

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Closed Meeting and
Work Session on Opioids and Substances in APS: Education Prevention Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2023

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, at 5:30 PM at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.¹

Present were:

Reid Goldstein, Chair

Cristina Diaz-Torres, Vice Chair

Mary Kadera, Member (Participated virtually from Arlington, Virginia using Microsoft Teams due to medical reasons)

David Priddy, Member

Bethany Zecher Sutton, Member

Also present were:

Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent

Dr. John Mayo, Chief Operating Officer

Michel Hodge, 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 18 appointments, 7 changes in position/salary, 5 resignations, 3 resignations with prejudice, and 1 retirement as authorized by Virginia Code 2.2-3711(A)(1)*. The motion was seconded by Ms. Diaz-Torres, and it was adopted in a vote of 3 – 0, with Ms. Diaz-Torres, Mr. Goldstein, and Ms. Zecher Sutton voting affirmatively. Ms. Kadera and Mr. Priddy were not present at the time of the vote.

The closed meeting adjourned at 5:55 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; Mr. Priddy – Aye; and Ms. Zecher Sutton – Aye. Ms. Kadera was not present at the time of the vote.

The Board took a recess and reconvened at 6:34 PM.

Also present were:

Kim Graves, Chief of School Support

Dr. Darrell Sampson, Executive Director of Student Services

Jenny Sexton, Substance Abuse Counselor

Dr. Kristen Devaney, Supervisor of Counseling Services

Carmen Mejia, Deputy Clerk of the School Board

Introduction

Mr. Goldstein acknowledged that the community is facing many challenges, including the need to address the increased use of opioids that is affecting our youth. The Board concurred with the Superintendent that combating this issue requires a community-wide response comprising of home, school, and public efforts. Mr. Goldstein validated the School

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Board's support for the Superintendent to implement concrete steps to ensure the community's well-being and address every avenue for the security and safety of schools by providing proposals for funding considerations.

Per Dr. Durán, the purpose of the work session was to discuss the issues of opioids and substance use and address how the crisis would be handled. He highlighted the need for everyone to learn and understand more about this topic and, as a community, he encouraged more vigilance for students in need.

Overview of APS Substance Use Prevention and Intervention Programming

Dr. Sampson discussed initiatives already in place at APS regarding substance abuse education, prevention, and intervention. To address the opioid crisis, he spoke about the need to continue to address this issue and APS's next action steps. Ms. Sexton described the difference between legal and illegal fentanyl and discussed the concerns regarding the various forms and availability of illicit fentanyl. She then provided a demonstration on how to use Naloxone (Narcan) and explained the appropriate way to store it. Ms. Sexton also detailed the symptoms of someone having an overdose and shared information on how to respond to an overdose situation. Moreover, Dr. Devaney explained the warning signs of substance abuse in adolescents and she shared information on places to find assistance in Arlington. Lastly, Dr. Devaney reviewed the role of a Substance Abuse Counselor (SAC) in schools.

School Board Discussion

In response to some incidents that took place at the schools, the Board reiterated that staff can always call 911. The Board suggested that the Narcan presentation be shared with each school's Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and possibly include information on other substances that may be available to students. In addition, the Board recommended that every student carry Narcan, provided that Virginia laws are followed before this happens. It was clarified that the Safe Reporting of Overdoses Law was no longer a felony that the County Attorney's office prosecutes and that schools work closely with the police department. Furthermore, the Board discussed ways to engage and inform students about this crucial topic so that it has an impact on them. They discussed School Safety Coordinators and their work to build relationships with students because embedding a relationship with them is a form of security. They discussed the need for more SACs in schools and redefining counselors' roles so students know whom they can go to for specific needs. The Board noted that some students' substance abuse might be a response to mental health issues. They also discussed staff mental health with Dr. Mayo speaking about the need to better communicate the resources available through Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to staff. Lastly, they discussed the communications provided to parents and the community when a situation occurs and the need for clearer messages. Unfortunately, many parents are scared to send their kids to school, and students are afraid to go to school. Dr. Mayo noted that facilities staff is visiting schools and, for security purposes, inspecting the current cameras' positioning, considering if there is a need for more cameras, and examining budget requests. Dr. Durán stated that a message was going out to families regarding communications from schools and it would address the level of information that can be provided to the public. Dr. Durán validated that communication in the past was unclear and reassured families that they would see changes.

In conclusion, it was reaffirmed that APS aims to support students' health, well-being, academic success, and positive social-emotional development to prevent substance use. The Board recognized the significant challenges in addressing substance abuse for those with less access to resources. It was reiterated that everyone- parents, schools, and communities- must work together.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM.

ATTEST:

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Carmen Mejia, Deputy Clerk
Arlington School Board

Reid Goldstein, Chair
Arlington School Board

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