

## Ep.21 Back to School

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:10:25 - 00:00:53:14

Welcome back to season 2 of What's Up, APS. We were on a little hiatus over the summer but we're back with a whole bunch of new episodes and today we're going to talk about what it takes to prepare for the new school year. This will be a short podcast. If everybody took a vacation over the summer that's the way it works. There's a lot of things going on. I've got a panel with me today. We've got Jim Meikle with Facilities and operations; Sarah Putnam with Department of teaching and learning Breonna McClain, principal at Ashlawn Elementary School and Corina Coronel supervisor of the welcome center which is a new office within the school system to handle registrations. Welcome to the show and welcome back to school.

00:00:53:14 - 00:01:06:12

Let's go ahead and start Jen when you get to the other facilities. It's pretty busy over the summer. You've got a lot of projects. So how many projects did you guys have and what type of projects does consist of.

00:01:06:28 - 00:02:26:02

OK probably around 120 which would qualify as individual projects this summer typically ranging from the five thousand dollar range all the way up to half a million dollar range. The priority for us is always anything really into seats for students. So first we get a real cable changes adjustments in place along with we do some minor renovations because often we can avoid topping an additional relocatable if we can maybe divide the room successfully or convert another space to make a classroom space. So that's always priority number one and then we'll have a full breadth of projects things like safety enhancements new fire alarm some schools and assessments to the P.A. systems. The new floor coverings in some cases. Repainting a school or two new ovens and multiple kitchens. Not very exciting thing but quite a practical tradition that kids will appreciate that absolutely remove some gym floors. So yes a whole variety of them projects and hopefully touch most schools in one way or another.

00:02:26:24 - 00:02:33:12

You work closely with principals to identify some of those projects and other staff come up with the staff we do.

00:02:33:13 - 00:03:41:06

So there's two parts to it and it basically relates to the main construction major maintenance projects. We'll talk about more to them later. So we start the procedure as early as this week sending a letter to all principals and building managers asking them what they need. Basically it is a wish list. We then Joe's requests with what we call a 1 10 year plan this year from a ten year plan. All the things we have scheduled right based on proactive inspections and so forth and then we have an AMA CMM committee which has a representative from each school level from facilities the safety officer the security officer facility Advisory Council and we sit down together probably over two meetings two to three hours each and we refine this list and decide what the priorities are for the coming year. We then put some numbers to law and some will in November we forward up to t executive leadership team for their consideration. And typically it becomes part of the Superintendents recommended budget.

00:03:41:07 - 00:03:44:23

Are you guys preparing for the summer long before the summer starts.

00:03:44:23 - 00:04:12:05

Absolutely. Absolutely. And not just in terms of the money the financial part but the planning. So we meet with some school folks and Tony folks as early as November to start plotting which schools will be available and which ones we'll know something I think about there is your partner with Parks and Rec and service care programs so you've got to make sure that they have space for that. Absolutely. Thousands of acres of school thousands more in camps and those that also.

00:04:13:18 - 00:04:24:26

Sarah talk about what the summer was like for Department of teaching. Yes some staff that are employed as part everyone is here. So where are you going to during the summer.

00:04:24:28 - 00:04:41:29

So for the majority we really are engaged in teaching and I also understand we have summer school going on all of our content supervisors and specialist help support all day enrichment programs as well that make up the training programs that we have going on at elementary middle and high school levels.

00:04:41:29 - 00:05:09:01

Now when you think signing on entry programs that we had this past summer was the current Indonesian Academy was one where students were invited to come. They tackled some really needy and project based learning. So we've Racine's engaging in critical and creative thinking. It's highly eating. If folks had a chance to go and see the students each. It's really quite amazing to see why.

00:05:09:08 - 00:05:17:11

Why do you carry over here. I feel like one thing doesn't stop it just kind of goes right into the next. We put out a snapshot video.

