

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Item C-1-b

Work Session #2 with the Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 6:04 PM. The meeting was held by electronic communications due to the Covid-19 Pandemic emergency, using Microsoft Teams.

Present were:

Monique O’Grady, Chair
Barbara Kanninen, Vice Chair
Cristina Diaz-Torres, Member
Reid Goldstein, Member
David Priddy, Member
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

Also present were:

Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent
Raj Adusumilli, Assistant Superintendent, Information Services
Bridget Loft, Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning
Brian Stockton, Chief of Staff
Arron Gregory, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer
Sarah Putnam, Director, Curriculum and Instruction
Pam Farrell, Supervisor, Arts Education
Cheryl McCullough, Supervisor, Gifted Services
Carolyn Jackson, Equity and Excellence Supervisor
Shannan Ellis, Supervisor, Mathematics
Dr. Laura Newton, Director, Student Services
Kerri Hirsch, Supervisor, Social Studies
Rebecca Hunter, Chair, Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning

Ms. O’Grady called the work session to order at 6:04 PM. Ms. Rebecca Hunter, Chair of the Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning (ACTL) introduced the discussion.

Arts Advisory Committee: Susan Scott, Chair; Pam Farrell, staff liaison

Ms. Scott spoke to the challenges the pandemic has caused for Arts instruction and presented three recommendations. These were to allow all students to have the option to take PE/Health online to count as graduation credit; establishing a consistent line-item funding for Visual Arts supplies consistent for all secondary schools; and contingency staffing for secondary arts courses to ensure that they are offered even for classes with a small enrollment.

The group discussed how the visual arts supplies funding is distributed and managed across the county, and the status of the request for the option to earn graduation credits for virtual PE/Health courses. Ms. Farrell provided information about both of these recommendations proposed by the Arts Committee in the past. The group also briefly discussed the staffing recommendation and how the pandemic may affect enrollment when students return to in-person learning.

Gifted Services Advisory Committee: Dan Corcoran, Chair; Cheryl McCullough, staff liaison

Mr. Corcoran explained the recommendations from the Gifted Services Advisory Committee, including adding a Gifted specialist in the Central Office to support training and other services; and a recommendation to increase intensified courses available at middle school.

Responding to questions, Ms. Loft confirmed that the gifted specialist is in the proposed FY 2022 Budget and she provided an update on staff work looking to increase the availability of intensified courses at middle school. The group also discussed gifted instruction in elementary school, and Ms. McCullough provided information about progress on efforts to improve gifted services throughout all of the schools.

Student Services Advisory Committee: Alisa Cowen and Adora Williams, members; Dr. Laura Newton, staff liaison

Ms. Cowen shared two recommendations: to conduct a full internal program evaluation of the Student Services Department, programs and services; and to change student grading and expectations for the current year to allow more latitude and help decrease high levels of school-related student stress as well as increasing counseling in the schools as students return. Ms. Cowen and Ms. Williams spoke to the importance of Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) and the need for a program evaluation to develop a strong baseline to better evaluate programs and services.

Dr. Newton spoke to SEL services available to APS students and shared highlights of specific changes made during the current year to address the challenges resulting from the pandemic. The group also discussed the recommendation for a program evaluation. Ms. Loft responded briefly to the second recommendation related to grading, confirming that APS does not have a systemwide plan to make any changes, however staff are working to ensure that students are supported.

World Languages Advisory Committee: Adrienne McQuillan, Chair, Rick Jackson, member; Elisabeth Harrington, staff liaison

Ms. McQuillan summarized the World Languages recommendations which are to develop improved consistency and equity in the POS for world language courses, particularly as it relates to online language classes; developing a comprehensive plan for Spanish for Fluent Speakers (SFS); and an immersion coordinator to guide dual language immersion instruction K-12.

Responding to questions, Ms. McQuillan and Ms. Harrington shared additional information about the students who would be eligible to enroll in the SFS courses, and what is needed to implement this plan. The group also discussed the role and responsibilities of an immersion coordinator.

Mathematics Advisory Committee: Amy Beaumont, Chair, and Ron Fecso, member; Shannan Ellis, staff liaison

Three recommendations were shared: The need for new textbooks and materials; the need for detailed syllabi for math courses; and the need for more pen/paper work so that students show work and receive feedback.

Ms. Ellis responded to questions about what classroom materials are being used in APS instead of textbooks, and efforts that have been put in place to ensure consistency of materials across the county. The group also discussed the textbook adoption process and what types of materials are needed to support and strengthen mathematics instruction.

Equity and Excellence Advisory Committee: Khaseem Davis, Chair; Carolyn Jackson, staff liaison

Mr. Davis spoke to equity and acknowledged that it is incorporated in the recommendations from all of the advisory committees. He then shared the committee's recommendations: ensuring equity remains central to APS goals; ensuring students have equitable access to distance learning, including support and training for using technology; and ensuring appropriate training for instructional and administrative staff to advance diversity and foster inclusion in the classroom.

Ms. Diaz-Torres appreciated this discussion and asked for more information about what training would best benefit the staff and students. Mr. Davis and Ms. Jackson spoke to the importance of the training and the need to ensure that staff has time and appropriate training, and Ms. Jackson noted that equity training is now state mandated. Also discussed was how equity is being incorporated throughout all of APS programs and departments and the equity work being done.

Social Studies Advisory Committee: Anne Paris, Chair and Heidi Gibson, member; Kerri Hirsch, staff liaison

Ms. Paris shared two recommendations: to analyze grading practices and uncover areas for improvement; and how to ensure social studies maintains its standing in the curriculum. She noted the link between social studies and reading as well as the need for students to see themselves in the curriculum and to have civic opportunities.

Responding to the Board, Ms. Hirsch spoke to efforts to expand equity and inclusion of diverse populations in social studies instruction. Also discussed was current interest in looking at grading and moving to standards-based assessments. Ms. Paris noted that the committee's concern is to ensure consistency in grading throughout the division.

Dr. Durán thanked all for their hard work, and appreciated the focus of all of the committees' recommendations, and particularly the recognition of the importance of equity in all instruction. Ms. Hunter appreciated the work session and the Board thanked the participants.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Monique O'Grady, Chair
Arlington School Board