

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Work Session on the Student Code of Conduct
June 8, 2021

Item C-1-a

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 6:04 PM. The meeting was held by electronic communications due to the Covid-19 Pandemic emergency, using Microsoft Teams.

Present were:

Monique O’Grady, Chair
Barbara Kanninen, Vice Chair
Cristina Diaz-Torres, Member
Reid Goldstein, Member
David Priddy, Member
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

Also present were:

Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent
Dr. Jeannette Allen, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services
Marcus Gregory, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Operations
Bridget Loft, Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning
Arron Gregory, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer
Brian Stockton, Chief of Staff
Dr. Laura Newton, Director, Student Services
Kim Graves, Incoming Chief of Student Support
Kristin Devaney, Supervisor of Counseling Services
Meg Tuccillo, former Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services
Kimiko Lighty, Coordinator, Restorative Justice Project

Dr. Allen stated that the purpose of the work session was to provide background information, a summary of Administrative Services policies \ under review and the timeline for this work, and a review of the Student Code of Conduct.

Administrative Services Policies Under Review and Student Code of Conduct Policy

Dr. Allen shared that the following policies were in the community review phase and slated to be presented to the Board at the July 29 School Board meeting:

- J-5.4 Leaving School Grounds
- J-6.3.6 Prohibited Substance Abuse
- J-6.7 Search and Seizure
- J-7.3 No Tobacco and K-7.4 No Smoking
- J-7.4 Discipline
- M-1 Serious Incidents

She explained that School Board Policy J-7.4, formerly titled “Discipline,” was changed to “Student Code of Conduct.” The changes to Policy J-7.4 reflect a more pro-active approach to student conduct and focus on positive interventions, social-emotional learning, and restorative responses to student behaviors. She confirmed that the associated Policy Implementation Procedures (PIP) will describe levels of intervention, responses to behaviors, and behavior descriptions.

Dr. Allen reviewed the community and staff feedback received on Policy J-7.4. Furthermore, she explained the addition of two PIPs that include five levels/categories showing the range of responses permitted for specific behaviors. By implementing different levels, the focus on addressing student behaviors moves more clearly from negative consequences/suspensions to positive, pro-active steps and interventions. Dr. Allen spoke about the restorative justice approach and the restorative justice practices at APS that include professional development, resource mapping, and the new student behavior and school climate coordinator position. Dr. Allen also shared collaboration efforts with Arlington County on restorative justice.

Dr. Allen then reviewed the updates to the Virginia Code relating to student offenses. It is no longer required to report student violations involving alcohol, student use, possession of marijuana, Schedule I and II drugs and anabolic steroids, and student possession of a knife. However, she noted that although the school system does not have to notify law enforcement of these offenses, they are still subject to school sanctions or supports.

Student Code of Conduct Handbook: Roles & Responsibilities

Dr. Allen briefly shared the work that has taken place since January 2019 when the Board and staff initially met to discuss the student code of conduct handbook and spoke about the enhanced feedback process to solicit input from various stakeholder groups, including students. She then explained the importance of the Student Code of Conduct Handbook and reviewed the contents that included behavioral expectations, social-emotional learning framework, restorative justice practices, equitable practices, pro-active prevention and intervention approaches and resources for students and families, disciplinary actions, and reporting requirements to local and state authorities. The handbook also provides information on the rights and responsibilities of students, the roles and responsibilities of parents, staff, law enforcement, and the community, behavior descriptions and behaviors, identified supports, and the levels of interventions.

School Board Discussion

The Board appreciated the staff, community members, and students involved in the Student Code of Conduct Policy & Handbook work and recognized the major effort they represent. Ms. Diaz-Torres appreciated the affirmative shift to a restorative justice approach and the Board welcomed the focus on opportunities for student learning rather than punishment.

The Board discussed the interpretation of interventions, clarification of different offenses and behaviors, and the implementation of the Second Chance Program. They also discussed incorporating restorative justice across the school division as a student-centered approach and collaborating with different stakeholders. The Board noted the importance of professional

development to mitigate unconscious biases and ensuring appropriate responses in line with the equity framework.

In terms of collaboration with Arlington County, Ms. Lighty briefly spoke about the different partnerships engaged to strengthen implementing, training, and communicating the restorative justice approach in Arlington.

To close the work session, Dr. Allen recognized the work that has taken place over two years to create an improved Student Code of Conduct Policy and Handbook. She looked forward to receiving input and working together with the Board to finalize these important resources. Ms. Graves expressed her commitment to ensuring that APS continues to create environments where all students can prosper, learn, and meet their social-emotional needs. Dr. Durán affirmed the importance of the Student Code of Conduct and creating a blueprint to make certain students are focused on their educational success. He also expressed the importance of providing the appropriate tools for staff to engage in a culture shift mindset. Ms. O’Grady thanked the participants and looked forward to more work on equitable treatment across the school system for all students.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Monique O’Grady, Chair
Arlington School Board