



Office of the School Board 2110 Washington Blvd. • Arlington, Virginia 22204

Tannia Talento
School Board Organizational Meeting – July 1, 2019

Good morning everyone. Buenos dias a todos. I want to once again welcome all of you to our organizational meeting. Bienvenidos de nuevo.

Thank you, Dr. Kanninen, for the kind remarks about my chairmanship and to Ms. Van Doren, Ms. O’Grady and Mr. Goldstein for the support and confidence for my ability to lead us this year. I also want to thank my family for being here to support me, as I enter my role as Chair of the School Board. Without their support and sacrifice, I would not be able to serve the community with the dedication, hard work, and passion that I bring to my public service as a School Board member and now as Chair. I also want to thank the many friends and supporters, as well as our County Board members for being here today as we change over leadership and prepare for the extraordinary and exciting school year that lies ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank our outgoing Chair, Reid Goldstein, for his hard work and leadership through the successful adoption of our FY2020 budget, boundary adjustments, growth initiatives and the gains and progress made for our students this past year. I appreciated the hard work we accomplished this year and the opportunity to serve as Vice Chair.

I am proud to be the second Latina to serve in the role of Chair of the School Board. I am specially honored to have Dr. Emma Violand-Sanchez here, who was the first Latina Chair, to support me, our Board, and our school system. She was a mentor to me and she is the reason that I sit before you today. Without her leadership and seeing her in this position I would not have thought that I was also capable of leading this amazing school system. Thank you, Dr. Emma Violand-Sanchez.

So again, I am proud to be the second Latina to serve in the role of Chair of the School Board and that alongside me will be serving Ms. O’Grady, the first elected African American woman to the School Board, as my Vice Chair. It is important that our students see diversity in their leadership. It is also important that our students see themselves in their leaders, and that is happening simultaneously today for our Latinx and African American students as our leadership changes over. I am proud to serve all the students and families in Arlington Public Schools. I am honored and grateful that we are taking on these leadership roles with the full support and confidence from our entire Board. Thank you. I don’t think that people understand the significance of what it is to have diversity in our leadership and to know that the system supports you in that role. That is historic; to not have to question that confidence and support. I am honored and grateful to be serving in Arlington Public Schools. This is

happening today, in a year of extraordinary change, in a year of wonderful opportunities for our school system. Truly thank you all.

This will be a pivotal year for APS as we move forward on the work of our strategic plan priorities and search for a new superintendent.

My top priority as School Board Chair will be to hire a new superintendent. I will be leading this effort, working in close collaboration with my School Board colleagues and APS leadership and staff.

As a Board, our goal is to find a highly qualified leader who will sustain our positive culture of learning and promote excellence and equity for all students. Finding the right leader and the best fit for our community will take some time. We are approaching this in phases to fulfill both immediate needs and long-term goals, and we also want to ensure the community has a voice in the process.

We plan to appoint an interim superintendent no later than September 3 to provide stability and leadership in the upcoming school year, while we initiate a full national search for a permanent superintendent. We will hire an executive search firm to aid us with the national search and we have directed APS staff to initiate an RFP. We hope to have a search firm hired by early fall.

Once the search firm is in place, we expect the process of hiring a new superintendent to take several months and we expect the process to also include input from staff, families and the community. We will share more details about our timeline, ways to engage and other updates on the Engage with APS web page as more information becomes available later this summer.

I want to take a moment now to say a few words of appreciation for the contributions Dr. Murphy has made in Arlington. Dr. Murphy is passionate about education and has worked tirelessly to promote the wellbeing of our students. During his tenure as superintendent over the past decade, he successfully led the school division through significant growth and change; championed several major initiatives designed to ensure rising achievement for all students; and provided vision and leadership that helped strengthen APS and position us well for future success.

We look forward to working with him through the summer as we prepare for this transition and the new school year. We wish you the best in your future pursuits.

Finally, while leading the superintendent search will be my priority as Chair, it is incumbent upon our Board to continue our focus on the instruction and well-being of our students. Therefore, I will continue my ardent support and advocacy for our work on mental health awareness and education; for our work on equity and the elimination of our opportunity gaps;

and for ensuring that our schools are a safe place for all our students, while maintaining our excellent instruction.

With the recent scares of immigration enforcement in the news, our students need to know that our public schools are a safe place and that they are supported, and provided the education we promise every one of our students as a public school system.

I cannot thank the County Board enough for the support and reassurance they provided to our community, at their June 18 County Board meeting. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey, Mr. de Ferranti, and your colleagues. At that meeting they stated that Arlington does not participate in federal immigration enforcement and that it will remain a welcoming and compassionate community that values each and every human being. This message is so important to our students and our school community to ensure they come to school every day ready to learn, that they feel safe and welcomed, and that they know that Arlington Public Schools welcomes all students. We have done a lot of work this year to ensure that welcome is open to everyone. This was an important message from our County Board and we appreciate your support for our students and our community.

In closing, there is one more group of people I want to thank, in addition to our School Board office staff. I want to thank our wonderful executive leadership team. I am grateful for all their hard work and dedication to our students. I am confident that our excellent leadership team, our teachers and staff will continue to move our most important work forward throughout this transition, keeping the focus on the high-quality instruction and student supports that Arlington is known for. Their dedication and passion for education and student achievement is what drives our success.

This year more than any other year, they will keep us focused on instruction and operations and moving our system forward, while the Board searches for and selects a new leader who will carry forth our mission and build on our strengths. We are so grateful to have you with us and for all the hard work you have and will provide. Thank you, truly thank you.

With every closing door a new one opens, and I am excited about the opportunity this transition will provide to our school system. Again, I am honored to be leading our Board through this year of change and the search for new leadership and vision. Thank you again for being here and I look forward to our great work ahead.
