# Essex County Public Schools

# District Comprehensive Plan for 2024 – 2029

**June 2025**

*Developed by the*
*ECPS, School Division Community*

*Facilitated by*
*Dr. Linwood Blizzard, II, Consultant*

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## School Board Members

Garlyn Bundy, Chair
*North District*

Pamela Floyd, Vice-Chair
*Central District*

Scott Croxton
*Greater Tappahannock District*

Christopher Hundley
*South District*

Andrea Sydnor
*At-Large District*.

## Central Office Staff

Ms. Doranda Scott
*Interim Superintendent*

## Executive Summary

This Comprehensive Plan for 2024 – 2029 for Essex County Public Schools develops out of both a state mandate and the inclusive voice of administrators, staff, families, and community within Essex County Public Schools and Essex County. The plan presents a renewed vision where the ECPS is empowering minds, opportunities, and futures. In addition, it presents a renewed mission to provide innovative education by empowering minds, opportunities, and futures through collaboration and partnership. A strategic plan with 3 goals, 9 objectives, 18 key performance indicators, and 31 strategies. Furthermore, the comprehensive plan outlines districtwide improvements to strengthen the district literacy, technology, parent and family engagement, and corrective actions and the 10 partnerships established with the district in an evaluation. Moreover, the comprehensive plan presents the continuation of a decades long projected enrollment decline; commits to confronting the challenge of right-sizing and upgrading facilities to free up operational budget funds for improved instruction, and concludes with a 5-year capital plan totaling $ 22,300,000.

## Purpose and Standards of Quality Requirements

This document meets the requirement under the Virginia Standards of Quality for Public Education established in state law standards, where Standard 6, Planning and Public Involvement (§ 22.1-253.13:6B), which specifies the following:

*Each local school board shall adopt a division wide comprehensive, unified, long-range plan based on data collection, an analysis of the data, and how the data will be utilized to improve classroom instruction and student achievement. The plan shall be developed with staff and community involvement and shall include, or be consistent with, all other division wide plans required by state and federal laws and regulations. Each local school board shall review the plan biennially and adopt any necessary revisions. Prior to the adoption of any division wide comprehensive plan or revisions thereto, each local school board shall post such plan or revisions on the division's Internet website if practicable, and, in any case, shall make a hard copy of the plan or revisions available for public inspection and copying and shall conduct at least one public hearing to solicit public comment on the division wide plan or revisions.*

This document further meets the requirements for the division wide comprehensive, unified, long-range plan pursuant to the Essex County Public Schools (ECPS) Policy AF, which specifies the following:

*The division wide comprehensive plan includes:*

- *The objectives of the Essex County Public Schools division, including strategies for first improving student achievement, particularly the achievement of educationally at risk students, then maintaining high levels of student achievement*
- *An assessment of the extent to which these objectives are being achieved*
- *A forecast of enrollment changes*
- *A plan for projecting and managing enrollment changes including consideration of the consolidation of schools to provide for a more comprehensive and effective delivery of instructional services to students and economies in school operations*
- *An evaluation of the appropriateness of establishing regional programs and services in cooperation with neighboring school divisions*
- *A plan for implementing such regional programs and services when appropriate*
- *A technology plan designed to integrate educational technology into the instructional programs of the Essex County Public Schools division, including the division's career and technical education programs, consistent with or as part of the comprehensive technology plan for Virginia adopted by the Board of Education*
- *An assessment of the needs of the Essex County Public Schools division and evidence of community participation, including parental participation, in the development of the plan*
- *Any corrective action plan required pursuant to Va. Code § 22.1-253.13:3; and*
- *A plan for parent and family involvement to include building successful school and parent partnerships that will be developed with staff and community involvement, including participation by parents.*
- *The division wide comprehensive plan will also include a division wide literacy plan for pre-kindergarten through grade eight, and*

- *The Essex County School Board will post, maintain, and update as necessary on its website a copy of its division wide literacy plan and the job description and contact information for any reading specialist employed by the Essex County Public Schools division pursuant to subsection G of Va. Code § 22.1-253.13:2 and for any dyslexia specialist it employs.*

## Comprehensive Plan Process and Participation

ECPS is committed to the input and feedback of staff, families, and community to develop the forward direction of the district. The development of this plan comes out of the development of the Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2029. The Strategic Plan's formation comes from sessions prior to September 2023 that involved members of the district's Administration. Their work developed a framework for a strategic plan. Beyond that, ECPS drew upon the staff's input through various surveys including the Comprehensive Instructional Program survey in Spring 2023 and the Upbeat survey in Spring 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024 to develop the finalized strategic plan, which becomes part of this comprehensive plan.

