

Arlington Public Schools

Staff Response to the Budget Advisory Council End of Year Report

June 15, 2017

The BAC had a very full year, as can be seen from the Budget Advisory Council's end of year report. This past year, from staff's perspective, was another successful year of collaboration and partnership. The BAC continued its practice of inviting ELT members and staff to help the Council understand various initiatives or activities. The BAC also continued its outreach to other School Board advisory committees and scheduled a portion of each meeting to hearing from the advisory groups.

The BAC has always been a good sounding board for staff; the Council is always willing to give their thoughts on how we could be more effective in communicating in the community and pointing out the types of information that would make budget material easier to understand. Importantly, the BAC is an effective carrier of APS' budget messages. This advisory council is respected in the community and often their explanations or interpretations of budget information are well-received.

The BAC report included recommendations in three areas: compensation issues and investments in HR data; the technology budget for personalized devices; and high school choices and construction costs.

In the area of compensation issues and investments in HR data,

- The BAC supports the multi-year approach to bring the identified under-market positions to market levels but suggests that the timing of the increases should be revisited should these areas become difficult to hire and/or retain. The BAC urges more timely compensation reviews in the future and recommends other positions determined to be below market be reviewed and any action be included in next year's budget. Staff agrees that compensation reviews should be undertaken more regularly and that under market positions should be brought to market if being under market makes it difficult to hire or retain staff.
- The BAC recommends that the key measurement necessary to measure and support staff growth and retention be identified and the proper tracking of such measurements be put in place. Human Resources has indicated that it will be working on implementing this over the next year or so.
- The BAC would like to see a thorough review of the consultant recommendations related to compensation and benefits. Staff concurs with this recommendation with the understanding that this will likely be a multi-year process.

Regarding the technology budget for personalized devices,

- The BAC encourages APS to develop and share more comprehensive and granular budget data on technology, metrics to gauge the device use and impact on learning outcomes, research on the impact of screen time on elementary school students, and a comprehensive technology

device plan. Staff understands the rationale behind the BAC's desire for these types of data. Technology is one of the many resources used to support student learning. In order to directly measure the impact on learning outcomes, we would need to isolate this practice from all others implemented within our schools (for example, after school and summer programs, problem-based learning, guided reading, etc.) to conclude that increases in student learning can be directly attributed to the personalized learning device initiative. We will continue to monitor the usage through program evaluations, classroom observations, the personalized learning design teams, our learning management system, and feedback from staff, students, and parents. Additionally, staff will continue to review the research available on passive versus active use of devices, particularly as related to screen time, and align guidelines for usage based on the research. Our goal is to ensure that the devices support improvement in teaching and learning.

- The Council also suggests that the personalized learning device initiative should be incorporated into the recruitment and professional development of APS teachers and support staff. Staff agrees with this recommendation and the professional learning framework being developed for APS will include best practices related to personalized learning.

Turning to the BAC's recommendations for high school choices and construction costs,

- A focus on reducing the cost of school construction in light of the number of projects needed and the increase in debt service generated by those projects is, of course, a goal Finance staff would support. As always, the extent to which costs are scaled back will be driven by both the community and the School Board.

This has been a productive and successful year. The BAC has provided genuine support to staff in the budget development process. We truly thank Michael Shea for his leadership over the past two years and look forward to continued collaboration with him as a member of the BAC. Also appreciated was Barbara Kanninen's regular attendance at meetings and availability when needed. Her support to the BAC provided the Council with insights that staff couldn't. Lastly, thank you to Tameka Lovett-Miller for her support and especially for maintaining and updating the BAC web site.