

**ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BUDGET ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 30, 2019  
**TO:** APS Policy Review Team, Attn.: David J. Webb  
**FROM:** Chair of the APS Budget Advisory Council, Robert Ramsey  
**RE:** Proposed Equity Policy

The Budget Advisory Council (BAC) thanks you for this opportunity to comment on the draft Equity Policy, and applauds the School Board and school district administration for taking this key step to address any opportunity gaps and achieve excellence for our students. This core policy— together with the hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer (whose actions will be guided by this policy)— serves as a critical framework for all future decisions relating to academics, staffing, budgeting, and capital investments.

We appreciate the rigorous process that has led us to this point. In reviewing the proposed policy, the BAC not only considered the draft policy, but also contemplated the forthcoming and complementary Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) that will contain absolutely necessary details for this important work. With that in mind, the BAC offers the following comments for further consideration and action:

**1. Establish measurable target outcomes grounded in student achievement**

The draft policy defines equity using the corresponding core value from the 2018-2024 APS Strategic Plan. That definition, however, is grounded in the inputs to the system (schools, resources, and learning opportunities) rather than in critical outcomes (student achievement and experience). This definition lacks the specificity necessary to measure the policy's success or to be a useful tool for the school administration, the School Board, or their Advisory Committees. Specifically, the section on Monitoring does not mention a process for determining said metrics. We encourage the Policy Review Team to clarify—either in the Policy or more likely in the forthcoming PIP—which measurable data points will be used to assess this Policy.

**2. Clarify language relating to equity audits and equity assessments**

We applaud the addition of equity assessments as standard operating procedures for policy revisions and the inclusion of a definition of an equity audit. These provisions, however, do not outline a process for the assessment, which might leave the Board and the school district open to litigation. Which data will be used? Which stakeholders will be consulted? Which criteria will be used to determine if/when a particular group experiences disparities? These are just some of the questions that might be raised when an equity assessment or audit is launched. We encourage the PRT to either include a procedural outline of the equity assessment process in the Policy or the

forthcoming PIP, or designate the task of establishing such procedure as a responsibility of the incoming Chief Diversity Officer.

### **3. Simplify the language to focus on the most essential information for stakeholders**

We recognize that the Equity Policy is written to be implemented by education professionals, but are concerned that the language used may present obstacles for many in the community who are most interested and impacted by equity issues. Therefore, we encourage the PRT to revise the policy before publication to minimize jargon and improve its accessibility to more readers, perhaps prioritizing meanwhile its most essential information.

Again, we applaud the effort and coordination that went into developing this draft and believe that the School Board and district will be well served by this new core policy. More importantly, we recognize that the greater impact of this Policy will be determined through its implementation—in particular through the corresponding PIP. We hope that our comments are useful toward some improvement of this draft Equity Policy, and otherwise the writing of a PIP. And finally, we will welcome any additional engagement addressing the comments above, on a further revised draft Policy, or on a draft PIP.