The Administration evaluated the input and feedback and redeveloped the Vision statement, Mission statement, and goals on March 26, 2024. The Administration divided into three smaller groups from within the Administration, aligned by each goal, to develop the objectives and key performance indicators relevant to that goal in meetings that happened on April 16, 2024, April 22, 2024, and April 25, 2024. The Administration met on May 15, 2024 to review the work of the small groups and approved the objectives and key performance indicators. In that same meeting, the Administration assigned members to small groups again to determine the strategies for each objective inclusive of administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and community members. These smaller groups met on May 27, 2024 and May 28, 2024. These groups developed the strategies and the Administration met on June 11, 2024 to refine, finalize, and approve the strategies.

The remaining elements of the comprehensive plan report come from the varying departments in ECPS relevant to the data. Below is a listing of those who contributed and their roles in the formation and development of this report.

Heaven Ball (Teacher at Tappahannock Elementary School), Damean Barfield (Principal at Essex High School), Jon Barnes (Director of Technology), Dr. Cyndee Blount (Chief Academic Officer), Janet Bohlmann (Community Member), Virginia Booth (Director of Accountability), Maronica Brown (Teacher at Essex High School), Fontella Calhoun (Principal at James H. Cary Intermediate School), Nicole Daily (Assistant Principal at Tappahannock Elementary School), Helen Davis (Teacher at Essex High School), Carlos Disla (Community Member), Michelle Dungee (Tappahannock Elementary School), Ernestine Fauntleroy (Community Member), Elizabeth Franklin (Director of Finance), Demi Fulcher (Instructional Technology Integration Specialist), Denise Griffin (Director of Special Education), Angela Gross (Director of Human Resources), Roger Gross (Chief Operations Officer), Rev. Cornelius Holmes (Community Member), William Hoover (Supervisor of Maintenance), Martha Mercer (Parent), Tiffani Nash (Teacher at James H. Cary Intermediate School), Jennifer Peters (Principal at Tappahannock

Elementary School), Michael Pierce (Assistant Principal at James H. Cary Intermediate School), Jonathan Scott (Assistant Principal at Essex High School), Ashley Shelton (Teacher at James H. Cary Intermediate School), Cherlanda Sidney-Ross (Community Member), Dr. Harry Thomas (Superintendent), Jessica Taylor (Teacher at James H. Cary Intermediate School), Valerie Taylor (Teacher at Tappahannock Elementary School), and Raymond Whitaker (Community Member).

## Essex County Public Schools

The Essex County Public Schools serves as the public school system for Essex County, Virginia. Per the most recent census, Essex County is 257.4 square miles and is the 78th largest county in Virginia by total area. The county serves a total population of 10,599 residents. ECPS has three (3) schools available to serve a total population of 1,589 school-age children.

## ECPS Vision Statement

Essex County Public School's vision is empowering minds, opportunities, and futures.

## ECPS Mission Statement

Essex County Public School's mission is to provide innovative education by empowering minds, opportunities, and futures through collaboration and partnership.

## Essex County Public Schools Goals

In June 2024, the ECPS administration approved the five-year Strategic Plan with three focal goals for the forward direction of the district through 2029.

**Goal 1:** Raise student achievement by providing exciting and rigorous learning experiences.

**Goal 2:** Recruit and retain highly qualified staff.

**Goal 3:** Foster a safe, secure, positive educational environment, culture, and climate.

## Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators

The three defined goals have objectives to achieve that goal and key performance indicators to measure the success of the goal through each objective. The color coding below used shows the progress of having the metric and the measuring tool for each key performance indicator at the beginning of the 2024 – 2025 school year as noted below.

| | |
|---|---|
| | Metric known and measuring tool currently is in place |
| | Metric baseline needs establishment but measuring tool currently is in place |
| | Metric baseline needs establishment and measuring tool currently is not in place |

Below are the objectives for each goal and the key performance indicators with color coding as noted above.

