

**Arlington Public Schools
Advisory Council on Instruction
Evelyn Syphax Academic Center (Education Center Annex)
Wednesday, December 8, 2010**

Present were:

ACI Leadership: Donna Felipe and Tecla Murphy, ACI co-chairs; Judy Hadden, Yvonne McIntire, Betsy Morse and Theresa Schweser, ACI Vice Chairs; Mark Johnston, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction, Executive Secretary to ACI.

ACI Membership (returning, new, and prospective members): Barbara Olivere (AAUW); Wanda Perkins (AEA); Natalie Goldring (LWV); Dana Andy (Abingdon); Janice Bitetti (Arlington Science Focus); Kathy Rehill (ATS, alternate); Matt Karush (Ashlawn); Ted Black (Barcroft); Barret Hildebrand (Barrett); Tracey Kretzer (Campbell); Blaise Scinto (Drew); Hans Bauman (Glebe); Sara Wilson (Henry); Beth Dowd (Long Branch); Maureen LaPiana (McKinley); Deborah Morone (Nottingham); Paula Kelso (Nottingham, alternate); Tracy Malone (Oakridge); Penelope Bender (Taylor); Michael Novak (Gunston); Joanna Hemmat (Kenmore); Pam Silberstein (Swanson); Edwin Yong (Williamsburg); Karolina Walkin (H-B Woodlawn, MS); Bob Trudel (Wakefield); Luann Moy (W-L); Martha Hermann (Yorktown); Karen Hunt (Yorktown).

Advisory Committee Chairs/Staff Liaisons: n/a

Guests:

Amy Graham, Data Coordinator, Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families.

Donna Felipe called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

She introduced herself, Tecla Murphy, Mark Johnston, and Amy Graham; then passed around the e-mail list of ACI members for them to review and correct any errors, explaining that hard copies of the list will be distributed at the January meeting.

Mark Johnston then introduced Amy Graham, data coordinator for Arlington's Partnership on Children, Youth, and Families, explaining that Amy would be sharing the most recent data on risky behaviors of Arlington students as revealed in the Partnership's annual survey. Mark encouraged the group to look at the APS Strategic Plan to see some of the datasets therein as well, stating that he was "so glad Amy could be with us" to share these data.

Report from the Partnership on Children, Youth, and Families

Amy Graham: (Referring to the Smart Board where her PowerPoint presentation was loaded): When we say that these data are significant, by that we mean “statistically significant.” We do two surveys each year; this one [about youth risk behaviors] and another, our developmental asset survey. Overall, we are looking at relationships between adults and students. We also try to stay current by adding new questions.

Mark Johnston: This information is significant because many committees will likely focus on some of the items Amy will be sharing this evening, for example, bullying.

Amy Graham: We sample between 2500-3000 students every year. We received about an 80 % response rate. We keep learning; we remove questions that are inconsistent with one another. For example, if a student answers a question stating that he/she has never had alcohol, but answers in a subsequent question that he/she had alcohol within the last month, we discount both responses.

Some questions are very sensitive. (Shows slide #4 on behaviors that have improved (“that means we are seeing less of them”).

Then on to slide 5, showing that in 2010, fewer than half of high school seniors reported alcohol use in the past month. As you can see, this is a significant improvement over previous years.

Michael Novak: During what month was that question asked?

Amy Graham: The first time we asked it was in June of 2001; the activity reported took place during most of May, and some of June); since then we ask those questions during the month of March.

Hans Bauman: Is there a goal for how much exercise is optimum? Or for carrying a weapon? (Laughter.)

Amy Graham: The partnership is going back to its practice of convening groups of community members to determine what is acceptable to us. For example, ideally there would be no binge drinking; yet we believe that a 5% goal is optimum in the real world. As you see, we are not there yet.

Bob Trudel: I think that the binge drinking data are interesting, given that there is an increase of it on college campuses, especially with incoming freshmen. So

what's happening? Where my son goes to school they brought six students into the local hospital with alcohol poisoning.

