

## Student Services Advisory Committee Recommendation Final – March 13, 2025

**Recommendation:** Ensure that every APS school has at least one full-time social worker and one full-time school psychologist, as required by the 2024 [APS Planning Factors Study Final Recommendations](#), Slide 10, by hiring an additional 5.3 elementary school social workers and 4 elementary school psychologists. *(Please see highlighted portions below for changes that have been made since the Committee's initial recommendation submission and Work Session.)*

### Members

Dana Milburn, co-chair  
 Kirstin Pickle & Adora Williams, co-secretaries  
 Members: Elizabeth Fabrizio, Marjory Franklin, Judy Hadden, Bethany Vanderbilt

Staff liaison: Darrell Sampson, EdD, MA, LPC, NCC;  
 Executive Director, Office of Student Services

### Alignment to [Strategic Plan](#)      Priority: Student Well-being

Performance Objectives	Strategies
School climate & mental health	Evidence-based strategies to support students; Trusted adult
Absenteeism	ATSS for attendance; Family relationships for attendance
Reduce suspensions	Restorative practices; Alternatives to suspension
LGBTQ+ belonging	LGBTQ+ supports; Student/family/community engagement; Help with evidence-based professional staff development
Feeling safe at school	Behavioral interventions; Communicate about resources

### Additional Strategic Plan Priorities

Please see chart entitled, "[School Social Workers and School Psychologists Contribute to APS Strategic Plan Success](#)," on page 4, showing detail that includes:

- **Student Academic Growth and Success** through IEP testing and eligibility meetings & goals/service hours: inclusion; college, career, civic readiness (SEL, resilience, other mental wellness/skills); & LRE.
- Sufficient expert staff time to aid in **Student, Family, and Community Partnerships** and contribute to **Student Well-being**, also, by identifying students in need of access to resources such as food, clothing and school supplies, and connecting them to resources.
- Reduced overload/overwhelm, promoting retention, contributing to a **Student-Centered Workforce**.

### SUMMARY

*When mentally able/ready, students can participate in educational activities, and learn to the best of their ability. Factors that may interfere with their learning include unmet needs such as food/financial/housing insecurity, family disruptions, social-emotional concerns such as bullying/anxiety/depression, and unmet educational needs requiring an IEP or other educational intervention. In addition to teaching staff, all of these needs can involve the support and intervention of the School Social Workers and School Psychologists.*

In addition, it is essential that the experts be on hand, already in the building, when an emergency arises. Support from the trained mental health professionals will be needed immediately, by students and likely by teachers and other staff members, as well. The on-site presence of the psychologist and/or social worker can affect whether an emergency's outcome is positive or negative, and to what degree. Our school system and its students are no strangers to tragedies, and we feel that adequate staffing is an absolutely necessary part of preventing tragedy where possible. The increasing student need at the elementary level is made starkly and frighteningly clear by these APS elementary numbers:

1. Since the start of the 2023-24 school year, **69.6% of all APS Threat Assessments were for elementary students.**

2. Since the start of the 2023-24 school year, **35.3% of all APS Suicide Risk Assessments were for elementary students.**

It is our belief that, due to the potential harm that could come to students if their schools are not properly staffed with these important experts, APS should approach this additional staffing as something it can't afford *not* to do:

- Young lives and futures can be changed for the better with early intervention
- Crises can be averted and/or mitigated
- Viewed from a financially pragmatic perspective, catching problems earlier allows for earlier intervention, which saves potentially much greater amounts of staff time and effort, therefore financial and other resources, later.

School psychologists and social workers also help to reinforce and create the protective factors children and youth need, so that they can be more resilient in the face of our current societal climate and past pandemic effects. The increasing insecurity of Federal jobs due to changes in policy and procedures are already impacting families, an issue that *we know* is trickling down to children. The current political turmoil and the intolerance shown to migrant, minority, and LGBTQIA families and students and those with disabilities, and losses of students in recent years, all contribute to increasing feelings of insecurity as well.

APS elementary schools are the only APS schools without a full-time school social worker and school psychologist in each building. Additionally, our ratios of students to psychologists and social workers far exceed those recommended by their professions (see below).

Finally, adding elementary school psychologists and social workers was ranked as **one of the top 10 recommendations overall**, in the most recent [APS Planning Factors Study Final Recommendations](#), as can be seen on Slide 10, entitled, "The Design Team's ranking represents a prioritization of APS' neediest student populations and teacher support," where the design team, in fact, **recommended more additional staff than our own recommendation requests**. Adding the staff we request would begin phasing in those positions whose need has been recognized and demonstrated.

**We therefore recommend hiring 5.3 social workers and 4 psychologists so that every APS school will have at least one full-time social worker and one full-time psychologist.** While this also does not bring APS to the ratios recommended by the professional associations (see below), it recognizes APS budget difficulties while providing one of each professional, full-time in each building, allowing more staff hours for these professionals' large and sometimes overwhelming workloads. Crucially, as we've emphasized above, it also assures that when emergencies arise, the experts are on hand, rather than at another school that shares them.