Goal 1: Raise student achievement by providing exciting and rigorous learning experiences.

Objective 1.1 Quality Classroom: Cultivate an instructional environment that maximizes teacher potential and student ability.

Key Performance Indicator 1.1a: Upbeat survey on personal satisfaction and growth-related questions

Key Performance Indicator 1.1b Increase proficiency of teacher performance based on end-of-year evaluations

Objective 1.2 Quality Resources: Provide intentional resources for meaningful experiences.

Key Performance Indicator 1.2a Improved student performance on Virginia State Standards of Learning assessments to 75% with raw data scores

Key Performance Indicator 1.2b Modify course offerings for Intermediate and High School

Objective 1.3 Quality Foundation: Build a community passionate about literacy.

Key Performance Indicator 1.3a Increase percentage of students within a cohort reading on grade level to 75%

Key Performance Indicator 1.3b Decrease the number of students identified as not meeting the benchmark on the Virginia Language and Literacy Screener (VALLS)

Goal 2: Recruit and retain highly qualified staff.

Objective 2.1 We Grow: Develop professional-growth opportunities and experiences which promote success and career growth.

Key Performance Indicator 2.1a Assessing embedded teacher cadets and apprentice programs

Key Performance Indicator 2.1b Upbeat Survey on professional development related questions

Key Performance Indicator 2.1c Expanded questions on professional development with internal survey

Objective 2.2 We Recruit: Recruit qualified, motivated, and dedicated staff committed to innovative and connected learning experiences.

Key Performance Indicator 2.2a Decrease the number of positions filled by long-term substitutes by 80%

Key Performance Indicator 2.2b Increase the number of provisionally-licensed teachers who complete full licensure requirements in three years or less by 80%

Objective 2.3 We Retain: Create a collaborative work environment where the contributions of every employee are heard, recognized, and valued.

Key Performance Indicator 2.3a Upbeat Survey on collaborative environment related questions

Key Performance Indicator 2.3b Expanded questions on collaborative environment with internal survey

Goal 3: Foster a safe, secure, positive educational environment, culture, and climate.

Objective 3.1 Who We Are: Cultivate an inclusive environment and culture.

Key Performance Indicator 3.1a Upbeat survey on inclusive environment and culture related questions

Key Performance Indicator 3.1b Expanded questions on inclusive environment and culture with holistic (internal and external) survey

Objective 3.2 How We Do It: Create efficient and effective school safety systems and procedures.

Key Performance Indicator 3.2a At least a 90% score on the Virginia School Safety Survey

Key Performance Indicator 3.2b Expanded questions on school safety with internal survey

Objective 3.3 Where We Do It: Improve school facilities and operations.

Key Performance Indicator 3.3a Take 1st year observations of school facilities and operations for metric

## Strategies for Goals and Objectives

The objective for each goal is matched with strategies that include a timeline for completion and person(s) responsible for the work. The timeline is the latest projected year for completion. The person(s) responsible consult(s) and work(s) with others from the across the district and community, where applicable, to achieve the strategy. Below are three (3) goals with their objectives, key performance indicators, and strategies.

| Essex County Public Schools Strategic Plan: 2024 - 2029 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal #1: Raise student achievement by providing exciting and rigorous learning experiences.** | | | | |
| | | | Timeline | Person(s) Responsible |
| Objective | 1.1 | Quality Classroom: Cultivate an instructional environment that maximizes teacher potential and student ability | | |
| KPI | 1.1a | Upbeat survey on personal satisfaction and growth-related questions (establish baseline) | | |
| KPI | 1.1b | Increase proficiency of teacher performance based on end-of-year evaluations (establish baseline) | | |
| Strategy | 1.1.1 | Increase content collaborative experiences and grade-level collaborative experiences and identify leads within and across schools | 2026 | Chief Academic Officer and Principals |
| Strategy | 1.1.2 | Differentiate Professional Development recognizing the teachers' voice and needs | 2029 | Executive Director of Human Resources, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Special Education |
| Strategy | 1.1.3 | Expand teacher led Professional Learning Communities | 2026 | Chief Academic Officer and Principals |
| Strategy | 1.1.4 | Develop and guide highly effective co-teaching teams | 2026 | Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Special Education, and Principals |
| Strategy | 1.1.5 | Provide educators with access to up-to-date computing devices, classroom technology, and digital resources required to educate students | 2029 | Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Technology, and Supervisor of Academic Programs |

