

POLICY REVIEW

BRIEFING REPORT



2019-2020



Arlington
Public
Schools



POLICY REVIEW

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE: POLICY REVIEW TEAM

The Policy Review Team (PRT) meets bi-weekly and is comprised of one representative from each department and includes the School Board clerk. This structure allows for the policies to be reviewed by a cross-representative group from various parts of the school division, aligned to the direction provided in Policy B-6 School Board Policy Process. It also ensures that the policies are reviewed through a tight, integrated process that embeds internal and external stakeholder feedback, as well as legal review, into numerous stages. The PRT is charged with determining priorities for the current school year and beyond, and presenting its recommendations to the School Board to set the annual review calendar. The advantage of this team is its ability to review the policies for overlapping content and cross-reference with other policies to support the Strategic Plan goals. It also confirms that proposed revisions or amendments do not have unexpected consequences on students, staff, buildings or departments, particularly when considering budget implications.

POLICY REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS

- Melanie Elliott – *School Board Office*
- Julia Burgos – *Superintendent's Office*
- Dr. Jeannette Allen – *Administrative Services*
- Helena Machado – *Facilities & Operations*
- David Webb – *Finance & Management*
- Brianna Cobbins – *Human Resources*
- Matt Smith – *Information Services*
- Helene Hartman – *Planning & Evaluation*
- Daryl Johnson – *School & Community Relations*
- Kathleen Bragaw – *Teaching & Learning*

SCHOOL BOARD POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

Part of the review process involves the engagement of the School Board Policy Subcommittee which meets monthly and is comprised of three School Board members. The Subcommittee provides any recommendations for revisions or updates to the full School Board after considering staff's proposed drafts. As part of its work, the Subcommittee also reviews and revises the 23 School Board-related governance and foundational policies. At its meetings, the members provide feedback on policies scheduled for amendments or revisions and provide initial direction to staff prior to finalizing drafts for internal and external review. Lastly, the Subcommittee meets with the superintendent's designee during these meetings to review policies and move them through the process.

BRIGHT SPOTS

In the 2018-19 school year, the School Board revised or amended 39 policies through this process. These are the categories and number of policies that were revised or amended in each category:

- A - Foundations and Basic Commitments: 2
- B - Board Governance and Operations: 9
- D - Fiscal Management: 3
- E - Support Services: 4
- G – Personnel: 5
- I – Instruction: 6
- J – Students: 4
- K - School-Community Relations: 1
- M – Other: 5

STUDENT SUCCESS/OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE: UPDATES/LINKS TO POLICIES ON ENGAGE WITH APS!

The schedule for policies that will be revised or amended in a given school year are available from the *Engage with APS* webpage, apsva.us/engage/, with hyperlinks to existing policies. Drafts of the policies noted as “new” are shared during the new public comment process. Community members are encouraged to review the policy schedule and provide suggested changes or additions to existing policies during the drafting process. Feedback can be shared via email at engage@apsva.us or by [submitting an online feedback form \(apsva.us/engage/engage-aps-online-feedback/\)](https://apsva.us/engage/engage-aps-online-feedback/).

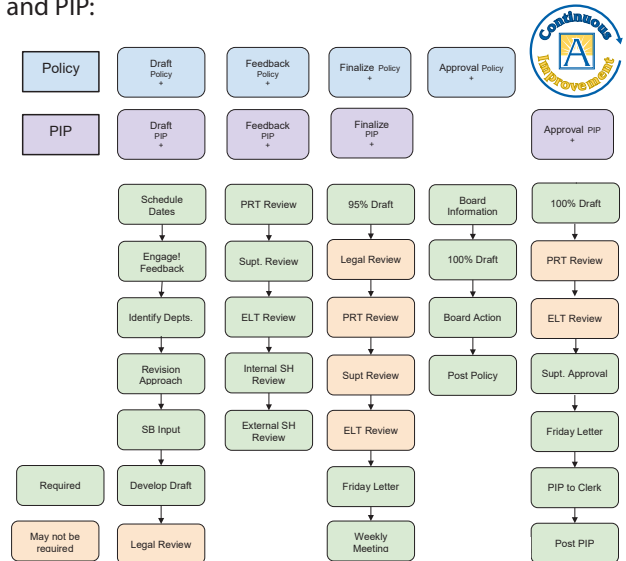
In addition, as policy drafts become available, they will be posted on the *Engage with APS* webpage, where the 30-day public comment period will be open to gather feedback from stakeholders. Once the feedback stage is complete, final drafts of each policy will be posted as an information item on the [School Board Meetings page](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/vpublic?open) on the Boarddocs website (go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/vpublic?open), on the corresponding meeting date. Community members are also encouraged to provide feedback on these drafts by signing up to speak at a School Board meeting.

The *Engage with APS* webpage also includes recently approved policies, to keep the community abreast of policies that were approved in the current year by the School Board.