**Comparing numbers of current APS elementary school psychologists vs our recommendation and those of others:**

- **APS has 25 elementary schools that share 21 school psychologists** at this time.
- **17 APS elementary schools do not have a full time school psychologist** at this time.
- **The current Planning Factor ratio is 1:775**, per [APS Fiscal Year 2025 Adopted Budget Planning Factors](#).
- **A ratio of 1:500 for school psychologists is recommended by the NASP** (National Association of School Psychologists in its [2020 Professional Standards](#), (which are its most recent). According to NASP, "This ratio is consistent with research showing that **school psychological services decrease as ratios of students to school psychologists increase** (Eklund et al., 2017; 2020)."

## Comparing numbers of current APS elementary school social workers vs our recommendation and those of others:

- APS has **25 elementary schools that share 19.7 school social workers** at this time.
- **14 APS elementary schools do not have a full time school social worker** at this time.
- The current Planning Factor ratio is **1:775** per [APS Fiscal Year 2025 Adopted Budget Planning Factors](#).
- A ratio of **1:250** is recommended currently by the SSWAA (School Social Work Association of America) in its [National SSW Model](#).
- The SSWAA further recommends a ratio of **1:50** in some cases. **“When intensive services are needed, one school social worker for every 50 students is the recommended ratio.”** (SSWAA’s [Recommended School Social Worker to Student Ratios](#), 2024.)

## **Budgetary Implications**

*Each full-time position, whether school psychologist or school social worker, will be \$79,100 in salary and \$31,540 in benefits.*

- 4.0 school psychologists will total \$442,560
- 5.3 school social workers will total \$586,392
- **9.3 new positions’ total cost: \$1,028, 952**

**Committee vote:** *Unanimous in-person vote of all 7 members*

**Date:** *November 5, 2024*

## **Detail**

### ***School Psychologists and School Social Workers Fulfill Crucial Roles***

***As trained mental health professionals, school social workers and school psychologists are necessary to student wellbeing and student and school success. Crucial issues facing APS and its students, including [increased suicide risk assessments](#) (Slide 12), [chronic absenteeism](#), [bullying issues](#), the need for [social emotional learning](#), and [substance use](#), all call for sufficient staffing that allows for relationship and trust building, to help students and families work through complex issues and needs. All of these needs exist at the elementary level and must be addressed there.***

In fact, both school social workers and school psychologists are needed at many levels to work with students, families, teachers, and administrators to provide services that are crucial to student wellbeing and success. To see comprehensive lists and/or descriptions of all that we depend upon school social workers and psychologists to do for students, families, and schools, please see Appendix 1, [What Does a School Social Worker Do?](#); Appendix 2, [Virginia Department of Education School Social Work Services](#); Appendix 3, [What Does a School Psychologist Do?](#); Appendix 4, [Virginia Department of Education School Psychology Services](#). Please see these links to read APS job descriptions: [APS School Psychologist’s Position Description](#) and [APS School Social Worker’s Position Description](#).

We know from the Virginia Governor Youngkin’s statement, [Governor Glenn Youngkin Unveils Youth Mental Health Strategy on the One Year Anniversary of Right Help. Right Now Initiative](#) that there is widespread and official state-level recognition of the importance of what many call a youth mental health crisis.

Finally, please see Appendix 5, **“Past Student Services Committee Staffing Recommendations”**, to see the historical context in which our recommendation is consistent with longstanding recommendations submitted by past committees. These committees, consisting of a variety of different community

members in their different iterations, consistently recommended adding staff, and specifically, recommended adding school psychologists and school social workers, and making sure that every school had at least one of each, a number of times. (Most relevant sections of these past recommendations are highlighted in pink for the convenience of the reader.)

### ***Benefits to Having Full-time School Psychologists and School Social Workers at ALL Elementary Schools (Expanded)***

- 1. Building blocks for readiness to learn are crucial to learning itself:** They cannot be skipped or short-changed without consequences for students, school populations, and schools themselves, and they very often require the expert help of a school psychologist or school social worker.

These learning-readiness building blocks include:

- a. mental wellness;
- b. having any learning or other school-related needs identified and addressed;
- c. not lacking basics like food or a warm coat;
- d. having any attendance-related needs/issues addressed (see Aps [Student Services Update - Chronic Absenteeism](#) presentation, p. 6, where almost all of the 10 challenges that cause chronic absenteeism are issues that would be addressed by school psychologists and/or social workers);
- e. being free of substance use (see APS/Arlington County [Joint Response to Mental Health and Substance Use](#) from March 2023 and from [March 2024](#));
- f. social-emotional ability and growth (see [APS Work Session on SEM Health and Social Emotional Learning and Wellness Update](#));
- g. addressing and preventing bullying (see APS [School Climate and Culture Update - Bullying Prevention](#));
- h. the foundation that comes from supportive school community and family/community connection;
- i. assistance needed by students new to US/APS.

