

# Memorandum

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To Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent, Arlington Public Schools  
From Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Sustainability  
Topic 2022 Annual Memorandum  
Date July 2022

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Since 2013, the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Sustainability (SACS) has prepared an annual memorandum with highlights and recommendations for the Superintendent to advance sustainability in Arlington Public Schools (APS). As we reflect on what was another extremely challenging school year, we are continually impressed by the commitment from the teachers, staff, administrators, and students to persevere in excellent, equitable education, while working toward sustainability in operations and education. We congratulate the seniors from our committee who graduated: Yesly Vasquez-Perez from Arlington Tech, and Madeline Goff-Glennon from Wakefield. Farther down in this memo, we will describe the different SACS initiatives in the 2021-22 school year, but first we want to highlight three topical areas:

First, the expansion of the sustainability liaison program from a pilot of 10 schools 6 years ago, to 26 schools this year, and especially to all schools and programs in SY 2022-23, is an extraordinary success story. We appreciate all the support that you, your staff, and the School Board have shown in expanding this program. We also appreciate the effort to highlight the sustainability liaison program in the April School Board meeting. The expansion of liaisons to all schools and programs presents a big opportunity to make the program more impactful, systemic, and equitable.

Second, we are also excited about the gains that our committee made in collaborating with the APS Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Early in the school year, SACS recognized the importance of identifying how our work fosters or impedes diversity, equity and inclusion at APS. We also thought that we might be able to identify sustainability-related operations and programs that could enhance or impede equity, such as transportation and participation in environmental clubs. As described below, our committee forged a connection with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and laid the groundwork for more collaboration in SY 2022-23.

Third, we are excited about recent commitments that Arlington County has made to sustainability, and the possibilities that they provide for APS. Most importantly, the County has budgeted a new Office of Climate Coordination and Policy, to address climate change more systemically and forcefully. This office will be important for implementing the Community Energy Plan's goals for Arlington to be a climate neutral community by 2050. As described below, other County programs, such as curbside compost pickup, and slower speed limit zones near some schools, also present opportunities for APS-County collaboration. In that vein, SACS continues to recommend establishing a new Sustainability Coordinator for APS. The person in that position could enhance collaboration with the County, provide a similarly high level of leadership and direction for sustainability, and help with coordination and oversight of sustainability liaisons.

When we meet with you this summer, we hope to discuss these exciting opportunities and new developments. To enhance that discussion, we thought it would be useful to summarize the committee's activities during the 2021-22 school year.

## **Sustainability Liaison Program in 2021-2022**

Despite the significant challenges that staff faced in SY 2021-22, the liaisons from 26 schools accomplished significant projects that made a lasting impact on school operations and student environmental education. For more on each liaison's projects, please see Appendix B: "Sustainability Liaison Projects."

Beyond the slideshow (created in March 2022) in Appendix B, SACS was able to gain insights into the liaison activities by participating in their quarterly meetings, and by surveying the liaisons in the fall and in June. As in previous years, it is clear that two types of projects are most popular: 1) outdoor gardening and learning, and 2) waste reduction, recycling, and especially composting. From 2020 onward, outdoor projects became especially popular because of their covid safety. These projects are quite popular among students because they get moving and socializing outside, while also learning about sustainability and greening the school. In waste reduction and recycling, many schools were able to resume programs like Recycling Rangers at Barrett and Long Branch, in which students implement recycling themselves, while also teaching about it to other students. Composting food scraps became more popular during 2021-22, partially because of the success at Yorktown High School, and partially because of curbside food scrap pick-up for single-family homes. Campbell Elementary went so far as to implement a vermicomposting (worm composting) system! Yorktown and Williamsburg Middle School were able to collaborate on food scrap composting, and Yorktown has shown how APS could start composting pickup at some schools on a pilot basis.

It was particularly gratifying to see liaisons collaborating with outside scientists and non-profits and receiving recognition for it. For example, at Wakefield High School, students participated in the City Nature Challenge with Arlington Master Naturalists and the Society for Conservation Biology. Students at Abingdon Elementary School tried out biodegradable and edible spoons from a small business. Oakridge Elementary School's Walking School Bus program, in which senior citizens "drive" walking school buses each week, was highlighted on the national CBS Evening News. And fifth graders at Jamestown Elementary School were a top ten finalist and second place winner for their proposal to add shade plants to the local park's creek, for the Caring for Our Watersheds competition. The school won \$900, and all the Jamestown 5th graders were involved in the planting in early June.

Finally, multiple sustainability liaisons wrote entries for the Sustainability Liaison Project Library on the SACS website. The library has detailed descriptions of sustainability liaison projects. Each entry is intended to allow another sustainability liaison (or other staff) to pursue a similar project without having to "reinvent the wheel." The new project entries bring the library up to fifteen projects.

