

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Item D-1-c

Budget Work Session #3

March 17, 2020

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, at 6:32 PM at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.

Present were:

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

Bridget Loft, Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning (electronically)

Leslie Peterson, Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Management (electronically)

Dr. Kelly Krug, Interim Director, Elementary Special Education (electronically)

Heather Rothenbuescher, Interim Director, Secondary Special Education (electronically)

Sam Klein, Supervisor, Office of English Learners (electronically)

Ms. O'Grady called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM and welcomed all participants. She thanked the community for working together as APS is proactive facing the pandemic and announced that Ms. Talento was not present because she was sick.

Ms. Loft reviewed the agenda which was focused on the English Learners Program, the Office of Special Education, and the Department of Teaching and Learning (DTL). She then provided an overview of DTL organizational chart and the programs under Curriculum and Learning.

English Learners

After providing an overview of the English Learners (EL) Program, Mr. Klein summarized the four recommendations from the program evaluation report presented to the Board in the fall. He also reviewed mandates from the settlement agreement between APS and the US Department of Justice (DOJ) that was signed in June 2019. This Agreement will be in place for three years and includes seven specific areas of services to be provided to ELs. Staff developed an EL action plan that overlays the recommendations from the evaluation and the required work of the DOJ settlement agreement, and Mr. Klein outlined three actions that respond to recommendations and have a budget impact. These recommendations are in the areas of staffing and providing services, communications with parents, and training. The budget impacts of these actions result in baseline increases for translation of essential documents, new funding required for staffing to meet requirements, and efficiencies and reductions in managing staffing to reduce costs as much as possible.

Mr. Klein then responded to Board questions on how staffing and instruction is provided to ELs at the elementary and secondary levels. The group discussed whether the changes to the allocation of elementary staffing based on the Agreement would allow a reduction in current staffing, as well as challenges faced by EL teachers, especially at the secondary level. Mr. Klein described training

provided to EL teachers and the group discussed how to ensure staff is provided the support they need. Ms. Loft spoke to mentoring and resources available to the teachers, and support provided to administrators to evaluate instruction. The group further discussed budget and cost implications of recommendations, including how reassignment of current FLES teachers will help address staffing while minimizing costs. Mr. Klein also provided information on efforts to come in to compliance with the Agreement as soon as possible and Ms. Loft also spoke to the importance of EL training for staff.

Students with Special Needs

Ms. Rothenbuescher provided an overview of the Office of Special Education and reviewed the recommendations from the recent program evaluation, which fall into five categories: Arlington Tiered System of Support, referral and eligibility, special education, Section 504 and organization and operation. She then summarized the goals to be accomplished by implementing the recommendations and outlined the five-year Special Education Action Plan. She also reviewed factors considered in developing the budget recommendations and confirmed the biggest baseline increase was the addition of a Special Education Director. Dr. Krug then shared new funding requests for several staff positions that result from plans to restructure the Office of Special Education. These positions were presented in tiers, and Dr. Krug reviewed the rationale for the proposed positions which include assistive technology specialists, a compliance specialist, student support coordinators, speech therapists, ASL interpreters and a cued language transliterator. She also provided background information on how the need for assistants has increased over the past several years.

The group discussed IDEA funding and how it is used, and Ms. Rothenbuescher and Dr. Krug provided more information about the tier one staffing request, confirming that many of these staff are required additions due to IDEA requirements. Staff also described the responsibilities support provided by classroom assistants, how these positions have been funded in the past, and how they are trained. Staff also clarified the role of the proposed student support coordinators. Dr. Krug explained how the new positions were prioritized. The group discussed the challenge of a tight budget, and how to determine how to manage the anticipated deficit, especially in terms of not adding staff versus increasing class size.

Department of Teaching and Learning

Ms. Loft presented an overview of the services and support provided by DTL in curriculum and instruction as well as in providing student services. After reviewing the total DTL budget, she provided a financial summary and position summary for the department and information on both school-based and non-school based staffing. She then reviewed baseline increases, funding requested for textbooks, and tiered new funding requests included in the proposed budget. In closing, Ms. Loft then reviewed the potential efficiencies and reductions to consider.

Ms. Loft responded to Board questions related to the school-based and non-school-based staffing information that was provided. The group discussed proposed positions such as the STEM specialist, and how the needs for the positions were identified. Also discussed were the impact of not providing funding for new textbooks, and how the elimination of FLES might be balanced by the addition of flexible positions or additional planning time in the schools that have offered FLES. Staff agreed to bring back information about options to increase planning time within the current staffing level. Ms.

Loft and Ms. Peterson spoke to the effect of increasing class size on the instructional program. Additional topics of discussion included digital resources available and used throughout APS, and how the new staffing requests in the proposed budget were identified.

In closing, Ms. Johnson and Ms. O'Grady thanked all involved in the work session for their contributions, and appreciated the staff for their patience and support as the division faces the pandemic and how instruction has been altered by this new situation.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Monique O'Grady, Vice Chair
Arlington School Board