| Essex County Public Schools Strategic Plan: 2024 - 2029 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal #1: Raise student achievement by providing exciting and rigorous learning experiences.** | | | | |
| | | | Timeline | Person(s) Responsible |
| **Objective** | **1.2** | **Quality Resources: Provide intentional resources for meaningful experiences** | | |
| **KPI** | **1.2a** | **Improved student performance on Virginia State Standards of Learning assessments to 75% with raw data scores** | | |
| **KPI** | **1.2b** | **Modify course offerings for Intermediate and High School (establish baseline)** | | |
| **Strategy** | **1.2.1** | **Innovate student learning experiences that align with the rigor of the learning standards requiring students to create authentic products and/or experiences with real-world application** | **2029** | **Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **1.2.2** | **Increase civic and business partnerships to engage students in meaningful learning experiences** | **2027** | **Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Assistant Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **1.2.3** | **Expand and stratify course offerings for Intermediate and High School that align with student interests and career aspirations** | **2029** | **Director of Accountability and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **1.2.4** | **Formalize targeted intervention and progress monitoring for at-risk academic students** | **2026** | **Chief Academic Officer, Director of Special Education, and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **1.2.5** | **Equip students with equitable access to computing devices and digital resources** | **2029** | **Director of Technology and Supervisor of Academic Programs** |
| **Objective** | **1.3** | **Quality Foundation: Build a community passionate about literacy** | | |
| **KPI** | **1.3a** | **Increase percentage of students within a cohort reading on grade level to 75%** | | |
| **KPI** | **1.3b** | **Decrease the number of students identified as not meeting the benchmark on the Virginia Language and Literacy Screener (VALLS) (establish baseline)** | | |
| **Strategy** | **1.3.1** | **Educate and inform the school and greater community on the purpose and importance of literacy** | **2025** | **Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **1.3.2** | **Recognize and celebrate successes related to literacy** | **2025** | **Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **1.3.3** | **Foster a culture of student-choice in reading** | **2027** | **Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **1.3.4** | **Engage the community in literacy and reading** | **2026** | **Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Assistant Principals** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Strategy** | **1.3.5** | **Explore, expand, and execute literacy experiences and opportunities** | **2028** | **Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Principals** |

