

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Work Session on Gifted Services and Program of Studies Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2021

The Arlington School Board convened on Thursday, December 14, 2021, at 6:36 PM at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.¹

Present were:

Barbara Kanninen, Chair
Reid Goldstein, Vice Chair (Participated via Microsoft Teams)
Cristina Diaz-Torres, Member
Monique O'Grady, Member
David Priddy, Member
Carmen Mejia, Deputy Clerk

Also present were:

Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent
Bridget Loft, Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Jason Ottley, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer
Sarah Putnam, Director of Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Tyrone Byrd, Director of Secondary Education
Cheryl McCullough, Supervisor of Gifted Services
Kat Partington, Specialist of Gifted Services

Dr. Durán stated that the focus of the work session was to share the 2022-27 local plan development process for gifted services, a comprehensive overview of gifted services at APS, and the plans to improve the program to make it more diverse and inclusive to all students. He also shared that the recommendation for a new delivery model for English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science for middle school courses would be presented. In addition, he announced that staff would be presenting the proposed changes to the Programs of Studies.

Gifted Services

Ms. McCullough presented information on the development of the comprehensive Local Plan for the Gifted guided by the Virginia Department of Education to address the needs of diverse gifted learners. She spoke about the APS policies and policy implementation procedure that guide Gifted Services. Ms. McCullough explained about the work that takes place to design instruction and programs unique to gifted students and the development of a comprehensive plan to address the needs of diverse gifted learners. Ms. Partington provided information on the cluster models for each level highlighting that the model for Gifted Services must be continually evaluated to strengthen services. She also provided information on professional learning opportunities and resources available to teachers in APS to develop a curriculum for advanced learners. Furthermore, Ms. McCullough presented the Superintendent's recommendations to strengthen the Gifted Services program stemming from the 2020-21 Cluster Study, 2017 Gifted Services Program Evaluation, and the Gifted Services Advisory Committee. She also shared the proposed implementation timeline. Lastly, Dr. Durán shared that his recommendations seek to open advanced course opportunities to all students and create an equitable infrastructure model with a focus on diversity and equity.

The Board discussed the open enrollment concept, the need to be judicious in explaining the new process to families, providing learning opportunities for staff, and being mindful about the added responsibilities for teachers. The Board also conversed about the need to design an equitable infrastructure model and identify key challenges. Ms. O'Grady expressed her concerns regarding the disproportionality of success of the proposed model and the need to ensure that students of color have access to the program. Dr. Kanninen noted that the proposed changes to the Gifted Services model would take effect in the 2023-24 school year.

Programs of Studies (POS)

¹The recording of School Board meetings is posted on the APS Web site following the meetings.

Mr. Byrd shared the process and the collective effort to assemble the POS, a document that informs students, families, and post-secondary institutions of the course offerings at APS that support the Strategic Plan and aligns with the Virginia Department of Education Standards of Learning and graduation requirements. Ms. Putnam presented the changes to the POS since last approved by the Board in 2021-22 which included the study of the efficacy of the middle school cluster model and the pilot course approval process.

The Board discussed the pilot course approval process and the value of having a uniform system to propose new courses and concerns related to budget and staffing constraints. The Board commended the addition of diverse courses that teach students about history and different cultures.

To conclude, Dr. Durán thanked staff for their work and looked forward to reaching the goal of equity for the students.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM.

ATTEST:

Carmen Mejia, Deputy Clerk
Arlington School Board

Barbara Kanninen, Chair
Arlington School Board

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