**Equity and fairness on the individual level:** We know that early intervention is crucial in addressing any educational or behavioral issues children might have. We also know that at current staffing levels, it is difficult to ensure that every child has received any intervention she/he/they might need.

**Equity and fairness on the school level:** Currently, each middle school and high school has at least one school psychologist and one school social worker. We believe that each elementary school and its students should have this benefit, as well.

**We need more intervention capacity available daily at the elementary level:** For students whose behavioral or emotional needs are preventing them from accessing the curriculum, in some cases, intervention by a school-based expert (mental health professional) might help students to develop new and more productive habits and coping skills, sometimes even obviating the need for referral to special education services. Greater staffing numbers would mean our professionals can do more interventions. Being split between two buildings sometimes prevents each professional from doing much more than supporting the special education processes and meeting only the very greatest needs among students and families.

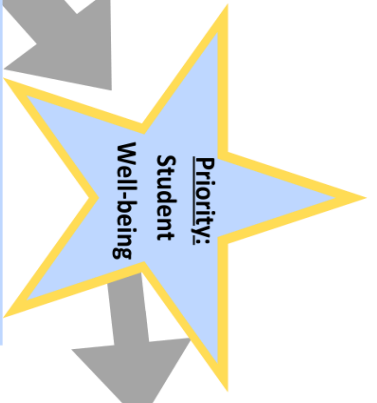
**Preparation for middle school/high school:** Elementary-level intervention means that students reaching the next levels are more socially and educationally able to succeed, which has positive ripple effects on their fellow students and their schools, with continuing benefits to students, student cohorts, and schools, through middle school and high school.

**Expertise on-site at all times rather than sometimes provides help when needed: The need for crisis intervention has only increased, post-pandemic.** The number of trained professionals available in a time of crisis is limited when staff are part time. Full-time professionals, on the other hand, are available for both large incidents and small ones. They can work directly with students (more elementary-level suicide risk assessments have been needed in recent years, for example), and/or provide helpful info/strategies/advice and training to teachers in de-escalation, behavior management, positive behavioral supports, social and emotional learning, and both trauma-informed spaces and educational practice, among other needs.

**Retention of our valuable trained experts:** We know that our school social workers and school psychologists work very hard. Anecdotally we know of some who often work well beyond their contract hours because they care about the students, families, and schools they serve, and they see that their regular hours might not meet urgent needs. But we also know that overloading anyone in *any* job can lead to exhaustion and burn-out, and could even cause them to leave a job. We need to assure working conditions that will help us *keep* our experts and attract those we need to fill vacancies. Making sure each elementary school has a full-time school social worker and a full-time school psychologist will help make sure our experts are not overloaded, and that they feel that their work is supported and appreciated by APS.

### ***Our Thanks to Student Services Leadership and Staff***

*This committee would like to note our appreciation for Dr. Sampson and Student Services Staff, for their caring and dedicated work on behalf of APS students, and for their kindness in sharing their time and wisdom with us. APS and its students and staff members are fortunate to have these experts in their corner to contribute their significant professional capacity to address today's and tomorrow's challenges.*

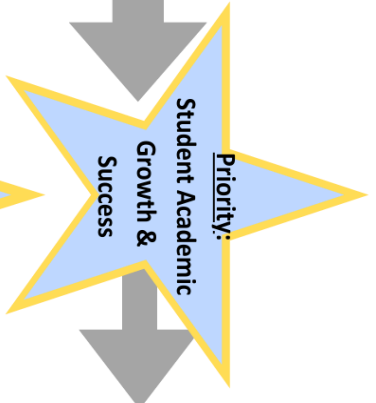


- Performance Objectives**
- School Climate and Mental Health
  - Chronic Absenteeism
  - Reduced Suspensions
  - LGBTQ & Belonging
  - Feeling Safe at School

- Strategies**
1. Evidence-based strategies to support students; trusted adult
  2. ATSS for attendance; Family relationships for attendance
  3. Restorative practices; alternatives to suspension
  4. ATSS & Family relationships for attendance
  5. LGBTQ+ supports; Student/family/community engagement; help with evidence-based professional staff development
  6. Trauma informed practices
  7. Behavioral interventions; Communicate about resources
  8. Help with needed food, clothing, & school supplies



- In numerous ways, as will hiring:
- 4 school psychologists and
  - 5.3 school social workers to assure one each --full-time -- at every APS elementary school.



