

**Executive Summary**  
**2019-2020 Recommendations to Arlington School Board**

The Math Advisory Committee (“MAC”) plans to make the following recommendations to the Arlington School Board this recommending year:

**Recommendation 1: Provide 1.0 FTE Certified Math Coach for all elementary schools**

Presently, 23 of 24 elementary schools each receive funding for a 0.5 FTE Math Coach. All middle schools are allocated a 1.0 FTE Math Coach. High schools currently do not receive staffing allocation for Math Coaches. Principals and teachers are consistent in reporting the important contributions of Math Coaches. Indeed, many APS elementary principals are finding ways within their budgets to fund a 1.0 FTE Math Coach at their school. Math is a cumulative knowledge -- success at the early grades is critical for success in later grades.

Certified Math Coaches provide sustained, onsite support and guidance to math teachers – thereby enhancing their math teaching abilities - in a way that other professional development opportunities do not afford. For over a decade MAC has recommended appropriate use of Math Coaches throughout the grade levels. We applaud the progress in attaining 1.0 FTE in middle schools and continue our efforts in support of full staffing throughout the system. MAC again recommends that APS provide each elementary school with a 1.0 FTE Math Coach allocation. MAC also recommends APS fund certification costs for all Math Coaches (certification is available at a discount at George Mason University).

**Recommendation 2: Reduce Unnecessary/Untimely Math Acceleration in APS Middle Schools & Communicate Rationale to Parents**

In 2016, VDOE changed its math standards to emphasize building solid pre-Algebra skills in Middle School rather than pushing students to take Algebra I by 8<sup>th</sup> grade prematurely. In light of VDOE changes, APS created multiple math pathways to ensure that students are placed in classes that best meet their readiness. MAC applauds these changes and makes these additional recommendations:

- 1) If students do not maintain a B or higher average in either an accelerated middle school or high school credit math class after the first quarter of the school year, they should be moved to a more appropriate math course; and
- 2) Materials should be developed to help parents understand the benefits of solidifying math base in lieu of acceleration to reduce parent inclination to accelerate students beyond their readiness.

We note that implementation of recommendation 1 would help improve decisions about embarking on the accelerated path and success along whichever path is chosen.

**Status of Prior 2017-18 Recommendations:**

**1) Provide 1.0 FTE Math Coaches for all elementary schools.** There has been no official action since our 2017-18 recommendation. Principals continue to look for ways to provide more resources for Math Coaches within their budgets to better serve their students. MAC continues this recommendation so principals will have the certainty of funding of a resource overwhelmingly agreed to as necessary and important.

**2) Reduce Unnecessary/Untimely Math Acceleration** APS has made efforts to emphasize math readiness over untimely acceleration. Toward that objective, the share of APS 8<sup>th</sup> graders taking Advanced Math classes (Algebra I or above) has fallen from a peak of 82% in 2015-16 to 59% in January 2020. MAC applauds the success in these efforts and again makes a related recommendation aimed at further focus on the readiness level of the student so the students can best achieve their full potential.