| Essex County Public Schools Strategic Plan: 2024 - 2029 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Goal #2: Recruit and retain highly qualified staff | | | | |
| | | | Timeline | Person(s) Responsible |
| Objective | 2.1 | We Grow: Develop professional-growth opportunities and experiences which promote success and career growth | | |
| KPI | 2.1a | Assessing embedded teacher cadets and apprentice programs (establish baseline) | | |
| KPI | 2.1b | Upbeat Survey on professional development related questions (establish baseline) | | |
| KPI | 2.1c | Expanded questions on professional development with internal survey (establish a baseline) | | |
| Strategy | 2.1.1 | Expand the mentor program to include greater resources and skills inventory | 2027 | Executive Director of Human Resources and Principals |
| Strategy | 2.1.2 | Create a culture of continuous learning that aligns professional development process with individualized staff needs and career goals | 2027 | Executive Director of Human Resources, Chief Academic Officer, and Principals |
| Strategy | 2.1.3 | Develop Grow Your Own Programs that promote education as a career and brings graduates back to Essex | 2029 | Executive Director of Human Resources |
| Objective | 2.2 | We Recruit: Recruit qualified, motivated, and dedicated staff committed to innovative and connected learning experiences. | | |
| KPI | 2.2a | Decrease the number of positions filled by long-term substitutes by 80% | | |
| KPI | 2.2b | Increase the number of provisionally-licensed teachers who complete full licensure requirements in three years or less by 80% | | |
| Strategy | 2.2.1 | Increase visibility and participation in iTeach | 2026 | Executive Director of Human Resources |
| Strategy | 2.2.2 | Build a strong brand for the district | 2029 | Superintendent and School Board |
| Strategy | 2.2.3 | Partner with community to develop and implement a community engagement plan | 2027 | Superintendent and Assistant Principals |
| Objective | 2.3 | We Retain: Create a collaborative work environment where the contributions of every employee are heard, recognized, and valued. | | |
| KPI | 2.3a | Upbeat Survey on collaborative environment related questions (establish baseline) | | |
| KPI | 2.3b | Expanded questions on collaborative environment with internal survey (establish baseline) | | |
| Strategy | 2.3.1 | Create a culture of collaborative growth that embraces individual voice | 2029 | Superintendent |
| Strategy | 2.3.2 | Develop a system for a transparent bi-directional flow of information | 2027 | Superintendent and Principals |
| Strategy | 2.3.3 | Foster an environment that demonstrates work-life balance | 2027 | Superintendent, Executive Director of Human |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Resources, and Principals |
| **Essex County Public Schools Strategic Plan: 2024 - 2029** | | | | |
| **Goal #3: Foster a safe, secure, positive educational environment, culture, and climate** | | | | |
| | | | Timeline | Person(s) Responsible |
| **Objective** | **3.1** | **Who We Are: Cultivate an inclusive environment and culture** | | |
| **KPI** | **3.1a** | **Upbeat survey on inclusive environment and culture related questions (establish baseline)** | | |
| **KPI** | **3.1b** | **Expanded questions on inclusive environment and culture with holistic (internal and external) survey (establish baseline)** | | |
| **Strategy** | **3.1.1** | **Develop a public relations engagement plan** | **2027** | **Superintendent and Assistant Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **3.1.2** | **Establish daily practices around shifting perceptions of ECPS from differing spaces and accountability** | **2025** | **Executive Director of Human Resources and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **3.1.3** | **Create consistency of purposeful community engagement across schools through a Public Relations staff position** | **2028** | **Executive Director of Human Resources** |
| **Strategy** | **3.1.4** | **Establish a system of norms for ECPS** | **2025** | **Superintendent and Principals** |
| **Objective** | **3.2** | **How We Do It: Create efficient and effective school safety systems and procedures** | | |
| **KPI** | **3.2a** | **At least a 90% score on the Virginia School Safety Survey** | | |
| **KPI** | **3.2b** | **Expanded questions on school safety with internal survey (establish baseline)** | | |
| **Strategy** | **3.2.1** | **Strengthen crisis communication, prevention, and crisis action planning and practice** | **2026** | **Director of Technology and EHS Assistant Principal** |
| **Objective** | **3.3** | **Where We Do It: Improve school facilities and operations.** | | |
| **KPI** | **3.3a** | **Take 1st year observations of school facilities and operations for metric (establish baseline)** | | |
| **Strategy** | **3.3.1** | **Create a Capital Improvement plan and process** | **2026** | **Superintendent and Principals** |
| **Strategy** | **3.3.2** | **Adapt facilities, infrastructure, and security to meet emerging needs that support school division learning and work environments** | **2029** | **Director of Technology and Supervisor of Maintenance** |

## Literacy Plan

The literacy plan is a requirement with the comprehensive plan beginning with the 2024 – 2025 school year pursuant to Essex County Public Schools Policy AF. The literacy plan aligns with the Strategic Plan's Objective 1.3, inclusive of strategies 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, and 1.3.4, with their associated timelines and person(s) responsible.

## Technology Plan

The technology plan is designed to integrate educational technology into the instructional programs of the Essex County Public Schools division, including the division's career and technical education programs, consistent with or as part of the comprehensive technology plan for Virginia adopted by the Board of Education. The technology plan aligns with the Strategic Plan's strategies 1.1.5, 1.2.3, 1.2.5, and 3.3.2, with their associated timelines and person(s) responsible.

## Parent and Family Engagement Plan

The parent and family engagement plan is an intentional approach to involve parents and families in the educational experience in a greater way for improved educational outcomes, expanded communications, and better engagement with families and the community. The plan for parent and family involvement includes building successful school and parent partnerships that will be developed with staff and community involvement, including participation by parents. The parent and family engagement plan aligns with the Strategic Plan's 1.3.4, 2.2.3, and 3.1.3, with their associated timelines and person(s) responsible.

