



Arlington
Public
Schools



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.

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.