## **Additional SACS Activities**

As emphasized at the beginning of this memorandum, an important focus of the committee was strengthening our collaboration with the APS Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. SACS felt strongly that sustainability work, like all other programs at APS, needs to be consistent with and contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion. To initiate that collaboration, we invited the new Chief of DEI, Dr. Ottley, to two of our monthly meetings, in which we discussed collaboration and initiatives. As a result, SACS

commented on his draft policy implementation plan for the Equity Policy, with an emphasis on efforts to measure whether operations and transportation are both consistent with sustainability as well as equity. In addition, Dr. Leah Nichols, SACS vice chair and Director of the Institute for Sustainable Earth at George Mason University, was able to connect a data analytics expert with Dr. Ottley's team, to enhance the considerable challenge of measuring and monitoring equity at APS. Most importantly, we forged a connection so that the principles of DEI, with assistance from the DEI office, can infuse the committee membership recruiting, the liaison program, and all of SACS's activities and recommendations.

In March, SACS provided awards at the Regional Science and Engineering Fair. The Committee reviewed 29 projects - 25% of APS projects - that addressed sustainability challenges. The breadth and depth of understanding of environmental issues was impressive. In first place, Colin Sartori from Yorktown High School developed a sustained power source generated from shoe soles. In second place, Harriet Shapiro from Washington-Liberty High School measured the effectiveness of strategies to reduce heat generated from streets and buildings in cities.

SACS continues to emphasize the importance of safe, healthy, climate-friendly, equitable transportation options, particularly walking and biking to school. We are very concerned about road safety for children who walk or bike. A SACS member, Cynthia Palmer, is the chair of the County's Bicycle Advisory Committee. She continues to help coordinate our efforts with that committee and with its sister group, the Pedestrian Advisory Committee. For example, she applauds the County's pilot program to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph for some schools. The County plans to add automated traffic enforcement, as well. SACS recommends continued collaboration with the County as it expands this important pilot from the initial 13 schools. We also support any efforts to better track student and teacher transportation choices (beyond the use of buses and other school vehicles) and to improve intersection safety in the vicinity of schools. We recommend expanding the use of no-right-on-red at dangerous intersections, as well as designated crossing times that allow kids on foot or bike to get *all the way across* safely. In addition, SACS has been eagerly following efforts to bring the first electric school buses to Arlington.

In December, Laura Watchman (SACS chair) participated in interviewing candidates for the Assistant Superintendent of Facilities and Operations. We appreciated this holistic approach to ensuring that the interviews covered all aspects of that role, including the position's central role in implementing sustainability.

In conclusion, we look forward to meeting with you and discussing all that our committee has done, the wonderful work of the sustainability liaisons, and especially opportunities for sustainability when all of the schools and programs have sustainability liaisons in SY 2022-23.

## Appendix A: SACS 2021-2022 Membership

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SACS meets on the third Tuesday of each month, except for July and August. All meetings are open to the public. Members are appointed to two-year terms and participate on a volunteer basis.

### Appointed Members

Meredith Allen	Senior Instructional Technology Coordinator, Tuckahoe Elementary School
Nicole Croce	Third Grade Teacher, Campbell Elementary School
Heather Dantzker	MS, PhD, Owner and Principal, Dantzker Consulting, LLC
Elenor Hodges	M.Ed., Executive Director, <a href="#">EcoAction Arlington</a>
Gregory Lloyd	CCM, LEED AP BD+C, TRUE Advisor, Construction Manager, Wesley Housing
Kate Marshall	Real Estate Senior Manager, <a href="#">GDIT</a>
Leah Nichols	Executive Director, Institute for a Sustainable Earth, GMU
Levi Novey	MS, Consultant, IUCN Pangolin Specialist Group
Cynthia Palmer	JD, MPH, Petrochemical Strategy Advisor, Moms Clean Air Force, EDF
Robin Puttock	LEED AP BD&C, AIA Architect, Architecture Faculty at Catholic University
Samantha Taggart	Teacher, H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program
Laura Watchman	LEED AP Neighborhood Development, Principal, Watchman Consulting

### Staff

Cathy Lin	CEM, APS Director, Facilities and Operations
Dat Le	Ph.D., APS Science Supervisor

### Student Liaisons

Madeline Goff-Glennon	Wakefield High School, Class of 2022
Alexa Gromada	Yorktown High School, Class of 2021
Kate Haley	Yorktown High School, Class of 2024
Yesly Vasquez-Perez	Arlington Tech, Class of 2022

### Liaisons to Other Committees

Gregory Lloyd	Advisory Council on School Facilities and Capital Programs
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