Amy Graham: Individuals' drinking habits are established by time they go away to school [college].

Edwin Yong: What does "too much TV" mean? Does that designation include anything on a screen?

Amy Graham: This does not include screen time such as using a computer to do homework.

Deborah Morone: Are there a few questions [on the survey] about binge drinking? Is it asked in just one way?

Amy Graham: The question asks about binge drinking in the past 30 days, and about the number of days on which the student has taken alcohol ... that is, more than five drinks in a few hours.

Michael Novak: Were the answers broken down by sex?

Amy Graham: We can get that information; the bottom line is that there is no difference. Girls drink as much alcohol, but do not engage in as much binge drinking as boys do.

Hans Bauman: What constitutes a risk behavior involving screen time?

Amy Graham: Two hours or more of combined screen time [TV; video games], not including computer time for homework.

On to slide 6. As you can see, the alcohol numbers are coming down, while those for marijuana have not budged. We have not as a community targeted marijuana use as urgently as we have for alcohol. In our community, when we take on a specific issue, these numbers move. The students listen to what adults are saying; our efforts do make a difference.

Slide 7 shows declining gang membership; we are heartened by this. We know that fighting and weapons use are related to gang memberships, so it's not surprising that they are declining together.

Ted Black: Are the responders self-defining question?

Beth Dowd: How do you get the "fighting" answers?

Amy Graham: We ask them “have you been in a fight in the last year?” We leave it to the kids to determine what it means to be in a fight. I do think that these numbers go down when we teach them better ways to handle things.

Yvonne McIntire: Are these broken down by ethnic group as well as gender?

Amy Graham: Not yet, but we can do that.

On slide 8, these related changes are not surprising. We ask them their height and weight and figure their BMI [Body/Mass Index]; we do not ask “are you obese?” We find that people tend to overestimate their height and underestimate their weight (laughter) ... I guess that adults do that as well.

As for slide 9, the worsening behaviors .. it’s important to remember the definition of “consistent and disruptive ...” Slide 10 shows items where we are still better off than in 2004, though they have dipped in 2007. Further, we note that depressive symptoms in grades 6 and 10 symptoms got worse; and that certainly bullying can trigger depressive symptoms.

Pam Silberstein: The question is “have you been a victim?” A kid in grade 6 might not have known that, oh yea, what is happening is that I am a victim of bullying. Teaching him/her the vocabulary is important.

Amy Graham: Bullying seems to be part of a bigger problem in grade 6; slides 13 and 14 indicate other changes in grade 10 where we need to target our efforts.

Yvonne McIntire: I am wondering what definition is given to the kids about bullying.

Amy Graham: We do attempt to provide a definition in the instructions. We give examples and include the fact that the behavior has to be persistent (not someone calling you a name one time).

Karolina Walkin: stats in elementary schools? The number seems to be becoming more prevalent in elementary.

Bob Trudel: Have you looked at how bullying has changed based on demographics or gender? I wonder if there are any cultural differences that might be in play.

Hans Bauman: Are those participants [who took the survey] identified by school? Are some schools known for having more problems than others?

Amy Graham: We survey all schools, but the results are not broken down by school. When we do the asset survey, the results can be identified by school

Will Adults help with bullying? (Slide 15). Maybe students are more willing to bring it up, now that we have demonstrated that we adults do care. There really is a sophomore slump.

And, as slides 16-18 show, Arlington is a strong community as far as our young people perceive adults as valuing them; all of this contributes to the prevention of all risk behaviors. We are inching closer and closer to having 2/3 of the responses being positive ones. Young people feel that there are high expectations for them, that they can contribute; that adults care about what they do and set boundaries. The partnership has put a lot of effort into this.

Bob Trudel: With regard to first two questions, do we have state or national norms against which these are rated?

Amy Graham: Not formally; some in Alexandria. Slide 19 shows some of the new questions we have added to our survey.

Barbara Oliver: There are no questions about sexual behaviors?

Amy Graham: Yes, we did

Barbara Oliver: What did it show?

Amy Graham: That young people in Arlington are less likely to engage in risky behavior.

Mark Johnston: The survey is on the partnership website.

[Note to the minutes: Dr. Graham reported that the link to the Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families is being worked on and will likely be available early in 2011.]

Joanna Hemmat: Can we ask ... did you request any information about substance abuse in elementary school?

Amy Graham: No; we asked about this in grade 6 so we would have a base line.

Pam Silberstein: When you ask about substance abuse, are you including OTC [over the counter] drugs? Does this refer to such items found in the home?

Amy Graham: No.... Back to slide #20, about the need for sleep; studies show that teens need nine hours of sleep per night. According to a June 2010 article in USA Today, dozens of studies were presented at the most recent meeting of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine indicating school performance is dropping because of student sleepiness.

[Note for the minutes: the following was provided by Dr. Graham: The USA Today article may be found at this link:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-08-12-kidsleep12_ST_N.htm

In addition, The National Sleep Foundation says that the vast majority of teens need at least 9 hours of sleep per night. That comes out of this report on its Website.

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/sleep_and_teens_report_1.pdf>]

Natalie Goldring: But the average would be closer to 50 percent than to 33 percent, as shown [erroneously] on the slide...

Amy Graham: Hmmm... you are right; I'll check on that.

[Note to the minutes: the data were correct; however the average was not calculated correctly. Dr. Graham sent a revised slide the following day; the correct version was immediately posted on the ACI website.]

I am sure that most of our young people are not getting enough sleep at night; sufficient sleep is essential to the process of transferring newly-learned information into long-term memory.

Betsy Morse: Weren't these data collected after the school day was changed? Holy cow! If students still do not get enough sleep, this sounds like a parental operator error.

Amy Graham: How important this is, and what can be done about it, I leave to you. I tell my children that their choices have to be part of a healthy life style.

Betsy Morse: That [the "33%" bar on the Slide 20 graph] averages to 56%, by the way.

Barbara Olivere: How much of this after school activity, which is so necessary for a successful college application, might be contributing to a student's lack of sleep? Is this again putting too much pressure?

Bob Trudel: My son is taking several high level courses; believe me, there is lots of pressure....

Janice Bitetti: Lots of these problems start much earlier. This should be studied. It would be very interesting to study a younger group.

(Unidentified): But can you trust the self-reporting of a third grader?

Barbara Olivere: There is a big difference between having one teacher (grade 5) and several (grade 6); a middle school student can end up having three or four big projects due....

Amy Graham: As you see in slides 21-24, we are seeing a drop-off in disapproval of use of some substances.

Beth Dowd: Do we have national standards for drug abuse?

Amy Graham: I'll be happy to check and let you know.

[Note to the minutes: Dr. Graham subsequently provided the following: There are a number of national objectives for adolescent health (listed here): <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/pdfs/AdolescentHealth.pdf> but nothing specific on drug use or abuse, except one related to being offered or sold drugs at school.]

As you can see on slide 23, there are lower perceptions of harm, particularly regarding the use of marijuana ... we attribute this to perceptions about the medical use of marijuana which are more prevalent by grade 12. There is also the biggest difference in parental disapproval of the use of marijuana.

Young people who experience both forms of verbal abuse [bullying and a partner who needs to know where you are at all times] are much more likely to experience violence later in those relationships.

Betsy Morse: Was there any follow up on this? As a result of understanding this, did the unhealthy relationship end?

Amy Graham: Unfortunately, there was not enough time to do this follow-up.

Betsy Morse: [If you did, such follow-up] might be an indicator of knowing how to get out of risky behavior.

Tracey Kretzer: Is there any way to follow up with these questions with younger children?

Amy Graham: That 's a good idea; I'll need to think more about that. It's a great idea.

Joanna Hemmat: Was this survey done on line?

Amy Graham: No; a letter goes home to parents before the survey is given; they can opt out; the students take it in class.

Joanna Hemmat: Was there any question about being the victim of abuse by a family member, a neighbor, etc?

Amy Graham: We don't do it in this context; but it's covered in the asset survey. Our conclusions: We think young people are largely better off now than they were three or six years ago. Further improvements need new approaches and we are working on that.

Tracey Kretzer: Is there a question about teachers bullying?

Amy Graham: No.

Tracey Kretzer: There is a fine line between having a teacher who says "do this or there will be a consequence" and bullying.

Bob Trudel: To what extent is the bullying definition possibly driving these numbers ... ??

Amy Graham: Everything I read about bullying indicates that it is under- rather than over-reported. What the experts agree on is not what it is, but on the fact of its persistence and the fact that the person doing the bullying has power over the person who is being bullied. We are looking at trends, so it's important to keep the definition the same.

Martha Hermann: Are there specific questions about drinking and driving and/or riding as a passenger with someone who has been drinking?

Amy Graham: That occurrence is shockingly high. Some think that we have solved this, but we are long way from that.

Hans Bauman: When will these data be available online?

Mark Johnston: Amy will be presenting this to the School Board on January 6.

Amy Graham: And I'll check my sleep data [before then]. On the other hand, maybe I'll just leave it in to see if they catch it. (Laughter).

Mark Johnston: Thank you for coming, Amy; your presentation was most interesting and helpful.

Protocols for Upcoming Reports

Donna Felipe: Tecla, Mark, and I -- and David [Hunn] last year, have been working on ways to make these meetings [when advisory committee reports are heard] as productive as possible, and have created this PowerPoint to help with that information, and to establish expectations and how to meet them.

[Ms. Felipe reviewed the PowerPoint presentation while speaking to the group.]

We need to keep in mind that we are all parents and/or citizens, and that you are representing your organization, not yourself.

Hans Bauman: Is there a protocol for submitting questions in advance?

Donna Felipe: No. We have tossed this idea about, but over some time, have concluded that it does not work. You can e-mail questions ahead of time, but we can't guarantee that committee chair will have a chance to reply in a timely manner. We all have lives outside of ACI! (Laughter.)

Hans Bauman: It is best to just make and leave our comments in the room; simpler.

Bob Trudel: If we don't have the reports a week in advance, there's not a chance to review and get feedback. I'm pleading with you to get them to us as early as possible.

Mark Johnston: We can get that information to you the Friday before [the meeting when it is to be reviewed]; it is hard to get it out earlier, because sometimes we just get it ourselves that afternoon.

Natalie Goldring: If we have 30 people in the room and 45 minutes for each report, we don't have enough time for each person to use two minutes. In addition, it's important

for people to be able to offer comments, rather than just asking questions. As a former committee chair, I noticed that some of the most interesting ideas from ACI reps came up during the discussion.

Donna Felipe: We are trying to limit this to questions, not stories.

Mark Johnston: There is a section upcoming [in the PowerPoint slides]; one of the feedback items we've gotten over time is that sometimes the comments made by ACI members are perceived by the committees as overly negative or attacking. Do keep in mind that these committees have presented their work; it may not be what you wanted them to produce, but it is their work; therefore, it is very important to treat them with respect.

Tracey Kretzer: Could we do our stories informally, like in the parking lot [afterwards]?

Donna Felipe: Sure. [Continues with slides.] The committees do like input and suggestions, but not criticism (laughter); we have had to do damage control after ACI meetings in the past; we want to avoid this.

Bob Trudel: Are this year's recommendations focused on any special group?... for example, middle school?

Mark Johnston: We don't have them yet. (laughter)

Bob Trudel: I mean, are there any specific guidelines [for committees' focus]?

Mark Johnston: No.

Hans Bauman: So it's the committees with recommendations which we'll be voting on?

Mark Johnston: Yes.

(Unidentified): Do we know what happens with these recommendations once they go to the Board?

Mark Johnston: Every year in January, I send a report to the Board on the status of the recommendations from the previous year.

Natalie Goldring: Is the report on the recommendations cumulative, or does it only deal with the previous year's recommendations?