## Corrective Action Plan Required Pursuant to Virginia Code § 22.1-253.13:3

The Essex County Public Schools has corrective action plans due to accreditation challenges. Pursuant to Virginia Code § 22.1-253.13:3:

*The Board shall establish a corrective action plan process for any school that does not meet the standards established by the Board. Such process shall require (a) each school board to submit a corrective action plan for any school in the local school division that does not meet the standards established by the Board and (b) any school board that fails to demonstrate progress in developing or implementing any such corrective action plan to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Board.*

Virginia's Division Support and Improvement Plan (DSIP) integrates findings from Virginia's needs assessment to help guide divisions as they prioritize work, predict and neutralize barriers, and catalyze transformative practices that will improve student outcomes. There are four sections to the Division Support and Improvement Plan, aligned to the Virginia Support Framework:

Academic: Providing high-quality instructional materials, routines, and prioritized placement are critical to the successful operation of the school division, and focuses on alignment, engagement, rigor, and organizing staff based on need.

Staffing: Recruiting, allocating, and retaining teachers and principals to address schools and areas with the greatest needs, to include building capacity from those within and the retention of high-quality staff are integral to school division success.

Professional Learning: Managing a school building effectively by providing logistical support to maximize learning through clear calendars and master schedules; and targeting professional learning centered on the instructional cycle with a focus on student outcomes.

School Climate: Engaging with families and providing instructional materials, learning opportunities, and supports to improve attendance creates a welcoming culture. Connecting each student with an adult creates a safe and orderly environment.

The corrective-actions plans for the Essex County Public Schools Division, Essex High School, and James H. Cary Intermediate School are accessible using the hyperlinks below.

Corrective Actions Plan for Essex County Public Schools Division
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UsGHYflXBm9E9FuO_JJYVzEYv_joxaoR/view?usp=sharing

Corrective Actions Plan for Essex High School
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UaePC1Tc9tGachvddSXJhBf5M5fVlPfF/view?usp=sharing

Corrective Actions Plan for James H. Cary Intermediate School
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nEcdEJzC3JZw3bX07b6p6Qcp9RyxD3Ax/view?usp=sharing

## Participation in Regional Programs

The Comprehensive Plan mandate, promulgated from Standard 6 of the Virginia Standards of Quality for Public Education, calls for the "evaluation of the appropriateness of establishing regional programs" and "a plan for implementing such regional programs, when appropriate." In adherence with these mandates, Essex County Public Schools partners with academic and co-curricular oriented regional programs. The academic oriented programs are The Chesapeake Bay Governor's School, the Northern Neck Technical Center, and the Rappahannock Community College. The Chesapeake Governor's School is an accelerated college preparatory program, which offers an enhanced level of experiential academics for highly motivated students. The Northern Neck Technical Center is a trades program, which provides technical certifications that lead to employment in the workforce. Student participation in RCC entails the enrollment and completion of dual enrollment courses; such courses translate into college credit toward undergraduate completion. Empirical data such as student course requests suggests that these programs are meeting the academic needs of our high school students. Student participation in co-curricular regional programs is not as prolific as the academic course offerings; however, these programs nonetheless meet substantial student needs.

The chart below depicts the number of students served in the NNTC since the 2019-2020 school year. The data shows a drop-off of student participation, since before the pandemic. We attribute the decrease to student interest in working after school to provide additional funding for their families. Such opportunities for student work is a dynamic which was heightened during the pandemic as students completed coursework virtually.

| 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 76 | 81 | 59 | 54 | 58 | 57 |

