

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Compensation Work Session
December 5, 2016

Item C-1-a

The Arlington School Board convened on Monday, December 5, 2016, at 7:02 PM at 1426 N. Quincy Street, Arlington, VA 22207.

Present were:

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Reid Goldstein, Member
James Lander, Member
Emma Violand-Sánchez, 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
Dr. Kristi Murphy, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Leslie Peterson, Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Management
Ellen Kennedy, Director, Employee Relations
Jim Miekle, Director, Maintenance Services

Tina Kuklenski-Miller, Co-Chair, Advisory Council on Instruction
Matt di Ferranti, Vice Chair, Budget Advisory Committee

Introduction

Ms. Van Doren called the meeting to order, welcomed attendees and announced that Dr. Kanninen was not able to attend due to a travel commitment. Dr. P. Murphy then provided an overview of the work session agenda, confirming plans to set the foundation for building a framework to support recruitment, grow talent and support retention of staff.

Vision: Goal 3 Opportunities and Choices for High Quality Staff

Dr. K. Murphy stated that Human Resources is working to build a holistic compensation philosophy to ensure opportunities and choices are in place to support a high quality staff. This initiative is focused on the year 2020 in parallel with the APS 3-5 Year Plan. Dr. K. Murphy described strategies for this work, and reviewed recruitment and retention data and other factors that drive staffing needs. She outlined both financial and non-financial incentives important to supporting recruitment and retention. In addition to other incentives, she stressed the importance of systematic, ongoing, and job-embedded professional development to staff retention.

Dr. Violand-Sánchez appreciated the strong support, including professional development, provided to instructional staff, but encouraged expanding training opportunities for other staff as well. Dr. K. Murphy confirmed that APS is working to provide these opportunities to all staff, and the group discussed the importance of providing ongoing training to staff throughout their careers.

Responding to a question, Dr. K. Murphy described the assistant to teacher program, confirming that approximately ten staff members join each year. The group discussed how to balance the types of incentives offered to employees and Dr. K. Murphy noted that staff has determined professional development is the area most in need of strengthening at this time.

Current State of the System: Pros and Cons to current pay Structure -- Segal Waters Consulting

Mr. Elliot Susseles of Segal Waters Consulting presented the results of the recent market study of APS salaries. He confirmed that APS leads local divisions in terms of teacher pay scales, but noted that other jurisdictions are looking at adjusting their pay structures to bring salaries closer in line with APS. He described how the analysis was done and shared strengths and challenges that have been identified. Presenting pay lane comparisons with peer districts for the different teacher scales, he noted that while APS salaries are higher at the lower steps, the gap narrows significantly in the out years for most teacher pay scales. He also presented comparisons of cumulative earnings under various scenarios, including with no annual increases or with a smaller increase than the other jurisdictions. Data on the effect of a modified 40 year pay progression on salaries as compared to other local jurisdictions was also presented, as well as the effect on cumulative career earnings.

Moving to the non-teacher pay scales, Mr. Susseles then reviewed the current pay structure for these positions and highlighted strengths and challenges. Based on the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) structure, some support positions are eligible for retirement while others are not. Focusing on 55 benchmark positions, Mr. Susseles highlighted positions where APS pay is significantly above or below market and demonstrated how pay steps are not consistent across the scales. Ms. Peterson provided background information about the variation in steps and agreed to provide the Board with additional detail. In closing his presentation, Mr. Susseles shared some options for incentives or changes to compensation that can be considered to strengthen retention of staff.

The Board asked about staffing challenges and Dr. K. Murphy stated that issues are primarily seen with hard to fill positions. Also discussed were options to restructure the pay scales, and it was confirmed that staff is working on a proposal to accomplish this. The Board was also interested in how to determine how effectively the current compensation system meets needs. Additional factors that influence compensation costs were acknowledged, such as the number of staff on longevity and the large percentage of teachers with advanced degrees. Ms. Van Doren confirmed that the first steps are to identify a philosophy for recruitment and retention and determine whether the current pay structure supports that philosophy. It was noted that this philosophy may need to be adjusted as the division approaches 30,000 students to ensure that APS meets the needs of all students.

Next Steps for Building and Growing Talent -- Human Resources

Dr. K. Murphy reviewed next steps, which include reviewing compensation, monitoring and supporting the workforce initiative, and identifying new approaches for personalized planning for career/professional development. Recognizing that some jurisdictions link student outcomes to compensation, the group discussed this option. Dr. K. Murphy noted that while this is not a mechanism used in APS, the division does put a strong value on outcomes. Mr. Lander asked for a recommendation on growing talent from within, and also expressed support for shifting to a systemwide approach to hiring so that there is more uniformity in the educational experience for students, regardless of the school they attend. He also asked about moving talent around to build

competency within the school system. Dr. P. Murphy appreciated this idea but noted that schools have different programs which may require different approaches, referencing the role of the principal at each school in selecting highly qualified staff that understand and can deliver the instructional program.

The group discussed additional strategies to grow talent, such as adjusting policies to strengthen the workforce initiative and increasing funding to bring lagging scales to market rate. Staff confirmed they are planning to add funding in the upcoming budget proposal to begin addressing the lagging scales, however it will likely take multiple years to fully address this issue. Also discussed was the recruitment and retention study which will provide foundational data to inform future work. Dr. K. Murphy also noted that staff is working to improve the functionality of the current data system to support this effort. In addition, funding is suggested for a position classification analysis. Dr. P. Murphy recognized that the current compensation system has resulted from a number of philosophies and approaches, and reiterated the importance of gathering data to inform decisions and determine the best next steps. Board members appreciated this approach but were also interested in seeing results from the investments being made.

The Board asked staff if there are specific critical positions where salaries should be increased soon in order to fill vacancies. Dr. K. Murphy reiterated that the goal of this initiative is to identify and analyze all components of compensation by 2020, which will support implementation of a continuous cycle of review and improvement. Dr. P. Murphy reviewed key considerations that influence the current compensation philosophy and that need to be considered going forward. These include class size, staff levels, variations in costs/services, and specialized programs or supports provided. Mr. Lander again commented on the importance of focusing on efficiency in what is being done and of ensuring that all students are receiving the same support.

In closing, Ms. Van Doren reviewed next steps which will include those discussed as well as asking staff to bring forward an overarching plan that identifies achievable goals. This plan will be provided to the Board for consideration and further conversation.

Meeting adjourned 9:27 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Arlington School Board