

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Item D-1-b

Work Session on Enrollment and Transfers for Schools and Programs

February 6, 2017

The Arlington School Board convened on Monday, February 6, 2017, at 7:32 PM at 1426 N. Quincy Street, Arlington, VA 22207.

Present were:

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Dr. Barbara Kanninen, Vice Chair
Reid Goldstein, Member
James Lander, Member
Tannia Talento, Member
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

Also present were:

Dr. Patrick K. Murphy, Superintendent
John Chadwick, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Operations
Linda Erdos, Assistant Superintendent, School and Community Relations
Cintia Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services
Dr. Brenda Wilks, Assistant Superintendent, Student Services
Tyrone Byrd, Supervisor, Secondary Education
Lisa Stengle, Director, Planning and Evaluation
Sarah Johnson, Integrated Project Manager, Planning and Evaluation
Lionel White, Director, Facilities Planning
Helene Hartman, Data Architect
Zach Larnard, Planner
Meg Tuccillo, Facilities Consultant

Ms. Van Doren called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

1. Guidance on Outstanding Policy Questions

Ms. Stengle reviewed the principles guiding the Board's work on revising Policy 25-2.2 Enrollment and Transfers for Schools and Programs. These are to balance neighborhood and option schools, to provide equitable access, and to simplify the policy and standardize practices. The Board then discussed several areas identified in the previous work session to consider as changes to the policy.

The first topic discussed was providing a blend of neighborhood and option schools and ensuring equitable access. The Board considered how to define the balance of both types of schools while ensuring options are available to all students. The Board agreed that all students should have guaranteed access to their neighborhood school, and briefly discussed sibling preference. All members agreed with preserving sibling preference for elementary students, but did not want to guarantee it at the secondary level. Also discussed was whether transportation should be provided to select programs or to all programs. The Board recognized that currently transportation is provided in some situations as an incentive to support efforts to balance enrollment. While

appreciating this approach, the Board was reluctant to guarantee transportation to all students in policy. They agreed transportation should continue to be provided to students attending neighborhood and options schools outside of the walk zone.

Neighborhood attendance zones for options schools was the next topic discussed. Also briefly discussed was whether to limit admissions to option schools to a lottery. Board members were focused on ensuring equal opportunities for students to access option schools, and recognized challenges such as the cost of transportation. Board members had concerns about the feasibility of walk zones for option schools. Staff was asked to do analysis and bring back data on the impact of walk zones on aspects such as capacity and transportation costs to help inform their decisions.

The Board also discussed if additional option schools should be considered, noting the financial implications of that model. Mr. Lander commented that organizing option schools by neighborhood zones provides opportunities to families without putting undue stress on transportation. He stressed that this would need to be done in a way that expands options while maintaining equity across the county. Board members recognized geographic limitations and other challenges to this model, such as ensuring diversity and identifying choice programs that a community would be interested in attending. Dr. Murphy agreed it will be helpful to do an inventory of current programs and to identify trends and interests in the community to help guide the Board's decisions. Mr. Byrd confirmed that staff is conducting a survey of current secondary options, tracking the number of applications and the percentage of admissions to programs and he stated the results will be shared. The Board recognized that there are different interests and needs at the different levels, which will need to be considered in this decision.

Additional questions for ensuring equitable access were discussed, including whether to set aside seats for a proportion of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Board members recognized the desire to support diversity in schools but questioned whether free and reduced lunch participation is a valid parameter of diversity. The consensus of the Board was to focus on equitable access to instruction, and not establish set-asides for specific populations. Expanding current mechanisms, such as providing the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) opportunities at option schools and reserving Montessori seats for low income students, was also considered. The allotment of H-B Woodlawn seats throughout the county and the 50/50 balance of English/Spanish language dominant students in immersion programs were also briefly considered. The Board asked for more data on VPI participation, and Dr. Murphy explained how this program placement is in part driven by capacity. Board members suggested looking at these mechanisms to determine how they are working and requested additional information such as how a super lottery would work. They also recognized the desire to simplify the policy and provide broad guidance that allows staff the flexibility to implement the strategies that will achieve the overall goal.

2. Additional Data Requests

Ms. Stengle summarized the data requests from the Board. These include looking at the impact on capacity and transportation costs for option schools with identified neighborhood zones. Data was requested on the number of students within set zones (such as one-quarter or one-half mile from the school) for option schools. The third request is for data on demand for current option programs, and Ms. Stengle noted that this will be more difficult to gather, as each school follows their own practices. Board members also asked for data indicating county-wide interest in immersion programs. In terms of enrollment, longitudinal data will be gathered on VPI and Montessori

students, to see how long they remain in the school or program they first enter. Ms. Talento requested data on the number and location of pre-kindergarten classes.

The group also discussed a super lottery and how it might function, and it was recognized that there should be overarching principles and goals in establishing options for families. As families are not always familiar with options available to them, the Board stressed the importance of developing awareness in all communities. Dr. Kanninen was concerned that while a super lottery provides equal access throughout the county, it could disadvantage families who have identified a specific program that would meet their child's needs. Mr. Goldstein suggested reviewing current options to consider changes, and the group agreed that the data requested will help inform further discussion of options.

3. Next Steps

Ms. Stengle reviewed next steps and encouraged the Board members to review the transfer report. Dr. Murphy summarized the discussion, noting the importance of aligning instructional needs as a first priority, then moving forward with changes. He confirmed the first draft of the policy revision will be shared in early February, and reviewed opportunities for feedback and community engagement as the policy is refined. Ms. Van Doren reiterated that this policy has not been revised in many years, and as the school system grows, will likely need to be revisited more frequently. She summarized the discussion, confirming the Board is interested in a blend of neighborhood and option schools and a policy that provides equitable access. The Board also supports sibling preference at the elementary level only, and will look at transportation and possible use of waivers. She confirmed that the Board is looking for feedback and at this time is not inclined to begin identifying specific attendance zones for possible options. She then briefly reviewed the Board's data requests, and thanked staff for their work.

Meeting adjourned 9:12 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Arlington School Board