

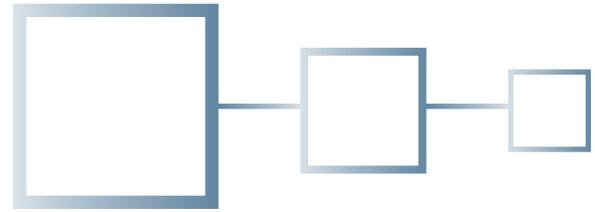
Academic Supports

# BRIEFING REPORT

FEBRUARY 2018



Arlington  
Public  
Schools



# ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

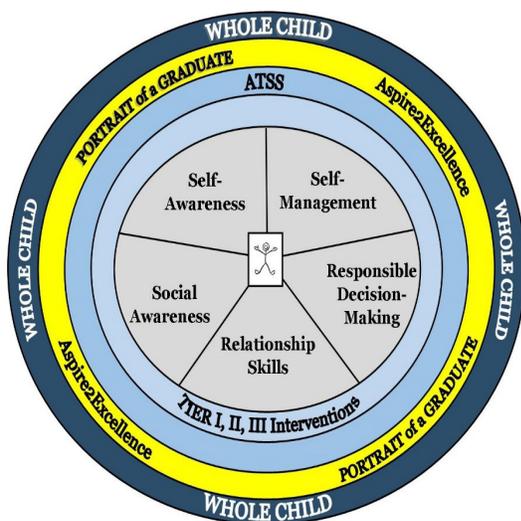
The Department of Teaching and Learning seeks to ignite a passion for learning with equitable access and multiple pathways where all learners connect, create, and innovate. In order to achieve this mission, supports are provided to ensure that all students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. These supports are provided across all offices within the department with the leadership and facilitation of this work undertaken by the offices of Student Services, Health and Physical Education, Special Education, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education. This report focuses on the key supports provided by these offices and the integration of these services across the department as well as the division.

In order to meet the needs of the Whole Child, staff within the Department of Teaching and Learning work to develop and implement prevention and intervention strategies in the context of Aspire2Excellence, Arlington Tiered Systems of Support (ATSS), and the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

## MAJOR SERVICES PROVIDED

The offices of Student Services and Health and Physical Education facilitate and lead many of services to support the Whole Child. Health and education affect individuals, society, and the economy and work in alignment whenever possible. When students are mentally and physically healthy, feel safe and secure in the school environment, and are engaged and supported, their ability to learn and respond to exciting and challenging educational work is significantly improved. Specific services facilitated include:

- Providing academic information and support for all students and families through academic planning, advocacy for equity and access, identification of students requiring academic supports, and consultation and collaboration with administrators, teachers, and educational specialists.
- Providing social, emotional and career skill development for all students (Tier 1) to support academic success through school counselor classroom lessons on the following topics: academic planning, skills for learning, empathy, bullying prevention, emotion regulation (anger, frustration, stress, etc.), problem solving, goal setting, career self-awareness and how to recognize, refuse and report unsafe behavior by peers and adults.
- Providing group and individual counseling (Tier 2-3) intervention for identified students conducted by school counselors, psychologists, substance abuse counselors and/or social workers.
- Providing case management and intervention support to special populations through targeted programming and coordination.
- Conducting individual assessments related to risk behaviors, such as self-harm, suicide ideation, violence or aggression, and substance abuse.
- Providing district and site-based counseling crisis response and intervention.
- Conducting developmental and social history evaluations, and psychological evaluations for students who may be eligible for disability services and supports.



- Monitoring the success of student's academic achievement; conducting quarterly reviews of grade reports, communicating and adjusting academic planning with the assistance of teachers, students and families. Conducting yearly academic planning sessions with each student to ensure that students are on the path to graduation and that they have a defined post-secondary pathway.
- Creating attendance policies and methods to respond to absenteeism.
- Leading substance abuse prevention and intervention, including the referral and support for students referred to Second Chance.
- Guiding supports for students facing homelessness and other family based challenges to identify means of providing physiological and safe and secure home environments.
- Supporting site-based Section 504 organization and management.
- Providing college planning and support, including the annual College and Career Fair. Hosting college admission officers in secondary schools and educating families on financial aid and promote scholarships.
- Guiding Tier 1 K-12 career awareness and exploration for all students, including the Superintendent's annual Dream, Explore, Create Your Own Path signature event.
- Engaging in school coaching and support to challenge and engage all students, meeting the needs of individual learners such as students with disabilities and students identified as gifted.
- Coordinating with School Health and numerous other partnerships including: Student Services Advisory Committee; Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families; READY Coalition; and Second Chance, among others.
- Facilitating professional learning opportunities on important topics such as: child abuse and neglect, bullying prevention, recognition and reporting, LGBTQ students, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and mental health. Staff are now required to participate in Mental Health First Aid.

## SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

In order to ensure that students are healthy, safe, supported and engaged, schools throughout APS are supported by staff who are able to focus primarily on social and emotional needs. APS school counselors, psychologists, social workers and substance abuse counselors are experts in their field and serving as mental health providers and teachers of academic, career and social emotional skills. Staff are guided by their individual professional associations (American School Counselors Association, National Association of School Psychologists, and National Association of Social Workers) and abide by a similar Code of Ethics which guide their use of time and issues such as confidentiality. All of these staff conduct risk assessments, provide group and individual counseling, support school climate and consult with teachers, administrators, and community members.

