

Date: December 9, 2021

Time: 6:45 – 9:00pm

Location: Remote Participation, via Zoom

Agenda

- 1. Zoom Protocols, Review of Mission Statement and Group Meeting Protocols (5 mins)**
- 2. Presentation and Discussion with APS Supt. Liz Homan and APS DEI Director Margaret Thomas (60 mins)**
- 3. Brief follow-up re: November check-in question -- "What would you like to see change in Arlington?" (15 mins)**
- 4. Review of November Minutes (5 mins)**
- 5. Presentation and Discussion with Scott Lever, Envision Arlington Steering Committee Co-Chair, regarding the 2022 Envision Arlington survey (30 mins)**

Minutes: Taken by Elizabeth Dray

In attendance: Rebecca Gruber, Elizabeth Dray, Katell Guellec, Lisa Treadwell, Kelda Fontenot, Kellye Eversole, APS DEI Director Margaret Thomas, Mona Mandal, Ramona Granucci, APS Superintendent Liz Homan, Mary, Robin Gottlieb, D'Ondria Maxwell, Elizabeth Rollins, Louise Popkin, Anne Cheung, Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Michiko Kurata, Sarah Forster, Sarah McKinnon, Scott Lever, Jagat Adiya, Nandana Mewada, Rajeev Soneja

- A. Zoom Protocols were read, Land Acknowledgment was read, Review of Mission Statement and Group Meeting Protocols were reviewed.
- B. Presentation and Discussion with APS Supt. Liz Homan and APS DEI Director Margaret Thomas ehoman@arlington.k12.ma.us, mthomas@arlington.k12.ma.us**
 - a. Equity initiatives "Equity is all of the work that I do as a leader, " can't parse it out from other work. Must be about every decision and interaction throughout the day.
 - b. Data Share: Equity in APS
 - i. Shared quotes from listening sessions.
 - ii. Data
 1. Data runs risk of reinforcing thinking and narratives of people that are problematic because they are actually the outcome of a system meant to benefit some and not all
 2. Panorama survey - Noted significant gap in responses about

their school experience by race. Black White, Black less favorable. Also noted was Asian White as being less favorable.

3. Early Warning Indicators by Race 2021-22 tells in aggregate by race. Low, Moderate and High Risk. Shows more Black and Hispanic students in Moderate and High risk.
 4. Academic Outcomes. K-8 trend over time.
 - a. Widening achievement gap for Black students, ...
 - b. More IEP students ages 6-21 are in separate settings if African American / Black. Cited by State. Need to reduce exclusionary settings for these students.
 - c. ELA also shows a persistent gap.
 5. Reframe: from achievement to opportunity gaps
 - a. The DEI office will start to layer this work.
 - b. Instead of an achievement gap, focus on Opportunity Gaps. The barriers to the opportunities of success and what resources can we offer to decrease/eliminate barriers
 - c. High risk testing focus switch to opposite by looking at whole child - different learning styles so all students can access curriculum
 - d. Punishment focus switching to restorative justice, logical solutions. Looking at how we are ranking classes
- c. This Years' Actions and Future Actions
- i. This Year's Actions
 1. Comprehensive Equity Audit and Strategy development
 2. Expanding Teacher Leadership capacity system-wide
 3. Resources to support mental health and school culture
 4. Acceleration and improvement of APS coaching models in literacy and math
 - ii. Equity Audit
 1. Goal is for it to look through practices and programs so we can design strategic plan from findings and recommendations
- d. Questions
- i. Can you briefly explain Chapter 222, more specifically how the requirement to consider alternatives to exclusionary punishment is done in real time? Is it discussed openly at hearings with parents and students or in private without parental involvement or informing parents and students involved? Also where can we find statistics for how Chapter 222 changed (or didn't change) disparities in student exclusionary discipline including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion?
 1. Answer - best practice is to engage students with counselors, always an attempt to partner with parents that should happen before exclusionary action takes place, mediation of conflict between two students with the goal of avoiding long-term or cumulative suspension (10 days or more of suspension) Use

these techniques to avoid long-term suspension. Audited and monitored by discipline data on DESE profile (Google APS) to see for each school. Reported to the School committee annually. APS has had disproportionality for POC and Spec Ed. especially at OMS.

2. Q follow up - Chapter 222 is NOT just for long-term suspension. So why are you only discussing eliminating long-term suspensions. Why not catch it earlier, focus on where it starts

3. Answer - we want to be very focused on where it starts. You're right, it talks about short term suspension and is designed to reduce exclusionary practice, including any short-term or in-school suspension

ii. Q: Teacher education sounded optional, opt in. What about the others?

1. A: Looking at how to make it required. Currently not required. Needs to be bargained and we intend to do that. Bargained and budgeted into a contract for new hires. Some type of Racial Identity coursework at masters level. Still need to determine how to embed it into professional development for veteran teachers. Need to also offer something beyond the first course so it is continued learning. Coaching and reimagining professional development are some short term ways.

iii. Q: What are the kinds of questions you will explore in the equity audit?

1. