

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Work Session on Services for Students with Special Needs
November 13, 2019

Item C-1-b

The Arlington School Board convened on Wednesday, November 13, 2019, at 6:34 PM at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.

Present were:

Tannia Talento, Chair
Monique O’Grady, Vice Chair
Reid Goldstein, Member
Barbara Kanninen, Member
Nancy Van Doren, Member
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

Also present were:

Cintia Johnson, Interim Superintendent
Raj Adusumilli, Assistant Superintendent, Information Services
Dr. Jeannette Allen, Acting Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services
John Chadwick, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Operation
Leslie Peterson, Assistant Superintendent, Finance
Dan Redding, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Lisa Stengle, Executive Director, Planning and Evaluation
Ty Byrd, Director, Secondary Education
Wendy Pilch, Director, Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Kelly Krug, Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) Supervisor
Heather Rothenbuescher, Supervisor of Special Education
Carlos Ramirez, Principal at Randolph
Leandro Ribeiro, Student Support Coordinator
Nadia Facey, Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC) Chair
Wendy Pizer, ASEAC Former Chair
Laura Newton, Director of Student Services
Wendy Pilch-Director of Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Michael Frickel, Assistant Director, Planning & Evaluation
Dr. Jennifer Meller, Associate Manager, Public Consulting Group
Anna d’Entremont, Senior Consultant, Public Consulting Group

Ms. Talento called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Ms. Johnson gave a brief introduction, highlighting areas of focus and plans going forward. Dr. Krug presented an overview of the agenda and goals for serving students with special needs.

Dr. Meller described the evaluation methodology and data collection methods, which included surveys, focus groups, document review, and student shadowing. She shared key takeaways related to implementation of practices, site-based management, parent engagement, the impact of enrollment growth, and professional learning. She also presented strengths and opportunities for improvement in the categories of ATSS, referral and eligibility, special education, Section 504, organization and operations, parent and family engagement, and student experience. Dr. Meller next summarized the evaluation recommendations, including setting a vision for providing high

quality services to students; creating a culture that promotes inclusion and integration of all students; enhancing parent and community engagement through welcoming environments and being flexible to accommodate needs; and strengthening links between school and home to help culturally and linguistically diverse parents access APS educational programs and services.

Dr. Krug described the role of the student support coordinators (SSCs) and outlined next steps to improve the district's organization and operations. Ms. Rothenbuescher explained how APS is working to ensure staffing is in place to provide needed services, and she highlighted how the schools and central office staff coordinate their work. Mr. Ribeiro and Mr. Rodriguez then described how the SSC model works at Randolph Elementary School to ensure that students, staff and families all work together to improve student learning and success.

Dr. Krug summarized next steps to be taken throughout APS, and Dr. Newton outlined key components for implementing the five-step strategy execution process recommended by PCG. Nadia Facey and Wendy Pizer, current and former ASEAC Chairs, described their participation in the evaluation process, and encouraged APS to implement the recommendations. Ms. Facey also shared concerns and suggestions on implementation of recommendations from the last evaluation.

Board members appreciated the presentation and discussed how the SSC model has evolved and is being implemented. Mr. Ramirez explained how success is measured for students with special needs. Also discussed was how the SSCs work with English learners (ELs), and collaboration between Special Education and the Office of English Learners. The group discussed how to strengthen accountability, and staff confirmed the SSC model provides a more structured process to ensure that services are delivered properly. Staff also described processes being put in place to coordinate and standardize practice in the schools.

Dr. Meller responded to questions on implementing inclusive practices and highlighted opportunities for improvement, stressing the need for training. She stated that inclusion, expectations, and accountability for principals are the key recommendations. The success of ATSS, the value of dedicated staff to implement recommendations, and providing professional training were also discussed. Additionally, the group considered inclusive environments and how they relate to equity, and whether a policy is needed to define practices and expectations. Staff confirmed they will develop a comprehensive plan to address the recommendations. The group also discussed 504s, developing goals for 90-day plans, school climate, and communicating with families of ELs. Finally, Ms. Facey encouraged courageous conversations with families about how best to provide services to students with special needs.

In closing, Board members appreciated the work of the consultants, staff and community members, and looked forward to the work to implement the recommendations. Ms. Johnson confirmed this work has already begun and summarized efforts in place for continuous improvement.

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Tannia Talento, Chair
Arlington School Board