

Survey Response to Question##33- Row 177 on PDF

-Please use the box below to provide any additional comments about your answers above or to share other thoughts about the proposal for the Academics Advisory Council?

An overarching theme seems to be a desire to make ACTL and the subcommittees more “useful” to the board. I would characterize this as a desire to develop a greater partnership between the SB and Academic Council (AC) and subcommittees going forward. A model would be something like a professional services firm, where the SG are the partners and the AC and subcommittees are the managers and analysts who do the work and report back. There needs to be more guidance from the School Board on what they would like out of the councils and the subcommittees. As a ***** for the past few years, I did not have a good sense of specific issues the School Board wanted to cover. It would be great if there was more communication so that we can all be more responsive to specific questions.

The proposal to have the School Board provide specific charges could be implemented without changes to ACTL or the subcommittees.

To make the Academic Council and the subcommittees more effective, I think the new structure and processes should capture the following ideas.

1. More effective communication in the 3 different forms:
 - a. Broad overall guidance.
 - i. Example: We would like to focus on numeracy this year.
 - b. Annual, specific guidance.
 - i. Example: Are the equivalent “science of math” resources that correspond to the “science of reading” materials we previously adopted?
 - c. Regular cycle for asking questions, getting help on specific items.
 - i. Example: ATS is a Title 1 school with good math SOL performance, are there best practices in math instruction that could be applied to other schools?

2. Process by which the AC, subcommittees and the SB can correspond with each other to move projects along.
 - a. Examples include asking clarifying questions, providing interim updates and results, and making modifications to directions based on interim updates.

3. An AC that has a general charge of gathering feedback from individual school communities, including parents, students and teachers.
 - a. This would require better mechanisms by which surveys could be done or by which parents can communicate with each other.
 - i. Surveys should be run through the school system in batches to make sure things are not overwhelming.
 - ii. Other mechanisms for parent communications could be implemented based on best practices already in place.
 - iii. I believe that the immersion schools generally have parent Whatsapp channels for each grade. There could be other things.
 - iv. Just picking one system and promoting it would have the benefit and making it easier to gather feedback on what is currently happening in the schools and would also allow parents to talk to each other and possibly solve their own issues.

4. Because you want these councils and subcommittees to be responsive to the needs of the School Board, the timing of due dates for recommendations needs to conform to when the School Board needs the information. The PIPs/processes should be changed to account for this timing. This is not the standard school year timing where things start in September and end in June.

- a. The policies need to be updated to remove the constraint of not working over the summer. There may well be certain tasks that are best performed over the summer. For example, gathering and analyzing SOL results should be done over the summer. Many of the APS staff members who would help with these matters are 12-month employees and so can work over the summer.
- b. Terms should be extended to 2 or 3 school years to capture the time periods over which certain tasks may be done. For example, a project started in April 2024 with a recommendation made in October 2026 would span 3 school years (though only 1.5 calendar years). Expanding the terms would more easily account for this. (and reduce work associated with the process of handling terms).
- c. There are mutually exclusive goals with respect to membership and participation. The proposal aims for atomization of membership by focusing on a wide representation by having 1 parent from each school. This ignores the reality that people have relationships, often built within their school community, and people are more actively involved when they have relationships with others who are doing it. Running buddies is an example where the buddy leads to more exercise.

Many members of subcommittee don't want to serve on a super committee. They just want to talk about the advisory subcommittee's specialty (e.g. social studies). There are also volunteers with years of experience that are very specialized and don't want to join a general supercommittee like the proposed Academic Council. Therefore the Academic Council may not have the most experienced and knowledgeable members.

The new participation requirements create an extra burden for parents to volunteer, which would put downward pressure on participation. These requirements are inconsistent with the stated desire to increase participation in from certain groups.

In addition, the part of proposal where it is contemplated that advisory committees be made up only of members of the Academic Council is an additional burden to anyone interested in a particular advisory subcommittee. Attending two or more meetings per month may be untenable for most people.

The long-standing members of the advisory committees have significant amounts of expertise, institutional knowledge, and relationship capital that will be lost by eliminating the subcommittees. The members with the most experience tend to be experienced within specific areas because that is where their interest and expertise lie. Without standing committees these long-standing contributors will be squeezed out of the system.

The proposed Academic Council (like the current ACTL) is too large to focus on specific and targeted questions. Groups that large are self-limiting on what they can accomplish when it comes to the specific, detailed work on particular topics.