Mark Johnston: To prepare a cumulative report would be really challenging, given the differing timelines for consideration and possible implementation [of the recommendations]; some happen quickly while some take years. The report to which I was referring is of the previous year's recommendations only.

Natalie Goldring: I recall that the Special Education Advisory Committee did a cumulative spreadsheet last year; it was very impressive.

Karen Hunt: It might help if the committees could include a history [of their recommendations and what happened to them].

Mark Johnston: We might want to be cautious with that, because the rankings might change over time.

Using the Smart Board, Mark Johnston showed the group how to find committee reports from previous years for those interested in tracking the history, and where to find the ACI chairs' annual report to the Board and the Council's Annual Priority Ranking of Recommendations. [*Note to minutes: on the ACI website, under "Committee Reports."*]

Hans Bauman: On the ranking, some have 0 cost; are we ranking them regardless of cost?

Donna Felipe: It's an individual decision.

Matt Karush: Last year we were charged to keep the budget in mind [when voting and ranking].

Natalie Goldring: [Noting the time; 9:10 p.m.] Shouldn't we segue to the third part of the meeting? (Laughter.)

Several in the room: Good idea!

FY 2011 School Year Budget Review

Tecla Murphy: The list [on the Smart Board / also on ACI website] shows what people wanted in the past, and what had happened previously in the budget.

Because we are short on time, we'll stop here.

Betsy Morse: What is FTE?

Tecla Murphy: It means "full time equivalent," that is, "warm bodies." (Laughter.)

Hans Bauman: Are those real figures or theoretical figures?

Mark Johnston: The savings represent an entry level position at that grade and level, so for example, if we eliminated a clerical position, the salary shown for the reduction is not the incumbent's actual salary, but rather the salary of a first-year clerical position at that grade. This is because employees with more seniority were absorbed into other positions; therefore, we did not save those actual salaries but rather saved the salary of a hypothetical entry-level employee for the position that was eliminated.

Natalie Goldring: What happens, because of the increase in student population, is that many of these positions ended up being retained. So the table is right; we made cuts by not increasing salaries (step increases).

Mark Johnston: I believe there was at least one RIF [reduction in force] because the teacher who was let go did not have certification in the area where a teacher was needed. About six years ago when we were growing, there were RIFs; sometimes the person ruffed can move to a non-teaching position.

Hans Bauman: My concern is, systemwide, how is this measured? What has really happened?

Mark Johnston: You might want to take a look at the WABE [Washington Area Boards of Education] budget survey; it is available on the APS website under Finance and Management Services. I think it will show you what you want to know.

*[Note to the minutes: the link to the WABE Guide is
<http://www.apsva.us/15401081151845893/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=54313&15401081151845893Nav=|&NodeID=1785>]*

Tracey Kretzer: What about class size?

Tecla Murphy: It held firm in grades 4 and 5.

Mark Johnston: Also, the planning factors are available on the APS website under Finance and Management Services. The effect of elementary staffing is determined by the "maximum" set in the elementary staffing planning factors.

Tecla Murphy: On another topic, if anyone would like to be part of a sub-group to increase ACI membership, please let me know.

The formal meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

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The formal meeting was then followed by a meeting of ACI Chairs and Vice Chairs [Donna Felipe, Tecla Murphy, Mark Johnston, Judy Hadden, Yvonne McIntire, Betsy Morse, and Theresa Schweser] to discuss the role of Vice-Chairs regarding their role in assisting and working with advisory committees.

Participants discussed the role of ACI Vice-Chairs as being available to help the committees prepare their reports and presentation to ACI as a whole, keeping in mind that the reports and views presented therein belong to the committees. Vice-Chairs are not able to vote on recommendations during advisory committee meetings, but they are able to vote at an ACI meeting. There was also discussion regarding ways to improve recruitment efforts for ACI and the advisory committees and to help the committees work together.

Minutes were not taken for this meeting.

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Next Meeting: January 12, 2011

Syphax Academic Center / Large Conference Room

1439 North Quincy Street

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