LIFE CYCLE OF EACH POLICY & PIP

To learn more about the policy and policy implementation procedure development process, the following graphic depicts the life cycle of each policy and PIP:



PARTNERSHIPS/OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BUILT INTO THE PROCESS

The process has been designed to thoroughly review a policy within a six-month window. Here is a snapshot of the timeframe for each stage of the process.

Drafting Stage (4-5 months)

- Existing policies posted on Engage for community input while drafting

Public Comment Stage (1 month)

- Policy drafts posted on *Engage with APS* for a 30-day public comment period to gather input from the community prior to finalizing

School Board Approval/Adoption Stage (3 weeks)

- Final draft posted for information item on School Board meeting agenda one week prior to meeting

New Public Comment Process Launching April 1, 2020:

Once the internal stakeholder process is complete, starting April 1, 2020, policies will be shared on the Engage page through a new public comment feedback process that will be instituted. Policy drafts will be made available for 30 days to ensure that all interested stakeholders have an opportunity to provide input. This transparent process allows for an equitable community feedback stage prior to bringing forth the final draft as an information item at a School Board meeting.

ENGAGED WORKFORCE: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

At the monthly meeting of the Administrative Council, the staff responsible for drafting the policies present the final, recently-adopted versions of the policies with highlighted changes, additions and/or compliance provisions included in the policy. Additionally, mini-workshops are offered during those monthly meetings to meet with smaller groups to unpack the policies and discuss the process for better understanding. The presentations are made available to staff through the learning management system to share within school buildings and departments.

Part of the process also involves training staff on the types of changes the School Board will consider. This year, the School Board approved the following two categories for policy adoption:

Revised

A School Board policy that went through either a full or partial policy review process that results in the policy not needing to be reviewed for another five years; however, a policy can be revised at any time at the discretion of the School Board.

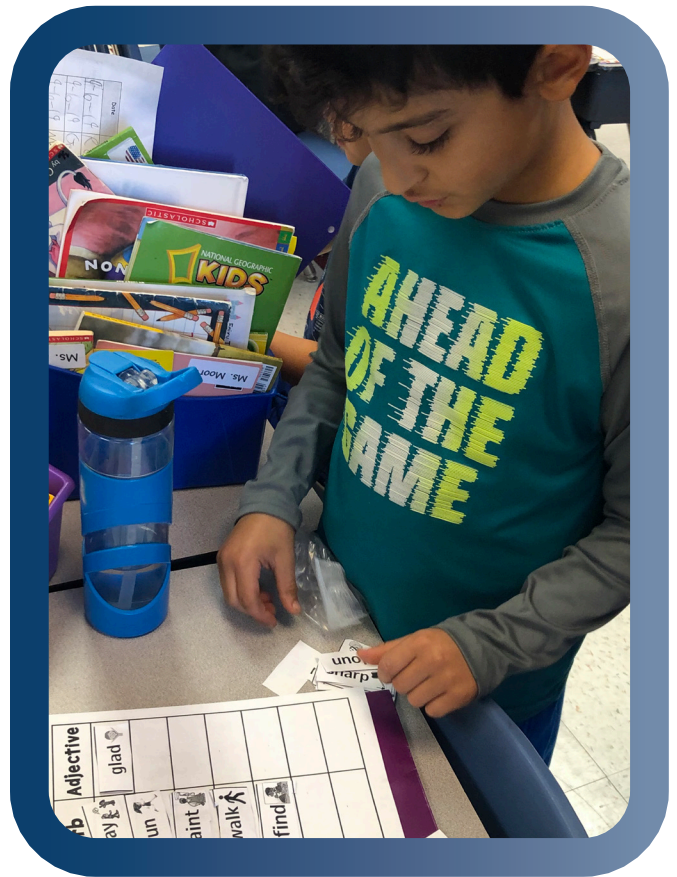
Amended

A School Board policy that required minor updates due to recent changes to the Code of Virginia, to align with division procedures, or to address an identified immediate need to have the policy updated. Amending a policy does not reset the 5-year review cycle.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The PRT has been in existence since August 2017, with many accomplishments to be proud of, including the School Board's new policy numbering system and format, adopted on February 1, 2018, and the enhanced policy page on the website. Additionally, it worked to develop the policy/PIP process, which had gone through many iterations, in an effort to develop an efficient and cohesive process that embraced transparency and community engagement.

What we have learned in the last two years is the need for flexibility in this process, and that this team is critical to moving the work forward. With the many moving parts in this process, this past year we worked to create the schedule earlier, share it with the School Board for buy-in, and include the full list on *Engage with APS!* at the start of the school year. This gave staff and the community early access to our plans so that stakeholder groups were able to schedule the reviews into their monthly meetings. While this was a challenging undertaking, it has allowed for greater transparency and solid planning.



MOVING FORWARD

There are 48 policies on schedule for revision or amendment in the 2019-20 school year, including four new policies. Here is a short list of policies on deck for this year:

- Equity
- Partnerships
- Cybersecurity
- Instructional Policies
- Options & Transfers
- Admissions & Placements
- Bell Schedules
- Volunteer Programs

There is a continued commitment to transparency and community engagement, with enhanced systems for efficiencies and opportunities for increased community participation.