- Youth analyzed data, identified root causes, and proposed solutions

This work will shape the next Children & Youth Community Plan (CYCP). It's updated every five years to guide citywide efforts around shared goals, align partners, and advance equity.





Results-Based Accountability: How We're Framing This Work



Result: What conditions do we want for children and youth?



How are we doing? What does the data tell us about how youth are doing?



Story Behind the Trends:
What's driving current conditions?

**Today's
Focus**



Strategies: What could help improve conditions?



Partners: Who has a role to play?



Action: What are we going to do?



Three CYCP Priority Areas & their Results



Affordability for All



Result:

Every family has what they need to live with stability and thrive in Alexandria

Safety & Belonging



Result:

All youth feel valued, supported, and safe in the school and community

Supportive & Responsive School Conditions



Result:

All students learn in environments that are designed to support their learning and wellbeing every day



How are We Doing?



Affordability for All



- Childhood poverty is declining overall, but Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial children remain disproportionately impacted
- Nearly 2 in 3 ACPS students are economically disadvantaged
- Over 90% of renter households earning under \$50K are housing cost-burdened

Safety & Belonging



- Youth report persistent gaps in feeling safe, supported, and connected, especially among students of color
- Disparities remain in school connectedness and trust in adults, especially among Hispanic students
- Schools show improvement in some areas, but not evenly across student groups

Supportive & Responsive School Conditions



- Students consistently report overcrowding, unsanitary or locked bathrooms, short and stressful lunch periods, and inefficient transportation to school that disrupt learning and well-being.
- These conditions disproportionately affect low-income students, students with disabilities, and students with dietary needs



The Story behind the Trends



Affordability for All



- Low-wage jobs have not kept pace with the cost of living
- High housing costs drive instability
- Cycle of poverty
- Rising costs and inflation
- Political resistance and corruption
- Taxes and government policies
- The influence of the wealthy
- Expensive childcare and healthcare
- Families don't know what help is available or may not feel safe asking

Safety & Belonging



- Lack of trust in adults and inconsistent system responses
- Unaddressed stress, trauma, and emotional overload
- Security that doesn't always work
- Outside Pressures (i.e. social media drama)
- Environments that intensify conflict rather than prevent it
- Stereotypes
- Limited opportunities for belonging, connection, and positive engagement

Supportive & Responsive School Conditions



- Administrative and Communication Issues
- Funding and Resource Constraints
- Infrastructure Limitations & Rigid Schedules
- Student Behavior Reflects Environmental Stress
- Inconsistent Rules and Adult Relationships

These conditions compound for youth of color, low-income youth, immigrant families, and students with additional support needs.



What Could Help Improve Conditions?



Affordability for All



Strategic Direction:

Make it easy for families to find help, understand their options, and feel welcome asking for support

Safety & Belonging



Strategic Directions:

Expand access to safe afterschool and enrichment opportunities

Build conflict-resolution and coping skills among youth

Expand youth leadership and peer-led solutions

Supportive & Responsive School Conditions



Strategic Directions:

Create school-based environments where students feel respected, heard, and supported by adults

Embed youth input into organizational operations, policies, and culture



Today's Goals



By the end of today, we aim to:

Surface 1-2 early action ideas per priority area that we can work on together

Discuss how work continues beyond monthly YSCC meetings



What Breakout Groups Will Do Today



Three breakout groups:

- **Affordability for All** - facilitated by Chelsea
- **Safety & Belonging** - facilitated by Noraine
- **Supportive & Responsive School Conditions** - facilitated by Emma

Each group will:

- Choose a notetaker & spokesperson for the report-out (could be the same person or two different people)
- Reflect on where youth informed strategies and current work already aligns
- Identify areas (gaps or barriers) that need stronger coordination
- Surface 1-2 ideas worth exploring further (not committing to)
- Decide how we want to continue the work of shaping action plans



Breakout Group: Affordability for All

Youth recommendations that feel most important to improving current conditions:

Make it easy for families to find help, understand their options, and feel welcome asking for support

- **YSCC offered some actionable ideas:**
 - Strengthen and consolidate resources into a clearer, more comprehensive entry point
 - Use youth-friendly, discreet access points (e.g., QR codes in bathrooms or classrooms)
 - Support other organizations in adopting stigma-reducing, culturally responsive language
 - Reduce admin. burden by creating a unified application or automatic eligibility tied to existing benefits (e.g., SNAP)
 - Remove cost barriers to participation in opportunities

Any other ideas you would like to offer? Where can alignment and coordination actually move the needle?"