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● An Academic council school representative would not have time to develop expertise over 13 areas (or 5 academic areas). Expertise takes time to develop. Without standing committees made up of independent and longer-serving members, there is no good way to develop expertise.

● The one parent representative per school would eliminate the most experienced members over time: the number of elementary schools is greater than the number of middle schools is greater than the number of high schools. So a structure premised on 1 representative per school creates a system where most everyone is new or less experienced. This is not a sustainable way to develop expertise or come up with any new substantive recommendations.

● Parents and community members of these committees are all unpaid volunteers donating their time and expertise. Option 1 of this proposal dramatically reduces (up to 95%) the number of people who would be volunteering to help APS. This is exactly the opposite of the approach that APS should be taking: APS should work to increase the number of volunteers it can get.

o Option 1 removes all subcommittees and states that the Academic Council would have “up to 63 members.”

§ Of those 0-4 would be students. Therefore, up to 59 members would be adults. (stating the obvious I know)

§ Up to 40 would be parents, 1 for each school. If you assume that current ACTL leadership and ACTL members map over to the “up to 40” parent members, then that would only leave 19 slots for available for current subcommittee members.

§ Of the 19 slots, up to 10 are designated as staff. There are currently 17 staff on advisory subcommittees. That would be a reduction from 17 staff members to 10 staff members. It is also not clear that all could remain since there are specific allocation requirements for the “up to 10” staff.

§ That leaves 9 positions for subject matter experts and community members. Currently, there are 163 subcommittee members (per the official roster sent out by the school board). Only 9 of the 163 members could be moved to the Academic Council.

§ In summary, choosing Option 1 cuts staff participation by 40% and cuts Parent and Community participation by 95%.

● Advisory subcommittees provide APS with critical and specialized expertise, broad participation and community input, and legitimacy.

● Subcommittees provide a structured way for parents and community members with relevant skills or interests to contribute meaningfully, rather than relying on fragmented, ad hoc input. This participation strengthens community investment in APS’s success and ensures that recommendations are grounded in diverse, informed perspectives.

● Eliminating these committees would reduce volunteer participation, weaken institutional knowledge, undermine the credibility of the advisory process, and risk overlooking key student needs; instead, APS should strengthen communication and coordination to maximize their value to the School Board.

● For the Academics Council, having more parents participating in the advisory committees has those parents more invested in APS’s success. We should want as many people as possible invested in APS’s success. It has always been a primary goal of each of the advisory subcommittees to increase participation as much as possible. It makes no sense to do a complete reversal and squash participation by eliminating or greatly reducing their numbers.

- The advisory committees are also part of the process by which concerns and proposals are brought to the attention of the board. They also provide specific feedback within each discipline that relates to their relationship with the liaison. These processes provide legitimacy to the whole system. Legitimacy that will be reduced without them.

- The long-standing members of the advisory committees have significant amounts of expertise, institutional knowledge, and relationship capital that will be lost by eliminating the subcommittees. The members with the most experience tend to be experienced within specific areas because that is where their interest and expertise lie. Without standing committees these long-standing contributors will be squeezed out of the system.

APS also needs standing subcommittees on the subjects and areas that directly go into accreditation. This is the new accreditation summary: School Performance and Support Framework

- Math and ELA make up the largest components of the Framework. Both of these should remain as standing committees.

- EL, Advanced Academics and Science are also mentioned in this Framework and should remain.

- While not mentioned in the accreditation standards, other committees have made significant contributions and should also remain as standing committees.

Finally, eliminating the subcommittees would curtail the momentum of accomplishments that has occurred over the past few years. A few (of many) recent examples of accomplishments that originated with the subcommittees include:

- ATSS (Arlington Tiered System of Support)

- Programs to identify and support students with Dyslexia

- Twice Exceptional (2e) Task Force

- Middle School intensified courses

- Middle School “ACT II” classes to expand Art Electives

- Dual-enrollment quality points

- “Crisis/Need Help” button on all school websites linking to APS/County social/emotional and mental health services

- Phonemic programs and expansions

- School-based math coaches and interventionists

- American Sign Language offered as world language

- Part-time English Learner Early Childhood Assistant added

- Additional Outdoor Lab Funding

- 2nd/4th universal gifted screening for advanced students, including non-verbal testing