00:05:18:23 - 00:05:23:15

This week to talk about curriculum right. Explain a little bit about that and what that entails.

00:05:23:15 - 00:06:48:12

Correct. So right after school ends we do curriculum right in that last week of June. So folks that are interested in engaging in that process come for that full week and they this past year this past June we had šiauliai come math and social studies teachers. K12 really engaged in that writing. We also had some teachers for our speech for fluent speakers course and the middle school level come to do some writing. That's really a week where teachers have opportunity to come together and they dive into their curriculum area and they use the Ubaydi framework understanding by design framework. And when they look at their content they look at developing essential questions for students during understanding they really hone in on what students know or will need to know and be able to do from there. They look at designing assessments and then really identifying the resources that would be best to design learning experiences through students so they do all that heavy lifting that last week of June and create those documents so that teachers have them in their hands when they come back to school. This current week folks have been able to engage in exploring those documents and start their lesson planning for the first two weeks of instruction and these two weeks back with future really focusing on that without just getting ready to hear.

00:06:48:18 - 00:07:05:10

I know you guys have opened Mitsu across the county. Just talk about what these two weeks share. So as you know last Thursday all of our staff returned and sometimes they have they engage in opportunities at their school but we also have some countywide.

00:07:06:08 - 00:07:29:01

Opportunities. On Tuesday we had our day of learning where teachers really had opportunity to go to a session that they were interested in learning so they had a morning and an afternoon session that they could choose from. It's nice because we also had teachers that were willing to share their expertise so some facility discussions and some Jews were in attendance as learners. And that's really a way for folks to engage in learning in anticipation of the.

00:07:29:24 - 00:07:41:11

New school year. Talk about some registration. Chris wants to talk a little bit about what the war and terrorism were functioning.

00:07:42:04 - 00:08:24:08

Yes so all of them at the main function off the welcome center is really to assist current atheist families and future Ireland to bollix as families navigating and understanding the school system and also providing information about schools about the programs about the services that we have and try to answer any questions they might have collective families to the different departments and when necessary. Also connected families to link them to other agencies in our intel county such as parks and rec or the Department of Human Services.

00:08:24:09 - 00:08:29:18

How does the registration process differ. What are you going to look for.

00:08:30:11 - 00:09:13:03

Well we address not only not just one specific school level but we do register as a pretty Apri school students and this is all the way through 12th grade and adult students. The other the other piece of it that we do is if students are coming from overseas we also have transcripts before they can come to the high school and work with the counselors on their schedules. And another piece that we do is that families a family speaks the language although in English then we do we screen the students for English language proficiency.

00:09:13:25 - 00:09:20:06

So dozens of us work on your district. We register families all year round.

00:09:22:27 - 00:09:29:14

Brianna. I know that schools are closed over the summer and you guys have fun.

00:09:30:17 - 00:09:33:24

You guys are busy. So what do you do for the school.

00:09:33:26 - 00:09:56:00

Yeah the schools are really busy over the summer. There still a lot of kids in the buildings and most buildings because there's camps there summer school there's enrichment programs that are happening in

addition to just building maintenance and cleaning. So thank you for our partnership with facilities and is helping us with those to do list requests.

00:09:56:05 - 00:10:32:00

A lot of times I know it actually when we worked on some of the grounds kind of building up some of the playground areas addressing some concerns for last year and then because there aren't as many kids in the playground gives opportunity for grass to grow old and to get ready for the school year and then also we're just preparing for the upcoming school year so working on schedules and hiring you know thinking about what our initiatives are going to be for the year budget planning and all of that and hopefully my colleagues would agree. You know trying to incorporate some rest as we can. But it's a busy time. Which staff members work over the summer and teachers.

00:10:33:12 - 00:10:38:03

The way they are structured day what's this for. What staff do you have around.

