

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Item C-1-a

Literacy Work Session

February 9, 2017

The Arlington School Board convened on Thursday, February 9, 2017, at 7:04 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
Raj Adusumilli, Assistant Superintendent, Information Services
Cintia Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services
Dr. Kristi Murphy, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Dr. Tara Natrass, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction
Dr. Brenda Wilks, Assistant Superintendent, Student Services
Dr. Donna Snyder, Acting Principal, Randolph Elementary School
Dr. Teri Adkins, Supervisor, Office of Minority Achievement
Paul Jamelske, Director, Special Education
Dr. Kelly Krug, Supervisor, ATSS
Cheryl McCullough, Supervisor, Gifted Services
Dr. Michelle Picard, Supervisor, English Language Arts
Regina Van Horne, Assistant Director, Accountability

Team Members:

- Linda Arnsbarger, ELA Advisory Committee
- Donna Owens, Special Education Advisory Committee
- Linda Saiidifar, Specialist, ESOL/HILT
- Gabriela Uro, ESOL/HILT Advisory Committee

Introduction

Ms. Van Doren called the meeting to order and Dr. Murphy welcomed the group and thanked all for attending.

Defining Reading

Dr. Natrass provided an overview of the work session objectives and reviewed the components of reading, explaining how these elements lead to skilled reading. She then described the four types of readers and key terms.

Overarching Goal

The overarching goal for Arlington Public Schools (APS) is that by June 2019, 100% of students will be reading on grade level or will make more than one year's worth of growth in reading as measured by Standards of Learning (SOLs), Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) and Reading Inventory (RI).

What Does It Look Like?

Dr. Natrass then provided an overview of the cyclical approach APS will take to accomplish the literacy goal. She also highlighted the four levels of work that include division, school, grade/department/classroom, and student. Information was presented for each of these levels.

- Division

Dr. Natrass reviewed assessments used and data that is analyzed at the division level. She described assessments used at each grade level and shared examples of data gathered at the division level using these assessments. Also reviewed were strengths and opportunities for improvement identified based on the division-wide data.

Staff responded to questions, providing more detail on how assessments are administered and how data is interpreted and interventions identified. Dr. Natrass confirmed interventions are personalized to meet individual student needs. Board members were especially concerned about struggling students, and how APS identifies and addresses their needs. Ms. Uro noted that caution is needed to ensure that English language learners (ELLs) are not misidentified as struggling readers. The Board looked forward to updates later in the year to see how supports are helping improve student reading.

Dr. Natrass then reviewed the three division-wide levels of support and confirmed that central office staff, including Minority Achievement staff, provide support and coaching to help teachers build capacity. She also summarized how Instruction monitors student progress.

- School

Data from Randolph Elementary School was provided to illustrate analysis and implementation of interventions at the school level. Dr. Snyder shared demographic and assessment data and a portion of the school management plan on reading goals, and she explained how this data is analyzed. Highlighting strengths and opportunities for improvement, Dr. Snyder also explained the relationship of the master schedule to building a plan to address literacy that responds to school level concerns. She then described the collaborative learning team approach used in the schools, which allows all staff involved to focus on student needs.

Board members were interested in more information on how staff builds capacity within a school, especially for identified groups such as ELLs and students with special needs.

- Grade, Department, and Classroom

Dr. Natrass explained that data at this level provides more specific analysis to determine needs and monitor progress at grade levels. Dr. Snyder shared a snapshot of a schoolwide grid used by

staff to review data in terms of student achievement, demographics, perception data, and process and programs. She then reviewed strengths and opportunities identified at this level, described how the collaborative learning team process responds to needs, and highlighted the cycle of assessment, analysis, response and monitoring progress. Responding to questions, she provided more detail on use of the schoolwide grid data to identify adjustments to instruction that will meet student need. She reiterated that while the grid provides data, the power of this approach is how teams use this data to inform instruction.

- Student

Sample data was then shared demonstrating how instructional decisions are made for individual students. Dr. Natrass briefly explained how data is interpreted and used to respond to student need. She also highlighted the three tiers of support provided to meet student needs identified through the review of data, then reviewed how progress is monitored. Additional support is provided through the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) which will be described at a future work session. In closing, Dr. Natrass spoke to efforts by the English/Language Arts (ELA) Department to review courses and resources that allow for individualized learning progressions to ensure students are being well served. She noted that the ELA resource process is underway and recommendations will come to the Board in the spring.

- Questions and Discussion

The Board briefly discussed how progress is measured in terms of reaching the overarching goal, and recognized that changes to cohorts affects the data. While recognizing that progress is being made, the group also discussed concerns about addressing dyslexia. In particular, the group considered how effective PALS is at identifying dyslexia and Board members encouraged staff to use all possible tools to ensure that students are identified. Also discussed was ensuring that appropriate assessments are used for ELLs to clarify if difficulties with reading result from dyslexia or other issues, or simply reflect that the students are learning a new language. Board members also stressed the importance of providing the support needed to achieve desired results, and Dr. Kanninen asked if sufficient professional development is available to staff to support efforts. Dr. Natrass confirmed that professional development is provided and is also being tracked to ensure that all schools can provide needed support to students. Having heard concerns about slow identification of students with special needs, the Board encouraged staff to clarify lines of responsibility and accountability. Board members also requested that the data presented be made available to the public, and reiterated that the goal is to focus on getting results. The Board also looked forward to the ELA program evaluation.

Ms. Van Doren appreciated the staff and advisory committee members for their efforts and participation in the work session.

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Arlington School Board