

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Advisory Council on Instruction Work Session
January 28, 2020

Item C-1-c

The Arlington School Board convened on Thursday, January 28, 2020, at 6:05 PM at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.

Present were:

Tannia Talento, Chair
Monique O’Grady, Vice Chair
Reid Goldstein, Member
Barbara Kanninen, Member
Nancy Van Doren, Member

Also present was:

Cintia Johnson, Interim Superintendent
Bridget Loft, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Teaching and Learning
Kerri Hirsch, Supervisor, Social Studies
Lori Silver, Supervisor, English/Language Arts
Dr. Dat Le, Supervisor, Science
Pam Farrell, Supervisor, Arts Education
Shannan Ellis, Supervisor, Mathematics
Wendy Carria, Supervisor of School Psychology and Social Work
Dr. Kelly Krug, Interim Director of Special Education, Elementary, Staff Liaison
Heather Rothenbuescher, Interim Director of Special Education, Secondary
Sam Klein, Supervisor, English Learners
Carolyn Jackson, Supervisor, Office of Equity and Excellence
Pam McClellan, Supervisor, Counseling Services

Ms. Talento called the meeting to order, welcomed attendees and provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda.

Advisory Council on Instruction (ACI) co-chairs Dana Milburn and Rebecca Hunter shared an overview of the ACI structure, membership, and activities of the Council. Ms. Milburn described collaboration between the ACI and other advisory groups, and shared feedback received in two ACI Constructive Feedback Forums that have been held. Topics to be presented at ACI meetings through the spring were previewed, and Ms. Milburn confirmed the ACI’s interest in returning to the former practice of holding the ACI reporting work session later in the spring.

Social Studies Advisory Committee (SSAC) Report

Anne Parris, Chair, and Heidi Gibson, past Chair, assisted by Ms. Hirsch, presented the Social Studies Committee recommendations, first introducing student member Noah Fortner. The group’s first recommendation is for APS to conduct an external equity audit of curriculum and resources used in the schools. They noted an audit would support continued efforts throughout the community to increase equity, and students would benefit by seeing themselves in their learning experiences, particularly in social studies. The group’s second recommendation is to provide professional

development focused on the goal of building student skills for active democratic civic engagement in all content areas.

Board members thanked the committee for their work. Ms. Parris and Ms. Hirsch responded to questions, describing how staff will approach identifying what is needed in the audit to ensure equity in resources and instruction. Noah described his experiences in APS and how that experience helped inform the committee's recommendation. Additional topics discussed included how to manage the audit and how it would relate to the work of the Chief Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Officer. The group also discussed looking at addressing this concern using current resources and Board members suggested the group provide a tiered list of actions for Board consideration.

English/Language Arts (ELA) Advisory Committee Report

Cloe Chin, Chair, assisted by Ms. Silver, presented the two ELA recommendations. The first recommendation, supported by other ACI committees, is to adopt a rigorous high school writing curriculum. The second recommendation is for APS to create, adopt, and implement a short-term plan to ensure that every teacher responsible for teaching reading has the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training.

The Board appreciated the report and the focus on reading and writing. Ms. Van Doren asked for more information about the recommendation on a writing curriculum. Ms. Silver explained that this was not a request for a new or additional program, but the work would be incorporated into curriculum writing already underway. She also confirmed there is no budgetary impact to this recommendation. After sharing more information about the LETRS training and how it would be used in APS, Ms. Silver confirmed that staff has worked with the LETRS provider to develop a phased implementation, as it is a costly training. The group also discussed the NAEP assessment and how it is used by APS.

Science Advisory Committee Report

Jason Papacosma, Chair, committee member Ann Marie Douglass, and Dr. Le presented the Science Committee's recommendations. The first is to adopt an updated framework for the nature, emphasis, and timing of independent projects as a near-term strategy to develop a consistent, district-wide project-based learning model for science curriculum delivery. Mr. Papacosma stressed that this recommendation recognizes the importance of having more time devoted to independent projects. The second recommendation is to provide funding and support for a full-time Outdoor Classroom Coordinator.

After thanking Mr. Papacosma for the presentation, the group discussed the first recommendation and how the committee would like to see it implemented. Also considered was how both recommendations could be imbedded in the current curriculum and how to encourage creativity and minimize costs for their implementation. The group also discussed if an Outdoor Classroom coordinator would have sufficient time to be able to assist at all elementary schools.