00:10:38:21 - 00:11:12:03

So there's myself the assistant principal. We also have our school finance officer or administrative coordinators there as well. So they're working on they help with registering families throughout the school year throughout the summer giving tours. Things like that but then also just helping with schedules and hiring in the budget piece all of that as we prepare for the school year and then the custodians are there working diligently as well on anything and everything there's an endless list there. And then also the school nurse normally between different schools as well preparing for the school year.

00:11:12:04 - 00:11:20:00

You mentioned hiring them for two years or about higher. How does detail support. Higher rate across the division.

00:11:20:00 - 00:12:06:19

So a lot of that hiring starts as early as February once we know the openings but sometimes openings kind of pop up over the summer unexpectedly so in a case where they might have an opening for a gifted resource teacher for instance our supervisor for gifted might have a pool of candidates that she has vetted that can be recommended to this school. Much like any content office to look at a secondary level if they know they have social studies or math opening the supervisors from that office do a great job of vetting the people that have kind of come in to look for a job in Arlington and do a nice job of pairing that and saying here's a person that you might want to take a look at. Could be a good fit for your building up for the need that you have. So they really do work hand in hand to help fill those positions.

00:12:06:21 - 00:12:09:05

How many staff did you bring in over the summer.

00:12:09:10 - 00:12:34:18

So we've hired seven new staff this year. Two of which are new to Arlington. And then we also just had a few internal changes for example a first grade teacher needs to go part time so we're able to have her being Esaw teacher part time which was great. So it is the department teaching and learning is great in the sense that even once teachers are hired they're there to support with the transition in just the school year as it starts.

00:12:34:24 - 00:12:42:02

We talked about sessional a little bit earlier a touch what's happening. Some are just beneficial for some.

00:12:42:02 - 00:13:34:23

They do. There they are. Work hard play hard staff so they have for the summer but they're learning we had a group of teachers go to South Carolina and participate in an adventure Avello workshop on strategies and small group instruction. And we had a lot of staff participate in the festival of the minds that was offered in August before teachers came back. But also I mean the department teaching learning is great. They offer several more opportunities throughout the summer such a step up to writing in Gillingham. We had several staff participate in that. A couple of staff participate in the curriculum writing and then even we kind of facilitated some language arts vertical teaming conversations amongst the team and then myself and some of the staff wrote a book like AnCo teaching and then met and just kind of debrief that and what can what does that look like it ashcan any changes we can do with that.

00:13:35:12 - 00:13:47:03

So like they're keeping themselves because they do they do the go back to talking about the Sobey's you mentioned AMCON which is minor structure major betas. What does that entail.

00:13:47:17 - 00:15:23:29

Okay so both terms are kind of in the same. I guess this is best explained by telling you that we have basically three main streams of funding. So the very top level. We're building a new school fleet that's comfortable putting the refurbishment project on a Stratford middle school bus and not getting to an end on a slightly lower side. We have a complete refurbishment of each Fisi. Both Rondel and Gunston so multimillions of Dolos fairly major on the board and we have routine maintenance. So some of the time we will get in touch open a lot written on small appeals. We do a lot of inspections and appeals from those we do Loso preventive maintenance schooling and change and fill those cleaning each Fisi coils. All those kind of things will contribute to hopefully an optimum for the kids coming but so then the middle tier is MC I'm in the construction major maintenance. No one is Pagle too many people and thus we're very fortunate in Arlington because funds for a body of work are typically getting 5 to 6 million dollars a year and proportionate to the size of our own school system compared to any other district too and she is extremely this really helps us to keep our schools and generally very good condition. So we should acknowledge the school board and superintendent Kielty who worked very hard to keep that level up despite competition for these seats. Right. Right.

00:15:24:28 - 00:15:35:26

Let's shift from from business to transportation and that's your party's bit. You do a little bit about transportation. So what does transportation do over the summer.