- Performance Objectives**
- SOL Proficiency
  - Meeting Reading & Math Growth Targets
  - Inclusion -- 80% SWD's 80% of time
  - College, Career, & Civic Readiness

- Strategies**
1. Behavioral support practices
  2. IEP & 504 testing & eligibility meetings
  3. Needs of historically marginalized groups
  4. Behavioral support practices
  5. Support parents' understanding of additional supports available to children
  6. Help develop appropriate strategies & for students with disabilities
  7. Provide staff training on creating inclusive atmosphere; all valued/supported, promoting empathy
  8. Employability skill development (ex: SEL)



- Performance Objectives:**
- Student Partnerships
  - Family, Partnerships

- Strategies:**
1. Help acclimate students new to US & APS
  2. Collaborate/gather feedback from families/community
  3. Help develop engagement structure
  4. Foster transparent communication
  5. Integrate family engagement supports/strategies in resources to support collaborative partnerships to best support learning; connect to needed resources



- Performance Objectives**
- Positive Workplace Climate & Staff Engagement
  - Improved Retention & Recruitment
  - Staff Feel Safe at Workplace

- Strategies:**
1. Improve workload
  2. Workforce quality
  3. Positive school climate -- respect, inclusivity, conflict resolution, restorative practices, ATSS

## **A Word about Staff Morale, Recruitment, and Retention**

***This committee shares the concerns of a number of families, community members, and staff about staff morale, recruitment, and retention. Concerns about staff morale seem to be broad and ubiquitous, at least from our committee members' collective observations from various corners and school communities within Arlington.***

First, the current APS parents in our committee would agree with a staff comment we heard recently that parents are not always kind to staff, contributing to morale issues. We feel that APS and its staff might benefit from a kindness campaign of some sort, recruiting parents and students, of course, but APS leadership, too, to acknowledge and appreciate the hard work and caring of staff overall, and essentially promote goodwill across the board. As an advisory body committed to student mental well-being, we feel that the benefits to our students in emphasizing kindness could be incredible. How to frame a "kindness campaign" is a complicated question, but perhaps worth exploration.

Specific to school psychologists and social workers, however, we are equally or more concerned, however, about compensation, and that in staff shortages such as the one we recommend addressing, our elementary school social workers and school psychologists can be overworked/overburdened (and therefore exhausted, possibly leading to burn-out). Our recommendation, to make sure each elementary school has its own full-time psychologist and social worker, would help address not only all of the needs noted throughout our recommendation, benefiting students, schools, and staff. It also would improve the morale and retention of these experts whom we need, and whose APS experience increases their value as well. Despite this being a lean budget year for APS, we believe strongly that APS should fund these positions.

In addition, we hope that the APS Human Resources Department will make filling existing and new Student Services vacancies an HR priority, including advertising these positions at the right time of year to reach promising professionals and newly graduating young professionals before they commit to other jobs. We also hope that the HR Department will study and assess what changes might be needed for the effective recruitment and retention of these staff members (and all staffing areas), including compensation and benefits commensurate with area localities.

## **Our Thanks to the School Board and Dr. Durán**

*We know this is a tough year for the APS budget, and we appreciate your time and attention to our recommendation. We would not be true to our committee's mission if we did not recommend that which we feel is most urgently needed; in this case, the additional elementary school social workers and psychologists, so that every APS elementary school has its own, full time, to address all of the many needs including immediate/emergency needs. Thank you for considering our recommendation.*

## **Staff Response**

Staff is supportive of these recommendations, particularly as they are in alignment with the APS Planning Factors priorities established during the 2023-24 school year.

APS has done a great deal to support the social emotional and behavioral health needs of students at the secondary level over the last several years, including adding additional substance abuse counselors and creating intervention counselor positions for the middle and high schools. However, given increased needs amongst elementary students and families since the pandemic, there remains a need for additional staffing to ensure that the appropriate staff are available to assist with student behaviors, mental health, and barriers to attendance for our youngest learners.

As noted in this document, there are a significant percentage of student behaviors at the elementary level that rise to the level of requirement for a threat assessment:

- These situations are not specific to certain schools within the division, but rather occur across the district.
- It is challenging to develop comprehensive plans to support students in the development of new strategies and skills when there are not consistent providers at all elementary schools, five days a week, to provide intensive support to the student and to teachers.

Currently, factors such as school enrollment, percentages of students identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentages of students with disabilities are used to determine the percentages of a school assignment for psychologists and social workers. This does leave some elementary schools with fewer resources to address student mental and behavioral health challenges, particularly those that require more intensive and potentially daily intervention, support, and reinforcement. By establishing a baseline of at least one psychologist and one social worker at each school, APS would be able to better ensure a steady quality of services across the district.



## Appendix 1

### What Does a School Social Worker do?

[Please see this link for APS School Social Workers' Position Description.](#)

#### **SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

(List below provided by [School Social Work Association of America](#))

##### **"RELATED SERVICES:**

- Participating in special education assessment meetings as well as individual Educational Planning Meetings
- Working with those problems in a child's living situation that affect the child's adjustment in school. (home, school, and community)
- Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability.
- Counseling (group, individual and/or family)
- Mobilizing family, school, and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program
- Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.

##### **SERVICES TO STUDENTS:**

- Providing crisis intervention.
- Developing intervention strategies to increase academic success.
- Assisting with conflict resolution and anger management.
- Helping the child develop appropriate social interaction skills.
- Assisting the child in understanding and accepting self and others.