Essex high school students participate in JROTC and the iMPACT, an alternative educational program in King William County. JROTC is a regional partnership, a magnet program with the King and Queen and Middlesex school divisions. King and Queen Schools initiated this program and currently serves as the fiscal agent. JROTC affords students leadership opportunities, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and a wide array of scholarship pathways into college. The iMPACt program is an alternative setting for students who have experienced social-emotional trauma, which often presents as behavioral challenges in the traditional academic setting. A cost-benefit analysis has been conducted by the Administrative Staff that supports the iMPACT program as the alternative education program in analyzing the Northern Neck Technical Center (NNTC). The engagement with the NNTC Executive Superintendent has indicated that each county receives six (6) seats in alternative education, which does not support the total number of 22 students that Essex County Public Schools sends to iMPACT annually. If NNTC was expanded to provide these six (6) seats to Essex County Public Schools, it would still require sending students to iMPACT. The latter decision would cause the district to pay for both enrollment and transportation in sending alternative education students to NNTC, while still sending students to iMPACT due to the annual number of alternative education students. Maintaining the present program with iMPACT would be the best option for Essex County Public Schools.

## Population and Enrollment Projections and Plan for Managing Changes

Below are Total Population and School Age Population Estimates for Essex County, over the minimum 25-year life expectancy of major school facility improvements, and FY25-29 School Division Enrollment projections, all data sourced from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service:

### Census and Total Population Estimate Data for Essex County

| 2020 Census | 2024 Estimate | 2030 Estimate | 2040 Estimate | 2050 Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10,599 | 10,411 | 9,903 | 10,057 | 10,362 |

## School Age Population Estimates for Essex County

| Year | 2024 | 2030 | 2040 | 2050 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ages 5-19 | 1,589 | 1,504 | 1,603 | 1,604 |

The following chart presents Virginia Department of Education and the Weldon Cooper Center actual enrollment for FY 2024 and enrollment projections for FY 2025 – 2029. Note: Pre-K is a funding limited program serving approximately 40 students ages 3-4, and there are typically 1-3 Post-Graduate SPED students per year not completely captured by the below data. The enrollment projections are critical for future planning, which includes staffing, capital improvements and expansion, regional partnerships, transportation, and resourcing.

| Grade | FY 2024 (actual) | FY 2025 | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 | FY 2029 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 69 | 79 | 80 | 76 | 69 | 65 |
| Grade 1 | 72 | 70 | 81 | 82 | 78 | 71 |
| Grade 2 | 70 | 69 | 67 | 77 | 78 | 74 |
| Grade 3 | 87 | 70 | 69 | 67 | 78 | 80 |
| Grade 4 | 80 | 85 | 69 | 68 | 67 | 78 |
| Grade 5 | 81 | 81 | 86 | 69 | 70 | 68 |
| Grade 6 | 76 | 80 | 80 | 86 | 70 | 70 |
| Grade 7 | 75 | 74 | 77 | 78 | 84 | 67 |
| Grade 8 | 99 | 75 | 74 | 78 | 79 | 84 |
| Grade 9 | 109 | 101 | 77 | 76 | 80 | 81 |
| Grade 10 | 109 | 110 | 102 | 77 | 76 | 80 |
| Grade 11 | 97 | 105 | 105 | 97 | 74 | 74 |
| Grade 12 | 95 | 96 | 103 | 104 | 97 | 74 |
| Total Students | 1,119 | 1095 | 1071 | 1036 | 999 | 965 |

## Enrollment Management and Oversight

The enrollment data provided within this plan were produced by the VDOE and the Weldon Cooper Center. The Weldon Cooper Center is an affiliate of the University of Virginia and provides research, data, services to the community, governments, and public sector leaders. The numerical figures within the provided tables reflect 2-3% per year decline in enrollment between grades K-12. Based on Weldon Cooper archived Census and Population Estimate data dating back to 2000, the 2-3% per year decline in enrollment has remained constant for three decades. The enrollment changes can be attributed primarily to declining birth rates, a national phenomenon, and secondarily to families that have chosen educational alternatives.

In keeping with the language of the relevant state codes, decreases in enrollment warrant the review and consideration of school consolidation. The observed student enrollment trends resulted in the Essex School Board initiating action to pursue consolidation via a construction feasibility study undertaken by the Skanska Construction firm. The study began with an overall facility assessment of the schools within the district. Following a review and analysis of the

facility assessment study and associated findings, five consolidation options were developed by a Facilities Assessment Committee (FAC), charged with overseeing consolidation. For the purpose of meeting the statutory requirements of the Comprehensive Plan, the options developed and analyzed concerning consolidation shall serve as "plans for managing the district's enrollment changes." The three most cost-effective consolidation options were presented to the School Board on October 25, 2023 for the purposes of continued study and development, but the School Board voted to halt the consolidation planning work prior to completing the contracted study.