00:15:35:28 - 00:16:37:10

Yeah. So this has been an exceptionally challenging year for them because there's another hurdle with transportation lost no off site parking facility used for the special needs buses and salutes and to combine to the trade center a new only way to accommodate them is to move my maintenance fleet to another state which was not. Was not. Able to host buses. It was sold and not takes it was so we could go to weightily. So we kind of sacrificed property trust in the old correct. So that was an extra what interest rate the law went home and they approved a new cease to amend the law. And obviously it comes with some practical challenges for some of the guys who are going over to the book Clark first thing in the morning before

reporting to work. So we're losing a little bit of time there. But I think the greater good is the special needs buses being raised by transport.

00:16:38:09 - 00:16:42:16

They're also working on routes and stuff like that. And that's something that that does take.

00:16:43:15 - 00:17:46:00

A bit of manpower to do. It does. We feel the public frustration because it surely lives just when last week telling us what the bus routes were but also on the phone away from the registrar. One of those schools. So I understand people walking through the door as late as Friday afternoon registering. So what transpired trying to do is hold off as long as they can. Before. The initial finalizing of the route. So to reach as many people as possible in the first quarter and naturally will have to be some small modifications. There's also a lot of frustration. We can't pick every kid up at the door. So we try very hard to do that if there's any special needs involved. Otherwise you know basically we're have group bus stops as efficiently as we can. And that is good news for transport as we'll get to New software the shield which is allowing them to be much more efficient. We think that process is good.

00:17:46:15 - 00:17:59:19

Some of the common questions that we get it specially the last week or so schools how can we ever get a transportation letter. And that's just because you guys are waiting for your kids to be in place as possible so the issue just goes round.

00:17:59:19 - 00:18:13:23

I hope so. Besides the roads occasionally we get three or four extra kids on a particular route. It may indicate that we've filled a bus and we're on a second bus. So that takes a major adjustment.

00:18:14:04 - 00:18:21:15

Sorry about some registration registration again. What the documents do we need to bring to to register their child.

00:18:22:13 - 00:19:12:22

For registration. We asked the families first of all people are willing to receive the same kind of make sure that everybody enrolls is in Arlington resident. We need the original birth certificate. And if that's not available then we ask for an affidavit a company from another word document that will show us proof of age and name and that could be like for example a passport. We also ask that if the chap that transcripts from the school that the children are coming from if they have it you know if they had attended school before for high school students we asked are they bringing transcripts and of course we need the health requirements. You know immunizations TB screening and they inform students at the elementary level we need a physical from their doctor.

00:19:13:07 - 00:19:25:13

If somebody is moving into the area of a military family and there don't have somebody like medical forms conveyed roibos back after they absolutely need those who register know for registration better.

00:19:25:14 - 00:19:37:18

We do it all together. Easier for the families and of course easier for the schools apod. We will be able to register families without the help required. However they do need the help requirements to be able to start school.

00:19:38:05 - 00:19:45:02

And they go to the same school level to get. Yes. How many families have you registered.

00:19:45:23 - 00:20:24:06

So this summer we have registered 900 and 70 families. My lot of them are students that are just going to start for the first time in Arlington as I'm going to source to them or an in Virginia preschool initiative program that we have registered students for. You know most of them the bulk of them have been about 800 for elementary schools and in that year over 100 Isaam for high school and middle school. That's pretty much all of the entire school that you registered just over.

00:20:25:01 - 00:20:30:02

Yes we will missing that.

00:20:30:16 - 00:21:59:19

That's right. Well we are in constant communication with the schools out you know about numbers and about you know making sure that we do have special call the pre-schooler that we have this particular set and in their neighborhood school as much just as much as possible. We are also we are in constant communication you know. Do you have anybody ever just in kindergarten and I have to make sure you know I have the right staffing you know are there any second graders got the second graders coming. So we're always talking back and forth about numbers. He also said that during the summer besides frustrated families well we have also been we're also tasked with the application process and then the lotteries and the managing of the wait list for preschool programs and for secondary programs and the elementary school schools. So a big particle of women do and also school and you know is really making sure that we move the wait lists every time that there are some vacancies. So we want to do that you know work and we're in constant communication also with the schools to make sure that if you know if somebody changes her mind or that there's a different you know they move over the summer and then the space opens that weekend that we can't we get the next family and. Go back to talking about the richer schools or just for general.