##### **SERVICES TO PARENT/FAMILIES:**

- Working with parents to facilitate their support in their children's school adjustment.
- Alleviating family stress to enable the child to function more effectively in school & community.
- Assisting parents to access programs available to students with special needs.
- Assisting parents in accessing and utilizing school and community resources.

##### **SERVICES TO SCHOOL PERSONNEL:**

- Providing staff with essential information to better understand factors (cultural, societal, economic, familial, health, etc.) affecting a student's performance and behavior.
- Assessing students with mental health concerns.
- Developing staff in-service training programs.
- Assisting teachers with behavior management.
- Providing direct support to staff.

##### **SCHOOL-COMMUNITY LIAISON:**

- Obtaining and coordinating community resources to meet students' needs.
- Helping school districts receive adequate support from social and mental health agencies.
- Advocating for new and improved community/school service to meet the needs of students and families.
- Helping the system respond effectively to each child's needs.

##### **SERVICES TO DISTRICTS:**

- Assist in developing and implementing educational programs for children for exceptional children.
- Developing alternative programs for students with attendance concerns or involvement with the law.
- Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.
- Providing consultation regarding school law and school policy including IDEA and Section 504.
- Providing case management for students and families requiring multiple resources."

## Appendix 2

### School Social Work Services

(Description below provided by the [Virginia Department of Education](#))

#### “Overview

School social work services are designed to address social, emotional, economic, and environmental barriers that may interfere with a student’s academic success. Through early identification, prevention, and intervention services, school social workers support the whole student – his or her needs at home, in school, and in the community.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

School social workers are an integral part of the school community. As such, they may serve as the link between the home, school and community. Additionally, school social workers serve as advocates, liaisons, coordinators, case managers, counselors, and consultants for students, parents, school staff and community agency personnel. Schools can employ school social workers in a variety of ways; therefore, these practitioners must be flexible, creative and able to demonstrate competencies in a wide range of areas. The role and responsibilities of each school social worker will be influenced and impacted by both the expectations of the local school division, the community needs, as well as the personal competencies and preferences of the individual professional.

School social workers are trained mental health professionals who provide direct as well as indirect services to students, families, and school personnel. Some of the responsibilities and scope of services are described below.

#### Services to Students

- Participate in special education and 504 evaluation teams, including preparing social or developmental history for a child with a disability and delivering counseling as a related service identified in Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
- Provide crisis interventions, including depression/suicide screening and interventions, abuse and neglect reporting, and alcohol and substance abuse screening and interventions.
- Provide individual and group counseling to help children develop appropriate social emotional skills, understand and accept self and others, learn conflict resolution and anger management skills, coping with stressor, and address mental health or behavioral issues.
- Advocate for equitable student access to school- and community-based services and instructions to address issues such as teen pregnancy and parenting, medical or mental health issues, chronic absenteeism, substance abuse, etc.

#### Services to Families

- Facilitate school-based services and instructions through activities such as parent conferences and home visits.
- Provide family education, counseling, and support in areas such as child development, child mental and behavioral health, and special education processes.
- Provide advocacy and linkage to community-based services and resources to meet basic needs, meet medical or mental health needs, or access programs for children with special needs.
- Coordinate and manage multi-agency services such as Children’s Services Act (CSA) meetings, Best Interest Determination Meetings, or treatment team meetings with Department of Social Services or mental health providers.

## Services to School Personnel and Division

- Participate in division and school-based Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) teams to address school-related concerns such as mental and behavioral health and attendance, including assisting with functional behavior assessments (FBA) for students.
- Provide consultation and support to school personnel, including developing and delivering professional development for school personnel on topics such as child abuse and neglect, children's mental and behavioral health, trauma-informed practices, etc.
- Assist in development of programs, resources, and policies to support specific populations such as English Language Learners, LGBTQ students, homeless or unaccompanied youth, pregnant and teen parents, and students in foster care.
- Assist in the development of programs, resources, and policies to support initiatives relating to safe and supportive school climates, harassment and bullying prevention, positive and preventative student conduct, human trafficking, etc.

## Training & Licensure

School social work is a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession. Per Virginia regulations ([8VAC20-23-700](#)), school social workers must have a master's of social work degree and must obtain a Virginia Board of Education (VDOE) Pupil Personnel Services License with an endorsement in School Social Work to practice in Virginia public schools.

The [VDOE Licensure](#) webpage includes information about how to apply for a license. For specific questions about obtaining a license in Virginia, please contact the VDOE's licensing office at 804-225-2022 or via email at [LICENSURE@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:LICENSURE@doe.virginia.gov).

## Professional Standards

School social workers are trained to use a wide range of evidence-based, professional strategies to enhance how students learn, as well as, ensure that students are physically and mentally ready to learn in the classroom. The School Social Work Association of America officially adopted the [National School Social Work Practice Model](#) (PDF) for the delivery of school social work services. This model provides a general framework and identifies the skills and services that can be expected from school social workers. Additional information regarding standards that define the scope of school social work services can also be found at [NASW's Standards for School Social Work Services](#).