## ECPS Facility Student Capacities

It is important to consider the VDOE recommended and ECPS planned classroom/student capacities, based on teacher:student ratios of 1:22/24 and 1:18 respectively, of each ECPS facility to provide perspective to the relative risk of campus consolidation options. The risk is when compared to the aforementioned School Age Population Estimates for the next 25 years. Tappahannock Elementary School (TES), James Cary Intermediate School (JCIS) and its unused classroom annex, and Essex High School (EHS) and its former Career Technical Education building (CTE) are detailed below. ECPS is currently operating its three buildings on three campuses at a utilization rate well below 50%.

| Facility | Classrooms | VDOE Capacity (1:22/24) | ECPS Capacity (1:18) |
|---|---|---|---|
| TES | 40 | 960 | 720 |
| TES annex | 8 | 192 | 144 |
| JCIS | 47 | 1128 | 846 |
| JCIS annex | 10 | 240 | 180 |
| EHS | 42 | 1008 | 756 |
| CTE | 17 | 408 | 306 |
| **Totals:** | **164** | **3936** | **2952** |

All campus consolidation options to be considered by the School Board result in three buildings; an elementary school (grades Pre-K-5), a middle school (grades 6-8), and a high school (grades 9-12) albeit on two campuses: JCIS and EHS. The student capacity of all two campus options will be 2784 at the VDOE recommended class sizes; 2088 at the ECPS planned class sizes. The highest School Age Population estimate, well above the forecast enrollment projections, in the next 25 years is 1604. The analysis concludes that ECPS will retain sufficient capacity for the entire School Age Population estimated for the next 25 years even at the smaller ECPS planned class sizes, with a built in 25% excess capacity by increasing class sizes to the VDOE recommend levels.

State code, 22.1-253.13:6B, which calls for the creation and adoption of a division-wide comprehensive plan, states the following: "a plan for projecting and managing enrollment changes including consideration of the consolidation of schools to provide for a more comprehensive and effective delivery of instructional services to students and economies in school operations." The School Board is renewing its commitment to complying with State code and continuing toward a cost-effective campus consolidation that right-sizes and upgrades facilities to free up operational budget funds for improved instruction.

## Capital Improvement Plan

The capital improvement plan emanates from a series of meetings on August 28, 2023, September 7, 2023, and October 25, 2023 of the FAC which included the following members: Dr. Harry Thomas, Dr. Cyndee Blount, Scott Croxton, Ray Whitaker, Sidney Johnson, Rob Akers, Roger Gross, Angela Gross, Elizabeth Franklin, Fontella Calhoun, Jennifer Peters, Marcy Tignor, Heaven Ball, Madeline Lawson, Nyeshia Reed, Sue Kim, Victor Burrell, and Randy Jones (ZMM Architects and Engineers). The capital improvement plan presented draws from the FAC study and estimates nominal annual expenditure amounts that will support any of the three FAC developed campus consolidation options.

*Essex County Public Schools Long Range Capital Plan: FY 2025-2029*

| Project | FY25 | FY26 | FY27 | FY28 | FY29 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EHS-JCIS Bus Connector Road | $250,000 | | | | |
| Joint Vehicle Maintenance Facility | | $250,000 | | | |
| TES - Contingency Maintenance | | $300,000 | | | |
| Campus Consolidation - Planning/Design | | $250,000 | $250,000 | | |
| Campus Consolidation - Phase 1 (CTE Reno+Gym) | | | $10,000,000 | | |
| Campus Consolidation - Phase 2 (JCIS Reno-PK-5) | | | | $10,000,000 | |
| Campus Consolidation - Phase 3 (If Reqd) | | | | | |
| Campus Consolidation - Phase 4 (If Reqd) | | | | | |
| Bus Replacement | | $200,000 | $200,000 | $200,000 | $200,000 |
| Totals | $ 250,000 | $ 1,000,000 | $ 10,450,000 | $ 10,200,000 | $ 200,000 |