These three disciplines, along with Substance Abuse counselors, HILT counselors, and interlude therapists form a Unified Mental Health Team in our schools. School Counselors are considered the General Practitioners; they are able to support 80% of issues that arise that impede a student's progress academically. When issues arise that require intervention or specialized support, school counselors call on their colleagues within the schools or in the community. These include School Psychologists, social workers, HILT counselors and/or Substance Abuse Counselors.

**School counselors** provide a wealth of services to students and families as they:

- Support students' academic success by delivering a comprehensive school counseling program to all students based on data identifying student needs
- Work to remove barriers to access and provide students with the opportunity for academic challenge in the most rigorous coursework possible
- Establish data analysis methods to identify and target systemic barriers deterring equitable access
- Work with administration, teachers and other school staff to create a school environment encouraging academic success and striving to one's potential
- Provide opportunities for students to: enhance their self-efficacy beliefs and competence, develop attributional beliefs, see value in tasks related to achievement, develop mastery/learning goals, develop autonomy, and relate to others
- Work to establish student opportunities for academic remediation as needed, and emphasizing family-community-school relationships in addressing academic needs
- Lead academic planning, crisis counseling, child protection and bullying prevention.
- Provide a wellness and prevention focused Tier 1 curriculum for "typical" age and stage concerns (e.g., skills for learning and life)
- Provide mental health group and individual counseling support for identified students.

**School psychologists** support students and families as they:

- Consult with teachers, parents, and administrators about problems in learning and behavior; help others understand child development and how it affects learning and behavior, and strengthen working relationships between educators, parents and community services to provide healthy and effective alternatives to learning.
- Provide a range of assessment activities which can include a wide variety of data-based tools at an individual, group, and systems level to evaluate academic skills and monitor progress;



assess learning aptitudes, and emotional development; evaluate the development of social skills; examine effective learning environments and school climate; and act as members of multi-disciplinary teams determining eligibility for special education.

- Help families and schools to identify potential learning difficulties, design programs for children at risk of failure, provide parents and teachers with the skills to cope with disruptive behavior, help foster tolerance, understanding, and appreciation of diversity in the school community, and develop school-wide initiatives to make schools safer and more effective.
- Educate families and staff through workshops and staff training activities that include but are not limited to the following topics: effective problem solving and conflict resolution, teaching and learning strategies, social skills development, mental wellness and behavioral health, behavior management techniques, crisis management.

**School social workers** are critical links for families who are in need of county services to mitigate physiological, safety and security concerns in their homes. As members of the unified mental health team, they:

- Provide support, resources, and consultation to the greater school community in order to promote academic success and engagement.
- Foster understanding and collaborative efforts among home, school, and community; problem solve and identify prevention and early intervention strategies for student success through a collaborative action process; work with parents and school staff to assess and support the needs of homeless families.
- Collaborate with school staff in developing interventions to address chronic attendance issues and dropout prevention; work with school staff and families to identify, investigate and resolve residency and guardianship issues; refer students, families, and school staff to community resources.
- Work with school staff to help maintain a positive home-school connection through strategies such as home visits and conferences; provide crisis support services to school staff, students, and families; assist in the special education identification and placement process.

Finally, our **substance abuse counselors** provide support to students and families through:

- Sharing prevention messages through classroom lessons and utilizing campaigns such as Red Ribbon week
- Intervening with students and assisting families when substance abuse issues first arise
- Coordinating with the Department of Administrative Services when students are referred through disciplinary action to Second Chance
- Staying abreast of national and local trends and communicating these issues to all stakeholders
- Working closely with the Arlington Community resources, including the Arlington County Police Department, to keep students safe.

Through early warning and mitigation support students are better able to return quickly to school and to better access their instructional program.

## DATA POINTS/ BRIGHT SPOTS



434 APS staff have been trained in Mental Health First Aid to learn about risk factors and warning signs for mental health and substance abuse concerns.

School Counselors delivered all K-8 students skill building social emotional learning and career lessons.



Provided all 6th through 12th grades lessons on career self-awareness and exploration.

Trained 100% of staff on updated protocols for conducting threat assessments.



In addition to providing supports through staffing, APS works to meet the needs of the Whole Child through policies and policy implementation procedures that align with this focus. In the summer of 2017, the APS Wellness Policy was created in collaboration with stakeholders for the implementation of a comprehensive school health model that promotes the healthy development of students. The Wellness Policy will enable schools to identify strengths and weaknesses of school policies and programs for promoting health and safety, and develop a customized action plan for improving health and safety.

## MOVING FORWARD

Coordinated prevention among all mental health staff required us to clarify for all stakeholders the specialized skills of each mental health discipline and to identify those roles and responsibilities that optimize and maximize the sustainability of student learning and support for academic, career and social/emotional stability and achievement. Providing this clarity supports budgetary decisions of the Superintendent and School Board.

National and local increases in suicide, stress, and mental health issues (particularly depression and anxiety) require us to prioritize prevention and early warning indicators at the elementary level. This is critical to the long-term reduction of risky youth behavior at the secondary level. Therefore, we are working to integrate further social/emotional elements into our classroom content across all grade levels. This includes building lessons into multiple content areas such as Health and PE as well as Social Studies and embedding them within our curriculum maps for seamless integration.

Finally, the Department of Teaching and Learning is working to communicate those strategies that our staff have put into place to address the needs of our students, particularly those around mental health and substance abuse, as well as to strengthen our current practices. Through our focus on the Whole Child, we will continue to integrate resources across offices and schools to ensure that every student is safe, healthy, engaged, supported, and academically challenged.