

**ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
Work Session on the Preliminary Findings on the  
Minority Achievement Program Evaluation  
January 19, 2016

**Item F-1-a**

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, January 19, 2016 at 7:36 PM at 1426 N. Quincy Street, Arlington, Virginia.

**Present were:**

Emma Violand-Sánchez, Chair  
Nancy Van Doren, Vice Chair  
Reid Goldstein, Member  
Barbara Kanninen, Member  
James Lander, Member  
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

**Also present were:**

Dr. Patrick K. Murphy, Superintendent  
Raj Adusumilli, Assistant Superintendent, Information Services  
Dr. Kristi Murphy, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources  
Connie Skelton, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction  
Dr. Terri Adkins, Interim Supervisor, Minority Achievement  
Lisa Stengle, Director, Planning and Evaluation  
Regina Van Horne, Assistant Director, Accountability  
Robyn Ristau, Evaluation Specialist  
James Smith and Terron Sims, Co-chairs, Superintendent's Committee on Elimination of the Achievement Gap

- Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Violand-Sánchez called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Dr. Murphy welcomed members of the Elimination of the Achievement Gap Committee, and reviewed the agenda.

- Overview of the Evaluation Process and Findings

Ms. Van Horne presented an overview of the program evaluation process, explaining that the evaluation is focused on the Office of Minority Achievement, but considers minority achievement throughout APS. She reviewed the committee members, community involvement, evaluation schedule, findings and next steps identified. Next, Ms. Van Horne presented a summary from the site based survey of data on acceptance, achievement gaps and student-teacher interactions. Focusing on the Office of Minority Achievement, she then reviewed findings from the students, staff and parents, on the familiarity of the program, the coordinator's role, and student participation. Outcomes are that there is a strong feeling of being supported, that APS cultivates and inclusive culture, and there is a positive climate in majority minority schools. Students who are the only or one of few minorities in a school feel there are challenges. There was positive feedback of the impact of the coordinator on students' development of self-advocacy skills.

- Proposed Next Steps

Ms. Stengle reviewed next steps to address findings, which include defining a vision, goals, and measures of accountability to ensure there is a consistent understanding of the program and delivery of services. There is also a need to improve the classroom experience for minority students, so staff will work to ensure that all instruction is culturally competent. The final finding is that there are not consistent tools to identify and track the progress of students who need services. Staff will work to clarify program offerings and strengthen monitoring and implementation of minority achievement. Professional development is needed to support these next steps.

- Initial Staff Response:

Noting that the evaluation is not complete so this report is preliminary, Ms. Skelton confirmed that staff is evaluating and looking to implement the recommendations. It was noted that the current Supervisor is serving as an interim appointment while staff considers the evaluation, which will then inform the decision on how to move forward with the Office of Minority Achievement.

- Citizen Response:

Mr. Sims confirmed that the Superintendent's Committee on Evaluation of the Achievement Gap participated in this process and agrees with the recommendations. He also recognized this opportunity to re-evaluate the mission of office and the role of Minority Achievement coordinators in the schools, and the importance of better coordination between the Minor Achieve Office and the schools to create better bonds throughout the program. He encouraged looking at best practices while still allowing principals to customize programs to their schools. Mr. Smith suggested that this program interface with other programs such as Family and Community Engagement, which will ensure that families are part of the process and are taught how to engage and progress.

- Board Comments, Questions and Discussion:

Staff responded to Board questions on staffing of minority achievement coordinators, student participation in the programs offered, and programs that are supported by Minority Achievement funding, such as the Early Identification Program and SAT preparation. Board members felt that, while there are a number of programs available, student participation (which is at approximately 10%) and staffing levels are low. It was also noted that the Minority Achievement Office also provides cultural competence training to division wide staff.

Responding to the Board, Mr. Sims and Mr. Smith shared their thoughts on the delivery of services through the Office of Minority Achievement. Mr. Sims suggested that the Supervisor provide more direct guidance to the coordinators, who should work in partnership with the principal and school staff. Benefits of this partnership would include better access to resources and data. It was noted that, for coordinators who work at two different schools, this structure would result in a clear line of responsibility. In terms of outreach, Mr. Smith supported centralized information on the website so families and staff can find what is available; he felt this would also result in better coordination of staff and will provide consistency across the division.

The group discussed how the Minority Achievement Office is integrated with Instruction, and recognized the need to strengthen connections between this office and instructional departments.

Dr. Adkins commented on the current program, noting that coordinators meet affective needs, but agreed better collaboration with Instruction would be valuable. She also recognized the need to improve use of data. Ms. Skelton confirmed that a placeholder for Minority Achievement is in the budget, and the use of those funds will be determined based on recommendations from the evaluation. She also spoke to the need to develop a mission and vision to help determine the direction moving forward, and agreed that the focus on instruction should be strengthened. Board members shared concerns about gaps between expectations and the delivery of supports to students and families, and also noted the connection to supporting the whole child.

Minority Achievement Coordinators Shari Benites, Washington-Lee High School, Allan Beitler, Wakefield High School, and Amanda Pointer, Williamsburg Middle School, spoke to their experiences and goals. Mr. Beitler noted the challenge of a large minority population, and described several programs and initiatives he has offered. Ms. Benites described the one-on-one support she provides, and Ms. Pointer recognized the importance of acting as an advocate for these students along with providing counseling and support. The Coordinators felt that there is good communication and support from the Office of Minority Achievement, and noted that some programs are conducted county-wide, and although there are different needs at different schools, the coordinators collaborate and support each other.

Ms. Van Doren commented on the importance of a structure and clear vision of what is needed and how to support students, and recognized the importance of a structure for accountability, to identify issues and develop plans to address those issues. Board members also recognized the challenge of providing sufficient staffing to meet needs, which varies between schools. Dr. Adkins spoke to her vision for strengthening the Office, noting she would keep the current coordinators, but would add a specialist who can work with teachers in each instructional area and provide specific training for focusing on meeting minority student needs. She suggested a pilot program at one elementary school as the model is developed and refined. While professional development is available, she would like to see more targeted training that builds on current practice.

The group also discussed how cultural competence training is funded and the best use of funds to support minority achievement. They also discussed if cultural competence goes beyond considerations of race, and how to ensure that staff recognizes the importance of closing the achievement gap. In general, Board members supported the recommendations of the evaluation, and particularly agreed with the need for professional development, support for students, stronger community engagement and coordination of services throughout APS. Ms. Stengle then briefly commented on next steps, which are to finalize the evaluation report, incorporating the feedback from the Board. Board members looked forward to the report and a plan for moving forward.

Dr. Violand-Sanchez thanked the participants, and the meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

**ATTEST:**

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Melanie Elliott, Clerk  
Arlington School Board

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Emma Violand-Sánchez, Chair  
Arlington School Board