In addition to following school division policies and regulations, school social workers are guided by professional ethics, including the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and the supplemental [SSWAA Ethical Guidelines for School Social Work](#)."

## Appendix 3

### What Does a School Psychologist Do?

[Please see this link for APS School Psychologists' position.](#)

(List below provided by the [National Association of School Psychologists](#))

**“What Do School Psychologists Do?** School psychologists provide direct support and interventions to students, consult with teachers, families, and other school-employed mental health professionals (i.e., school counselors, school social workers) to improve support strategies, work with school administrators to improve school-wide practices and policies, and collaborate with community providers to coordinate needed services. They help schools successfully:

#### **Improve Academic Achievement**

- Promote student motivation and engagement
- Conduct psychological and academic assessments
- Individualize instruction and interventions
- Manage student and classroom behavior
- Monitor student progress
- Collect and interpret student and classroom data
- Reduce inappropriate referrals to special education.

#### **Promote Positive Behavior and Mental Health**

- Improve students communication and social skills
- Assess student emotional and behavioral needs
- Provide individual and group counseling
- Promote problem solving, anger management and conflict resolution
- Reinforce positive coping skills and resilience
- Promote positive peer relationships and social problem solving
- Make referrals to and help coordinate community services provided in schools

#### **Support Diverse Learners**

- Assess diverse learning needs
- Provide culturally responsive services to students and families from diverse backgrounds
- Plan appropriate Individualized Education Programs for students with disabilities
- Modify and adapt curricula and instruction
- Adjust classroom facilities and routines to improve student engagement and learning
- Monitor and effectively communicate with parents about student progress

#### **Create Safe, Positive School Climates**

- Prevent bullying and other forms of violence
- Support social-emotional learning
- Assess school climate and improve school connectedness
- Implement and promote positive discipline and restorative justice
- Implement school-wide positive behavioral supports
- Identify at risk students and school vulnerabilities
- Provide crisis prevention and intervention services

#### **Strengthen Family-School Partnerships**

- Help families understand their child's learning and mental health needs
- Assist in navigating special education processes

- Connect families with community service providers when necessary
- Help effectively engage families with teachers and other school staff
- Enhance staff understanding and responsiveness to diverse cultures and backgrounds
- Help students transition between school and community learning environments, such as residential treatment or juvenile justice programs

**Improve School-Wide Assessment and Accountability Monitor individual student progress in academics and behavior**

- Generate and interpret useful student and school outcome data
- Collect and analyze data on risk and protective factors related to student outcomes
- Plan services at the district, building, classroom, and individual levels

Why Do Children Need School Psychologists? All children and youth can face problems from time to time related to learning; social relationships; making difficult decisions; or managing emotions such as feeling depressed, anxious, worried, or isolated. School psychologists help students, families, educators, and members of the community understand and resolve both long-term, chronic problems and short-term issues that students may face. They are a highly skilled and ready resource in the effort to ensure that all children and youth thrive in school, at home, and in life.”

## Appendix 4

### School Psychology Services

(Description below provided by the [Virginia Department of Education](#))

#### “Overview

School psychologists provide a variety of professional services to support the academic achievement, positive behavior, and social-emotional wellness of all students, especially those who struggle with barriers to learning. School psychologists play a critical role in supporting the attainment of the goals of local school divisions and help to ensure that every student is ready to learn and every teacher is empowered to teach.

**School psychologists work with students, teachers, administrators, and families to:**

- Improve academic achievement
- Promote positive behavior and mental health
- Create safe, positive school climate
- Support diverse learners
- Strengthen family-school partnerships
- Improve school-wide assessment and accountability

#### **NASP Publication: Who Are School Psychologists (PDF)**

##### **Scope of Services**

School psychologists are able to provide a broad range of services to all students and families to remove barriers to learning, improve school climate and safety, and ensure that students are engaged and available for learning. The [National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\) Practice Model \(2020\)](#) outlines the comprehensive services that school psychologists are encouraged to provide.

The roles and responsibilities of school psychologists in Virginia may vary according to their local school division and community needs as well as available staffing ratios. Examples of professional services provided by school psychologists within a comprehensive model include:

- Develop and integrate school-wide programming to promote social–emotional and mental wellness for all students based on the needs of the school community.
- Deliver professional development to school staff and families on a range of topics, such as trauma informed practices, mental health first aid, crisis prevention, suicide prevention, effective discipline, and behavior management.
- Help schools conduct comprehensive needs assessments to develop strategies to address attendance, poverty, trauma, violence, and other barriers to learning.
- Enhance coordination and alignment of efforts to improve school safety, including crisis prevention, intervention, and response.
- Design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive range of interventions for students at risk for academic, social–emotional, or mental and behavioral health concerns.
- Provide mental and behavioral health services for individual students and groups of students, including the delivery of individual and small group counseling and direct instruction in social skills.
- Support school-wide efforts to facilitate student progress toward measurable goals through data collection, progress monitoring, and data interpretation.