Arts Advisory Committee Report

Susan Scott, Chair, assisted by Ms. Farrell, presented recommendations from the Arts Advisory Committee. The committee's first recommendation is to provide a physical education credit for

participation in Marching Band. The second recommendation is to establish line item funding for visual arts supplies that is consistent in all secondary schools to ensure equity. Both of those recommendations have been presented to the Board in previous reports. The third recommendation is to assess the impact of changes to middle school block scheduling on electives. Ms. Scott commented on the recommendations, providing a summary of past consideration of the first two. Acknowledging the importance of daily practice for learning to play instruments, she confirmed that the last recommendation is to determine if block scheduling negatively impacts music or other instruction.

Appreciating the information presented, the group discussed benefits and challenges of these recommendations, including the challenges that were faced when APS previously considered the Marching Band recommendation. Board members suggested collaboration with the Health and Physical Education program to work towards implementation of that recommendation. Also discussed were the different models of block scheduling in place and current funding of arts supplies.

Mathematics Advisory Committee Report

Amy Smith Beaumont and Ron Fecso, Co-Chairs, assisted by Ms. Ellis, presented the Mathematics recommendations. Mr. Fecso confirmed that the first recommendation is a continuation of past recommendations, to have math coaches at all the schools. This recommendation is for a 1.0 FTE Certified math coach at all elementary schools. He noted that the recent Mathematics Program Evaluation confirmed the value of having a full-time math coach at each school. The committee's second recommendation is to reduce unnecessary or untimely math acceleration in APS middle schools and to communicate the rationale for this action to parents.

Board members thanked the committee for their work. The group discussed the rationale for reducing acceleration, and how to make sure students have the flexibility to take math courses when they are ready to be successful in the course. Ms. Ellis spoke to changes made at the state level and beyond to address concerns about students' readiness to take higher level math. Also discussed was how the approach to math instruction in APS has evolved over the years, and how to ensure that students are appropriately placed in courses.

Student Services Advisory Committee Report

Judy Hadden and Kirstin Pickle, co-chairs, assisted by Ms. Carria, presented the Student Services Advisory Committee's recommendations. Ms. Hadden briefly reviewed recent data for APS students on key challenges and needs in terms of mental health. Ms. Pickle then shared the committee's recommendations. The first is to create consistency in social emotional learning (SEL) goals, components and expectations district-wide for all students. Recommendation two is for Student Services central office guidance and training for staff and administrators in goals and desired outcomes of SEL. Additionally, the committee is recommending that APS strengthen districtwide and school-based parent/family engagement focused on SEL and the fourth recommendation is to develop a SEL coordinator position to provide district wide coordination for these efforts. Ms. Pickle then outlined the benefits of these recommendations.

Board members appreciated the report and importance of the recommendations, including the suggestion for a district-wide coordinator. The group discussed how the committee prioritized their

recommendations, and whether some of this work can be done using current resources. Ms. Carria provided additional information about how staff envisions implementing this work and how it could benefit students. The group also discussed the ratio of school counselors to students and current legislation being considered that would affect staffing of counselors at APS.

Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC) Report

Chair Nadia Facey and Vice Chair Nick Walkosak, assisted by Dr. Krug and Ms. Rothenbuescher, presented the ASEAC recommendations, first summarizing the recent evaluation of programs for students with disabilities and those receiving interventions. Ms. Facey and Mr. Walkosak shared the committee's recommendations. The first recommendation is to create a system of accountability that sets a vision for high expectations, greater consistency, and compliance for administrators by utilizing 90-day plans and other metrics recommended by the program evaluation. The second recommendation is to review and adjust planning factors to ensure staffing allocations best support inclusive practices for students with disabilities in a variety of settings.

The Board appreciated the committee's work and recommendations. The group discussed the recommendation related to adjusting planning factors and how staff will be working to address this recommendation. Also discussed was the use of 90-day plans in the schools, and the group looked forward to continued work with the consultants who conducted the program evaluation to implement needed changes.

Advisory Committee on English Learners (EL) Report

Anne Zebra, Chair, joined by Mr. Klein, presented the ACEL recommendations, which are to empower EL families and to strengthen teaching through professional development. Ms. Zebra explained that this recommendation includes support for a full time Early Childhood Specialist to the English Learners Office. She also referenced the recent EL program evaluation and the connection of these recommendations to the strategic plan goals.

After thanking the committee for their work, the Board discussed the work done by the Early Childhood Specialist and language needs for prekindergarten children. Also discussed was how to ensure that the EL families are represented on the committee to ensure that their needs are understood, and the availability of interpretation/translation services for families in the schools.

In closing, Ms. Millburn thanked all the staff and committee members, including the ACI vice chairs, as well as the Board for this work. The Board appreciated the work of the cochairs and committee members and appreciated the successful and informative discussion that took place.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Tannia Talento, Chair
Arlington School Board