00:22:01:05 - 00:22:04:10

Teachers are back this week. Really.

00:22:04:21 - 00:23:25:28

Everything. You know teachers come back you know I think it's always great to see everybody in just the hustle and bustle and you know the excitement of a new school year. I think one priority always for teachers is like getting their classroom ready. They worked diligently to make sure it's ready for open house. You know they want when students walk in to be excited and engaging. But we're also doing a lot. We have whole staff meetings where we're looking at you know what's our goals for this year. Reflecting on last year planning for this year. Teams are meeting a lot just kind of being on the same page when they started this whole year sending welcome messages to the families. And then we also have planning meetings that start where grade levels are sitting down and just looking at the curriculum and the programs and assessments that are going to be coming up so that we can start the year strong. And then there's also a lot of just like logistical pieces you know getting technology set up and remember your

password for things that be kind of familiarizing yourself you know where everything is located online and just kind of some of those things and then just the logistics of thinking through the day like what does arrival look like in dismissal and going through that with stuff. And then of course you know at least it Ashlynn would you like to have a little fun with each other too and build our own rapport with each other. So there's a lot of luck going on.

00:23:26:00 - 00:23:32:16

Always wondered how schools determine who's in what class. How does that work.

00:23:32:29 - 00:23:38:07

So a lot of thought goes into I think class placements.

00:23:38:09 - 00:24:11:17

It's kind of like you want to get you know the right chemistry and the sense so you're looking at what are the instructional strengths and needs of students. What is their social emotional strengths and needs kind of each year the way that we have a student the more we know about them as well which is helpful and just trying to make sure that when you have that final class list that you've got a group of students that are going to get their needs met and then you look at the teacher and see OK you know what is going to be a good placement for them.

00:24:13:09 - 00:24:21:05

So that you go back to school and it's coming up. What sort of activities do you have for parents and for families.

00:24:21:06 - 00:24:52:15

So of course we have open houses coming up so please families are participating in that. And then at Ashlie on the first Friday of the full week we have our back to school picnic on the school grounds so we invite families to come back dinner blankets. We have a deejay. So kids are dancing and having a good time. And then we also actually have like a spirit night coming up later in September. So what we're messaging things like that to families. What are you looking forward to most.

00:24:53:07 - 00:25:15:09

Right now I'm just looking forward to like seeing the kids that first day getting the kids in the building and seeing like their excitement getting that report with the kids I mean the first week is always one of my favorite weeks because you're just see a puppet in the rooms and see the teachers building that are poor with kids you know visited him outside at recess getting to know the new families.

00:25:15:16 - 00:25:34:13

But just getting the kids in the building and seeing them and looking forward to that I'm sure and this goes for departments and facilities that everything there is to these way is on the first day of the first week in something the parents wanted to run as smoothly as posturing. Things are going to happen here across the district.

00:25:35:21 - 00:25:51:14

You just try to you know be pretty as prepared as possible and then I think communication is key to you so as things you know hiccups do come just communicating that often and trying to come up with the solutions or changes that are necessary. But it's a partnership I think across the board.



00:25:52:06 - 00:26:33:00

Thank you all for joining us on this episode of What's up. Yes thank you for your insights. What goes on in the submarine and how the. Back to school and I'm sure all of. The great 2018 19. We're. OK with that. Thanks for listening. You can find us on iTunes and or Apple. Apple podcast and Google Play. We're also getting out to stitcher and Shuyun so look for us there. Do you have any questions you can e-mail us at. The news media's us and you can find us online to pass via us as well. So thank you very much. We wish you the best 2008 Beijing school year and we'll talk to you soon.