- Support divisions and school leadership teams by effectively integrating and interpreting of multiple data sources to aid in decision making.
- Conduct culturally competent psychoeducational evaluations to assess abilities, skills, and social/emotional functioning of students suspected of having a disability.
- Conduct functional behavioral assessments and assist in the development of behavior plans.
- Work collaboratively with teachers in delivering effective differentiation strategies for students with diverse needs.
- Collaborate with teachers and school leaders to implement universal, targeted, and intensive academic and behavioral support programs using evidence-based practices.
- Facilitate collaboration and coordination between school and community providers to ensure access to wraparound supports for students with the most significant needs.

### **School Psychology Training**

School psychologists receive specialized advanced graduate preparation that includes coursework and practical experiences relevant to both psychology and education. School psychologists typically complete either a masters-plus or specialist-level degree program (at least 60 graduate semester hours) or a doctoral degree (at least 90 graduate semester hours). School psychology training includes the development of knowledge and skills in:

- Assessment (including cognitive, academic achievement, interpersonal emotional / social functioning, and sensory-motor)
- Prevention and intervention services, including academic, behavioral, and mental health
- Consultation and collaboration with administrators, teachers, parents, and other professionals
- Diversity in development and learning, including knowledge of resiliency and risk-factors
- School-wide practices to promote learning
- Data-based decision making
- Special education services
- Crisis preparedness, response, and recovery
- Family-school-community collaboration
- Research and program evaluation
- Professional ethics and school law

### **Licensure Information**

School psychologists must obtain a Virginia Board of Education Pupil Personnel Services License with an Endorsement in School Psychology to practice in Virginia public schools. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) licensure office works to issue licenses based on the Regulations for School Personnel. The requirements for an endorsement in school psychology are listed in Section 690.

[Licensure Regulations for School Personnel: School Psychology Endorsement Requirements](#)

The [VDOE Licensure](#) webpage includes information about how to apply for a license. For specific questions about obtaining a license in Virginia, please contact the VDOE's licensing office at 804-786-2302 or via email at [LICENSURE@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:LICENSURE@doe.virginia.gov).

### **Professional Development**

- To access recorded webinars and modules on a variety of topics, please visit the Learning Center, within the [Virginia Career and Learning Center for School Mental Health Professionals](#).
- [Back to Basics: Special Education Law Modules](#)

## Appendix 5

### Past Student Services Staffing Recommendations:

(Most relevant sections are highlighted in pink below.)

2023-24

#### Recommendation 2:

**Ensure Adequate Staffing and Role Definitions as set forth below: Hire one Director of Student Wellness & Support, two Student Services Specialists [Descriptions], and additional school-based Student Services professionals (consistent with nationally-recognized professional organization ratios). Additional Student Services professionals are needed district-wide to ensure ALL schools meet the recommended ratios of their respective professional organizations.**

**Need:** Adequate staffing within Student Services is vital to APS' ability to effectively support students. APS must have enough staff who serve schools full-time, regardless of funding source, and central office staff dedicated to supporting school-based staff, and ensuring APS can provide all students with equitable access to student services professionals, support, resources and a foundation crucial to their overall wellbeing and success. This cannot happen without sufficient school staffing. APS must prioritize mental health by seeing the need for more Student Services staff so that they can deliver comprehensive school services.

We are in a mental health and substance abuse crisis that is killing our students. Low-income students in particular lack access to and availability of therapists. Coordination with community mental health providers and incorporating DHS staff into schools helps to ensure equitable access, but it is not a substitute for school-based mental health services. We need more Student Services staff to meet recommended ratios AND to meet the ratios set forth by APS. Without sufficient APS staffing, programs cannot be effectively implemented; students cannot be known by name, strength, and need; and student sobriety and mental health cannot be prioritized. Current ratios are inadequate to student needs and lead to decreased retention of staff.

**Solution:** Hire a sufficient number of school Student Services staff to meet professionally recommended staffing ratios in recognition of APS' diverse student needs.

Hire three new Syphax FTEs to provide support to school based staff in the implementation and management of various student services programs in schools. The proposed Syphax staff should help coordinate and integrate SEL, drug prevention, and mental health support in

Prioritize filling the current vacancies of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and substance abuse counselors. The School Board has previously acknowledged the importance of providing these positions by including them in the budget. **All schools must have full-time, daily coverage of school psychologists, social workers, school counselors, and substance abuse counselors consistent with national ratio standards.** This is crucial to the effective implementation and integration of SEL throughout the system, and to the wellbeing of Arlington students that these positions are filled. **The School Board should make filling existing Student Services vacancies an HR priority, and assess what changes might be needed for the effective recruitment and retention of these staff (including compensation and benefits commensurate with area localities).**



**Budgetary Implications and/or Implementation**

Needs: 3.0 FTE, potentially fully-or-partially offset by Medicaid reimbursement funds.

**Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Core Values Supported: Excellence, Equity, Inclusivity and Integrity.