What's Already In Place:

Finding Help:

- Key partners already engaged: schools, City departments, nonprofits, Family Support Specialists, youth leaders, and resource navigators.
- Campagna Center's efforts to reduce stigma and remove deficit-based language from outreach materials
- Family Support Specialists and Child Find serving as trusted connectors to services
- Existing program locators (e.g., ALX Beyond, Youth Resource Directory)

Where do you or your organization already see yourselves contributing?

Where are systems falling short & creating barriers?

- **YSCC Noted:** Fragmented resource directories, repeated income verification, inconsistent eligibility rules, and "hidden" knowledge.

Where might coordination or shared ownership help most?

What Needs Shaping Next:

- What **1–2 actions** feel realistic for the YSCC to explore in Year 1? Is there work we can do together?
 - Who needs to be involved next?
-

How do you want the work to continue?

- Who wants to stay involved in shaping those plans?
- When can we meet again?
- If we continue using YSCC meetings to shape our action plans, then what needs to happen in between meetings?



Breakout Group: Safety & Belonging

Youth recommendations that feel most important to improving current conditions:

Expand access to safe afterschool and enrichment opportunities

• **YSCC offered some actionable ideas:**

- Increase middle school programming
- Ask ACPS communication to push OSTP and community events

Build conflict-resolution and coping skills among youth

• **YSCC offered an actionable idea:**

- Explore ACPS discipline and conflict resolution practices
- Recommend youth-centered trainings for security guards in ACPS

Expand youth leadership and peer-led solutions

• **YSCC offered some actionable ideas:**

- Shift toward youth-led facilitation with adults in supportive roles
- Encourage small changes in adult behavior to foster student trust and engagement

Any other ideas you would like to offer? Where can alignment and coordination actually move the needle?"

What's Already in Place:

Access to OSTP

- Titan Takeovers
- LINK Clubs, mentoring programs, and middle school sports
- ALX Beyond OSTP locator

Conflict-Resolution Skill Building

- ACPS implementation of restorative justice

Youth Leadership/Peer-Led Solutions

- Library-based peer-led programming
- Peer Advisors discussing interactions with security guards
- Current youth groups can play a role
- Peer Advisors, Youth Ambassadors, Peer Advocates

Where do you or your organization already see yourselves contributing?

Where are systems falling short & creating barriers?

- **YSCC Noted:** Punitive discipline, uneven access to programs, and gaps in middle school supports

Where might coordination or shared ownership help most?

What Needs Shaping Next

- What **1-2 actions** feel realistic for the YSCC to explore in Year 1? Is there work we can do together?
 - Who else needs to be involved?
-

How the Work Will Continue

- Who wants to stay involved in shaping action plans plans?
- When can we meet again?



Breakout Group: Supportive & Responsive School Conditions

Youth recommendations that feel most important to improving current conditions:

Create school-based environments where students feel respected, heard, and supported by adults

- **YSCC offered an actionable idea:** Expand trainings that build trust & relationships with youth to school staff

Embed youth input into organizational operations, policies, and culture

- **YSCC offered an actionable idea:** Bring decision-makers into youth forums and agree to take 1-3 suggestions to try and create change in specific areas

Any other ideas you would like to offer? Where can alignment and coordination actually move the needle?"

What's Already in Place

- Trainings for adults & mentors to strengthen their relationships with youth
- Youth Voice Survey conducted by ACPS, as part of the ACPS Strategic Plan
- Youth voice structures already embedded in some settings
- School Board student representatives bring youth input to decision makers

Where do you or your organization already see yourselves contributing?

Where are systems falling short & creating barriers?

- **YSCC noted:** inconsistency across schools, lack of clear feedback loops from students to decision-makers, and operational decisions being made without student input.

Where might coordination or shared ownership help most?

What Needs Shaping Next

- What **1-2 actions** feel realistic for the YSCC to explore in Year 1? Is there work we can do together?
 - Who needs to be involved next?
-

How the Work Will Continue

- Who wants to stay involved in shaping those plans?
- When can we meet again?



Whole Group Share-Out

- Is there work we can do together?
Did the group identify 1–2 actions for the YSCC to explore?
- Was there enough interest to continue this work between YSCC meetings?
 - If yes, then: What general time of day tends to work best for this group?



What Comes Next

- Follow up with interested partners
- Potentially convene smaller working groups
- Assess feasibility, alignment, gaps, and implementation pathways
- Draft action plans



Thank you!

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