



Consolidation Q&A

Where can I find more information about the AHPS Consolidation?

You can find archived first-hand information on the AHPS website, including information from the school boards of the historic Allegheny County and Covington City Public Schools at https://www.ahps.k12.va.us/school_board/archived_policies_agendas_and_minutes.

Information about the actions of the current school board is also available on the website under the “school board” tab. This information includes meeting agendas and minutes. Local print, radio, television, and social media sources have covered the development of consolidation plans for several years. Depending on your specific interest, you may also find items of relevance on the websites of our funding localities — Covington City and Allegheny County.

AHPS makes frequent news releases about its activities and also maintains an active Facebook presence at AHPublicSchools. While not all of this information is about consolidation, these resources are great ways to keep up with activities in AHPS. News releases are posted on the AHPS website. As our Facebook page is set to public, you can use the web address www.facebook.com/AHPublicSchools to view the page without a Facebook account if you prefer.

Who makes what decisions about AHPS as AHPS moves forward?

The AHPS School Board is responsible for “big picture” and governance decisions affecting AHPS. The school board establishes a broad direction and vision for the school division. Day-to-day operational decisions are made by school division staff to establish and maintain this vision. Most decisions about how buildings operate are made by principals. Operational decisions range a great variety of topics and include time-sensitive matters such as weather closures and ongoing efforts such as continuous school improvement.

AHPS is grateful for its funding localities — of Alleghany County and Covington City, and their decisions affect the amount of funds available for AHPS to carry out its efforts. AHPS is similarly grateful for the incorporated towns of Iron Gate and Clifton Forge as important stakeholders in our community.

Will AHPS have schools that are over capacity in 2023-2024?

No. We understand there may be more questions about Covington Middle School given the new configuration of schools. Based on the most recent assessment of educational specifications and projected enrollment, Covington Middle School will be at 83% capacity for the 2023-2024 school year. It will have about 600 students and has hosted as many as 900 students in the lifespan of the building.

Does the Covington Middle School building have asbestos?

When Covington High School, now Covington Middle School, was built, asbestos-containing materials were used. Asbestos at Covington Middle School is fully abated and contained. Other buildings in the school division were also built with asbestos-containing materials that have been fully abated and contained. For more information, contact the school division maintenance office at 540.863.1800 or 540.965.1808. You can also find information about this topic in information reviewed by the school board Jan. 10, 2023.

Do teachers and other staff need to share classrooms in AHPS?

Many teachers teach in individual, traditional classroom spaces, but not all. Some teachers and other staff share classrooms and other spaces. This occurs at Covington Middle School as well as at other school sites to help meet the needs of children and schools. Here are some examples:

- Some teachers may share a room with a paraprofessional/teacher's assistant. Across schools, we strive to have desks or similar places for paraprofessionals to place their belongings, and these may be inside of classrooms. Additionally, many paraprofessionals are assigned to assist specific classes for part or all of the day, and this may also necessitate sharing a room.
- Some teachers may share a room with a special education teacher. Because many special education services are provided in general education classrooms with a general education teacher also present, special education teachers may share classrooms with each other. Additionally, "team teaching" between general and special education teachers is regarded as an effective instructional practice that may also necessitate sharing classrooms. For more about team teaching, sometimes referred to as co-teaching, resources available through the Virginia Department of Education at <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/special-education/iep-instruction/inclusiv e-practices> may be helpful.

- Some teachers may share a room to access particular equipment or meet other needs. In secondary (grades 6-12) environments, this may be very useful for science labs. Additionally, AHPS secondary teachers are working hard on vertical alignment and need to communicate with each other within subject-area departments. Vertical alignment means that teachers are working actively to make sure instruction in one year or course “builds” on what has been taught in the previous year or course, and proximity to each other can be helpful in some of these circumstances. Improving vertical alignment has been specifically recommended to AHPS leaders to help AHPS achieve greater academic success, and this goal does affect the placement of teacher classrooms and other decisions. When general education teachers share classroom spaces (two math teachers, for example), they do not teach two classes in one room at the same time.

It is also correct that no staff members lost their jobs involuntarily through this process, and we want to deploy all of our instructional staff to meet the needs of students throughout our schools.

Do most general education teachers teach in one room all day?

Yes, but there are exceptions. Most general education teachers work in one or two classrooms during the school day. To meet student needs, special education teachers and paraprofessionals/teacher’s assistants may work in several classrooms during the school day.

If a teacher or other staff member is sharing a classroom or other space and needs a private space for planning period work or something similar, is that available?

Yes. As spaces vary by building and time of day, staff needing a private space should contact their immediate supervisor (principal) if they are having any related difficulties.

How much does moving schools cost?

Costs for the support of movers is lower than projected thanks to the efforts of many staff involved in planning. AHPS will spend around \$150,000 on moving tasks this summer based on the moving plan developed. This is about half of the originally-projected cost. It is very important that AHPS staff follow directions about how to pack boxes to help maintain lower costs. Moving is thought of as a “one time” expense, and bringing the secondary school buildings together will help AHPS be a good steward of educational resources for children.

What new opportunities are available because of the consolidation?

We know that not all positive outcomes from the consolidation will be immediate, but opportunities are already increasing for students. These opportunities include expanded gifted education services, additional resources for English Language Learners, more robust support for work-based learning in local businesses, and increased athletic opportunities particularly for 22-23 Covington High School students in swimming and wrestling. The school division is also in a better position to retain staff through salary equalization, resulting in raises realized in 22-23,

and additional support for instructional materials, including, for instance, equalized funding for school libraries.

It is true that the decreasing size of both historic school divisions reduced the number of programs that could be offered in either ACPS or CCPS. The consolidation does not reverse the declining population of the Allegheny Highlands, but it does bring us together to use resources efficiently to offer programs and other opportunities for our students. As part of overall economic development efforts and responsible use of taxpayer funds, AHPS is able to provide for student needs more effectively through a joint City-County effort.

What do I do if I have another question?

Please call your child's school principal or our central office if you need additional information. There is a lot of helpful information on the AHPS website, too.