

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Closed Meeting and Work Session on Student Climate, Culture, and
Responses to Student Behavior Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2022

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at 5:31 PM at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.¹

Present were:

Reid Goldstein, Chair

Cristina Diaz-Torres, Vice Chair

Mary Kadera, Member (not present for the closed meeting; however, she participated in the work session virtually via Microsoft Teams due to work reasons from New York)

Barbara Kanninen, Member

David Priddy, Member

Also present were:

Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent

Dr. John Mayo, Chief Operating Officer

Michael Hodges, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources

CALL TO ORDER AND CLOSED MEETING

Mr. Goldstein called the meeting to order and *moved that the Board immediately convene in a closed meeting to consider as many as 27 appointments, 7 changes in position/salary, 8 resignations, 1 retirement, 1 termination and the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body as authorized by Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(1).* The motion was seconded by Mr. Priddy, and it was adopted in a vote of 4 – 0, with Ms. Diaz-Torres, Mr. Goldstein, Dr. Kanninen, and Mr. Priddy voting affirmatively. Ms. Kadera was not present at the time of the vote.

The closed meeting adjourned at 6:11 PM and the Board reconvened in an open meeting.

Mr. Goldstein moved to certify that pursuant to 2.2-3712(D) of the Code of Virginia to the best knowledge of each School Board member, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting just held, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening this closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered. The motion was seconded by Mr. Priddy and was adopted in a vote of 4 – 0. The voting record is as follows: Ms. Diaz-Torres – Aye; Mr. Goldstein – Aye; Dr. Kanninen – Aye; and Mr. Priddy – Aye. Ms. Kadera was not present at the time of the vote.

Mr. Goldstein called for a brief recess at 6:11 PM. The Board reconvened in an open session at 6:31 p.m.

Work Session on Student Climate, Culture, and Responses to Student Behavior

Also present were:

Kimberley Graves, Chief of School Support

Gradis White, Director, School Climate and Culture

Sharrin Saintil, Student Climate Coordinator

Dr. Chip Bonar, Student Behavior Coordinator

Tyrone Byrd, Director, Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Arsalan Soltani, student, Arlington Career Center

Taylor Jones, student, Langston High School

Claudia Mercado, Clerk

¹The recording of School Board meetings is posted on the APS Web site following the meetings.

Student Voice- School Climate and Culture

Mr. White began the work session by facilitating a conversation with students, Mr. Soltani and Ms. Jones. The students shared their experiences at their schools, including some of the challenges they faced and the support their schools provided to create a better learning environment.

The Board thanked Mr. Soltani and Ms. Jones for eloquently sharing their student perspectives. The Board discussed the implementation of the Student Safety Coordinators, managing conflict resolution, and the importance of staff relationships with students. The Board inquired about the Student Code of Conduct and the students expressed their lack of knowledge of the Student Code of Conduct. They suggested brainstorming ways to better promote the importance of the Code of Conduct. In addition, the students shared factors that impact school culture and climate. Furthermore, they conversed about avenues for students to share their input on climate at their schools.

Overview of the Office of School Climate and Culture

Mr. White provided an update on the Office of School Climate and Culture which included staffing, areas of responsibility, and brief updates from the 2020-2021 school year. Furthermore, Mr. White presented new action items to help the school climate and culture better support students by name, strength, and need.

The Board discussed the School and Law Enforcement Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and required reporting to law enforcement. Ms. Graves and Dr. Durán spoke about some of the robust work accomplished in partnership with the police department. Mr. White then spoke about procedures to mitigate incidents and provide students with resources to address their specific needs. Next, the Board discussed School Safety Coordinators (SSCs) and putting metrics in place to ascertain that their new roles are achieving the intended goal. Ms. Graves explained that her office would be conducting surveys and student focus groups, as well as analyzing discipline data to change or refine the role of the SSCs. Mr. White added that his office was actively engaging with SSCs to provide them with feedback and guidance in interacting with students. He also spoke about how his office works to provide support to administrators to identify unbiased approaches to discipline and find wrap-around services for students, so they feel seen and supported. The Board also discussed professional development and its alignment with the Office of School Climate and Culture. Ms. Graves explained the multiple ways staff is trained in crucial areas including de-escalating situations, student engagement, and communications. Speaking on shifting culture and mindset on student discipline and conduct, the Board conversed about restorative justice practices and expanding training system-wide to build student voice and leadership. Mr. Byrd highlighted information on the implicit bias training rollout noting that next school year the training will be mandatory for staff, including the School Board. Ms. Saintil defined restorative justice in education as focusing on building positive relationships with students and staff, creating a culture with specific norms and practices at the schools, purposeful family engagement, and repairing relationships. Moreover, the Board inquired about the types of incidents that are reported to the police, how the schools handle these situations, and the school's relationship with the justice system. Noting the complexities of reporting infractions to the police, Mr. White explained that under restorative justice, the school system works to create a partnership with the student to deal with the infraction at the root and ensure that the student is supported at the school level. Dr. Kanninen noted that due to time constraints, the Board didn't get the opportunity to delve into the subjects of climate and culture. Thus, she looked forward to learning more about the work to cultivate a safe and supportive environment at the schools.

Acknowledging that there is still more work to create a cultural shift related to student behavior and responses, the Board thanked staff for their work and Ms. Diaz-Torres recognized budgetary considerations moving forward. Dr. Durán concluded by speaking of the preventive work of the Office of School Climate and Culture and highlighting that student well-being is the driver of the success of the school system.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

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ATTEST:

Claudia Mercado, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Reid Goldstein, Chair
Arlington School Board

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