

# POLICY REVIEW BRIEFING REPORT

## **FEBRUARY 2021**



### 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 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
- Brian Stockton Superintendent's Office
- Dr. Jeannette Allen Administrative Services
- Arron Gregory Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- 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 bi-weekly and is comprised of two 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**

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, during 2020, the Board adopted several key policies that will guide the division's work.

- The new Equity policy sets the foundation for ensuring equitable practices across the division
- The new Administrative Placements policy helped to strengthen and reinforce the school-choice processes
- The new Information Security policy created the framework for APS's Cybersecurity program.

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

The schedule for policies that will be revised or amended over the upcoming calendar year are available from the Engage with APS webpage, <u>apsva.us/engage/policies-for-</u> <u>revision-amendment/</u>, 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 <u>engage@apsva.us</u> or by submitting an online feedback form (<u>apsva.us/engage/engage-aps-online-feedback/</u>).

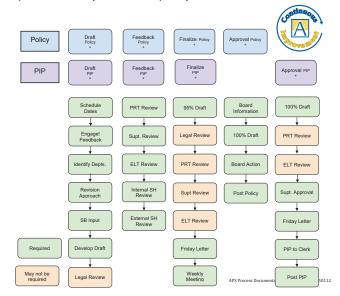
In addition, as policy drafts become available, they are posted on the Engage with APS webpage, where the 30-day public comment period is open to gather feedback from stakeholders. Once the feedback stage is complete, final drafts of each policy are posted on the *Policy Revision Page* and as an information item on the School Board Meetings page 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 Policy Revision 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.

#### **Initial Feedback (1 month)**

Feedback on existing policies is solicited from Advisory Committees and the Board

#### Drafting (2 months)

Policies are drafted and provided to the Board for feedback

#### Public Comment (1 month)

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

#### Final Revisions (1 month)

Feedback is considered and drafts are revised as appropriate

#### School Board Approval/Adoption (1 month)

Final draft posted for information item on School Board meeting agenda one week prior to 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, miniworkshops 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.

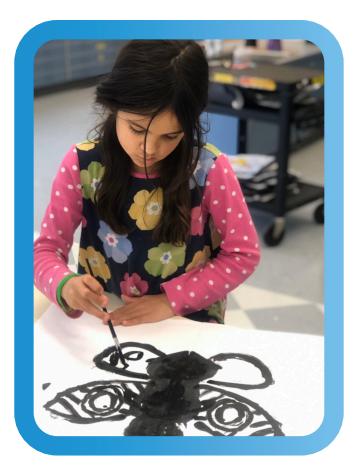
#### WHAT WE LEARNED

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. In 2020 the PRT improved the feedback process, making it easier for Advisory Committees and community members to provide feedback on policies.

The PRT has 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. The process has greatly matured over the 4 years of the PRT. In the early years, the work was ad-hoc and there was significant variation in the process. The team used this flexibility to find optimal processes that balance engagement, rigor, and effort. The PRT now has a consistent revision process with well documented steps, checklists, and quality-control feedback loops.

#### DATA

Strategic Plan Performance Objective 19 states that "All School Board policies will be up to date and will be reviewed every five years". As of December 31, 2020, the Board has 195 policies. Of these, 121 are current and 74 are not current. The large number of non-current policies is partially due to the COVID-19 crisis, which caused a significant decrease in the number of policies revised in 2020. The target is the revision of 50 policies a year, the board adopted 17 policies in 2020. There are 72 policies on schedule for revision or amendment



through March 2022, including two new policies. If the plan is followed, the number of not current policies will decrease from 74 to 37 over the next 14 months. Of these 37, five are planned for retirement. The remaining not current policies are in Human Resources and Teaching and Learning. These departments have the largest number of policies and have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

#### **MOVING FORWARD**

The PRT is working to catch up from the pause in policy work due to COVID-19. Here is a short list of policies on deck for the next 14 months

- Restraint and Seclusion
- Discipline
- Strategic Plan
- Family and Community Engagement
- Employee Health and Dental Insurance
- Staffing Requirements
- Transportation
- Memorandums of Understanding

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