Goals Supported: Student Wellbeing

Strategies Supported: Student Wellbeing Strategies 2, 3, 4 and 5.

<https://www.apsva.us/strategic-plan/student-well-being/>

Committee vote: Unanimous

**Staff response:** Per the Arlington School Board’s Strategic Plan, APS is working to implement evidence-based social-emotional learning programs and evidence-and-research-based interventions for students who need more targeted or intensive support in the areas of behavioral health and wellness. Further, due to higher levels of need for intensive supports as substantiated by data, APS has also entered into multiple partnerships that expand opportunities for students to access mental health services within the community. Additionally, Medicaid reimbursement is changing to allow for more services, including those for general education services, to be eligible. In order to support implementation, coordination, and training, to include on-site side-by-side coaching, of all of these initiatives, and to align them with ongoing work around the Arlington Tiered Systems of Support, additional staff are needed.

\*\*\*\*\*

**2022-23**

**Recommendation 2:**

The committee has previously recommended adjusting the staffing ratios for school psychologists and social workers to allow for one full-time psychologist and one full-time social worker assigned to each elementary, middle, high, and alternative program school. In the meantime, APS has begun a pilot program adding SEL school leads and support in the central office. The committee believes APS should be prepared to continue this additional SEL support in the future. The SEL leads have been able to provide additional help to the schools in the handling of SEL, for example:

- Provide communication to parents and families around SEL survey results (interpreting the report) and in general information and knowledge
- Help increase the overall survey response rates (89% response rate vs. 60% prior to having the leads)
- Help principals in schools review survey data, and use the information to assist the school in decision making, not just in SEL areas.

As noted before, the strategic plan has goals and objectives around student well-being, and furthermore a mission that all APS students learn and thrive in safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments across the entire system (and in each school). Adequate support in the implementation, rollout and continuing management of SEL is vital to this goal. We believe that adding specific central office leadership and paid school based support will be important. A future recommendation may be to allocate the following resources to schools and central office:

- SEL leads in schools. Need additional funds moving forward. Make sure additional funds in stipend are included in the student services operating budget
- Central Office Director of SEL programs, with a specific focus on student well-being goals.
- Central Office Specialist to support the universal roll out of the SEL curriculum and CASEL recommendations.
- Give parents resources to help them know how to build student well-being skills at home (as community support/services is limited)

Adequate staffing in this area (including school-based staff and central office staff that will provide vital support to staff based in schools) will help APS provide all students equitable access to student services professionals. In addition, it can ensure equity between all schools in supporting all of our students at a time when mental health related issues for students are on the rise, and at a time when crucial mental health referral services are limited. There is not sufficient mental health care available to our children locally to meet the needs that already exist and are expected to continue. This makes it more important than ever that APS have adequate internal resources to address rising needs for students. Not all elementary schools currently have full time services for their students, and some school Psychologists and social workers have multiple school responsibilities. Student needs for school psychologists and social workers do not match the availability of these professionals.

The budget expense for additional full-time social workers and psychologists was estimated to be \$2,160,000/year. The projected budget for the School SEL leads and central office SEL support staff is \$400,000 to \$500,000 per year. We are aware of the budget constraints that APS faces, but we believe this need is too great to be left unmet.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 2015-2019

### Summaries of Recommendations, Responses, and Actions Taken:

**2018-19 Non-recommending year:** Counselor-to-student ratio in elementary schools, 1:444, and in secondary schools, 1:244; the American School Counselor Association recommends 1:250. Psychologist-to-student ratio, 1:775; the National Association of School Psychologists recommends 1:650. Social Worker-to-student ratio, 1:850; the recommended ratio is 1:400. SAC-to-student ratio 1:2,000; there is no ratio recommendation for SACs.

**2017-18 Recommending year:** Recommended

1. Increase the number of counselors across all elementary schools with the goal of improving the counselor-to-student ratio by reducing the ratio from 1:470 to 1:371 over a 2-year period.
2. Continue to increase the number of school psychologists and social workers across all schools to support the improvement in the ratio.
3. Expand the number of APS substance abuse counselors,(SAC) with the goal of one full-time SAC serving each middle school, high school, and secondary program in order to address the growing student, family, and staff needs for critical substance abuse prevention and intervention services. (At the time, there were 6 SACs providing services to 12,000+ students in the 13 APS secondary schools.)

**2016-17 Non-recommending year:** APS trained 380 teachers and staff in MHFA; Hired 6 additional psychologists and 6 social workers; and added the “In Crisis/Need Help Now?” button to the APS website.

**2015-16 Recommending year:** Recommended

1. Provide Mental Health First Aid training (MHFA) for all APS teachers and administrative staff;
2. Reduce social worker and psychologist ratios from 1:1650 to 1:650;
3. Expand the reach and impact of youth social-emotional and mental health/resiliency resources, and develop new resources and accessible formats in collaboration with community partners. SSAC also asked for a [“In Crisis/Need Help Now?”](#) “button” on the APS homepage and school homepages, linking to county-wide services, programs, and information.