

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Work Session on Personalized Learning
March 28, 2017

Item D-1-c

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, March 28, 2017, at 7:02 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
Kristi Murphy, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Dr. Tara Natrass, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction
Leslie Peterson, Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Management
Terrance Proctor, Director, Service Support and Infrastructure Support
Joanne Uyeda, Principal, Abingdon Elementary School
Kimberley Graves, Principal, Hoffman-Boston Elementary School
Heather Hurley, Personalized Learning Supervisor
Kerry Abbott, Instructional Technology Coordinator, Abingdon
Jacqueline Firster, Teacher, Abingdon

Ms. Van Doren called the meeting to order and participants were introduced.

Dr. Natrass presented an overview of personalized learning. She highlighted best practices in terms of individualized instruction, assessment and feedback, practice, and both active and mastery learning. Ms. Hurley then provided a more detailed definition of personalized learning, recognizing that it provides both differentiated and individualized instruction. The vision of personalized learning in APS classrooms was presented, and Ms. Hurley explained how teacher support and technology are incorporated in this approach.

Ms. Uyeda, Ms. Firster and Ms. Abbott described how personalized learning is implemented at Abingdon Elementary School. They demonstrated how instruction is data driven, self-paced and supported by staff. They also explained how personal technology is used to support student learning, noting that it can strengthen communication between teachers, students and parents. It was confirmed that research shows that passive teaching methods, such as reading and lecturing, are less effective than the participatory teaching methods used in the personalized learning model. Dr. Natrass then summarized the strengths of personalized learning.

Board members asked for more information on how the use of technology affects interpersonal skills, how it supports the whole child and how it can help strengthen literacy. Board members also asked about the Board's role in approving technology, staff training, whether technology is used consistently, and how parents are communicated with about devices in their child's classroom. Dr. Natrass noted that technology is used purposefully to provide an environment for authentic learning in each of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) areas, and how it is integrated in the classroom. She confirmed that individual devices support student learning and affirmed that staff is focused on equity and building strong instruction across the system.

Responding to questions, staff explained that consistency in instruction is supported with ongoing professional development, training from master teachers and integration of technology in all subject areas. Staff also described how individual devices benefit students by facilitating communication, strengthening resourcefulness, and supporting accessibility for students without technology at home. They also confirmed that training is provided to parents so that they can support their students. The group briefly discussed goals and outcome measures, and Dr. Natrass confirmed the overall goal is to support each student by providing instruction that meets individual needs while also supporting elimination of the achievement gap.

Dr. Natrass then reviewed next steps. Staff will continue to adopt best practices, implement strategies to ensure consistency throughout APS, and minimize the budget implications of this initiative. Resources being used to strengthen best practices include the International Society for Technology in Education and the Virginia State Technology plan. In terms of consistency, Dr. Natrass confirmed staff is looking at learning management and strengthening the resource adoption process. Professional learning is being strengthened with the development of personalized learning teacher design teams, an across-school initiative to develop an approach and models for instruction. Dr. Natrass also described the responsibilities of the Instructional Technology Coordinators and reviewed device instructional use, stressing that screen time is limited and staff works to ensure purposeful, thoughtful use to support learning.

A discussion was held on selection and approval of instructional resources. Staff shared a rubric illustrating how devices and applications are selected, and Dr. Murphy confirmed that a variety of supplemental materials are provided to meet the needs at the individual schools. Staff also gave a more detailed description of the review process for resource adoption. The group also discussed the accessibility of resources, and Mr. Adusumilli described efforts to ensure that all students have devices as well as wireless internet access. Also discussed was balancing the use of technology with concerns about issues such as screen time, digital stimulation, and access to inappropriate sites. Dr. Murphy recognized these concerns and spoke to division-wide initiatives and efforts to ensure that parents and staff work together to address concerns.

Staff then presented the budget implications of the personalized learning device model. Information was presented at the school level for individual and shared student devices, testing needs and specific program needs. Data was presented comparing enrollment growth, number of devices and the per student cost of devices. A preliminary alternate plan for elementary technology of a 4:1 per computer ratio was also presented, as well as how this plan would impact learning. This plan would reduce costs by \$247,000 in the first year, and in outgoing years by \$15,000. Data on costs of damage was also shared. Ms. Graves then spoke briefly to the instructional impact that going to the 4:1 computer model would have on individualized learning.

Board members appreciated the positive experiences described and asked about challenges with the 1:1 initiative. There was concern about implementation and how devices are used to differentiate instruction in the schools, and the Board asked for outcome data to determine if there are benefits from the initiative. Additional questions were asked about using only Apple products and the transition to a middle school with less access to technology than in elementary school. There was concern about the impact of devices on learning to read and on learning penmanship skills. Board members encouraged developing a vision for moving forward and for more outreach to families to ensure they understand why devices are being used. As this discussion focused on elementary schools, Board members asked for an additional discussion of technology at the secondary level. They also reiterated concerns about ensuring consistency throughout the division as well as helping families understand how to help their students use the devices responsibly.

Ms. Van Doren thanked all of the staff members for their participation in the work session and their efforts in the classroom. Dr. Murphy summarized the discussion, recognizing the interest in finding a balance with technology and to focus on how this will prepare students for the future. He acknowledged inconsistencies and concerns and stated staff continues to address issues. Staff will respond to questions that were raised and additional information will be provided to the Board.

The meeting adjourned 9:23 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Arlington School Board