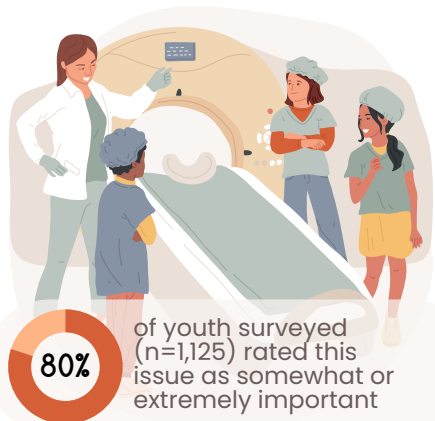


## Youth Perspectives on:

# Academic Success & Environments



### Overview



Alexandria students expressed a strong desire for school environments that are equitable, engaging, and responsive to their individual needs. It came up roughly 230 times during the 94 Listening Sessions. While many youth noted positive experiences, such as access to tutoring and passionate teachers, they also identified persistent challenges like rigid instruction, inequitable opportunities, inconsistent grading, and high teacher turnover.

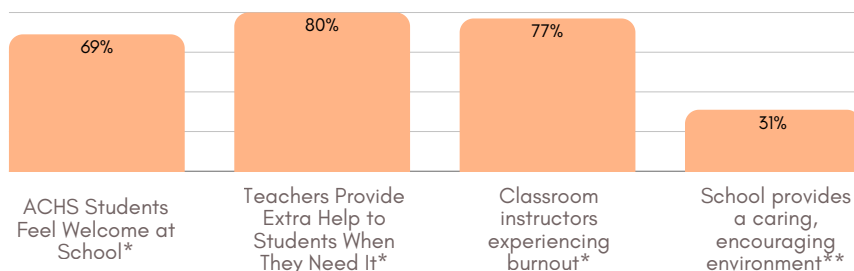
## WHY IT MATTERS

Students' academic confidence and future success are directly shaped by how supported and engaged they feel at school. When learning environments are responsive, hands-on, and inclusive, youth are more likely to thrive. Their feedback highlights the importance of equity, relationships, and real-world relevance in academic settings.

## WHAT THE DATA SAY

### Academic Environment

Source: ACPS Climate Survey (2024)\* & Developmental Assets Survey (2025)\*\*



## WHAT YOUTH WANT

40+ mentions

### Student-Centered Learning & Engagement

"More field trips that actually help students understand more."

More hands-on, experiential learning (e.g., field trips, life skills, group projects)

60+ mentions

### Supportive Relationships & Academic Encouragement

"An ideal school looks like everyone getting the help that they need for learning."

- Personalized support through tutoring and meaningful teacher-student relationships
- Passionate, well-supported educators who care about student success

25+ mentions

### Fair and Growth-Oriented Assessment

"Different ways of evaluating knowledge."

Fair, flexible assessment systems that prioritize growth over test scores

10+ mentions

### Equity in Access & Opportunity

"Encouraging more minority students in college level/AP classes."

Equitable access to academic opportunities, including support for students with different learning needs

## WHAT YOUTH EXPERIENCE

60+ mentions

### Learning & Engagement

"Great variety of classes."

"Haven't been on a field trip since 9th grade."

While many appreciate access to diverse classes and caring teachers, they also described instruction as overly rigid, disconnected from real life, and lacking in interactive opportunities.

40+ mentions

### Relationships & Academic Encouragement

"They give up on kids easy."

Teacher turnover and lack of one-on-one support were common concerns.

5+ mentions

### Assessment

"Too many tests."

Frustration over inconsistent grading and overreliance on testing.

15+ mentions

### Access & Opportunity

"Educational equity...not really fulfilled."

Disparities in support and opportunities, particularly for students in special education or youth of color in advanced courses