

Building Supportive School Communities

Academic Matters - August 2026

Fairfax County PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ENGAGE • INSPIRE • THRIVE

Strategic Plan Connection

FCPS EXCELLENCE EQUITY & OPPORTUNITY 2023–30 STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal #2: Safe, Supported, Included, and Empowered

Every student will experience an equitable school community where student health and well-being are prioritized, and student voice is centered.

Equity Commitment

We will amplify student voice to inform our approaches, honor students' identities and experiences, and ensure student safety and well-being in an inclusive school climate and culture.

Key Metrics

- Positive school climate (safety, inclusion, and sense of belonging)



Why Sense of Belonging Matters

When students feel that they belong, outcomes improve—academically, socially, emotionally, and beyond high school.

22% vs. 40%

U.S. high school students who felt connected at school were **far less likely to report poor mental health**.

5.9% vs 11.0%

Students who felt connected were about **half as likely to miss school** because they felt unsafe.

Academic Achievement

Belonging was a **statistically significant predictor of achievement** for US 9th graders.

3x

Students who experienced strong **school and family connectedness during adolescence** had more than **3× the odds of graduating from a four-year college.**

Sources: CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States 2021; CDC School Connectedness; National Center for Education Statistics; National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health

Example School Practices: Elementary



Community Building

- Morning Meeting
- Closing Circle
- Peer Mentors
- Welcome Rituals

Skill Development

- SEL Lessons
- Self-Regulation Spaces

Content Area Integration

- Inclusive Welcomes
- Engaging Strategies
- Intentional Close

Example School Practices: Middle & High

Student Voice

- Data Dialogues
- Action Planning
- Student-led Advisory activities

Community Building

- Responsive Advisory Meeting
- Affinity Programs
- 7th & 9th Grade Transition Programs

Leadership & Support

- Student Advisory Councils
- Peer Mentorship & Ambassadors



Central Supports

- Tier 1 Behavior/Wellness Data Dialogues
- Goal Setting & Action Planning
- Sense of Belonging Toolkit
- Community of Practice
- Targeted Professional Learning & Consultation



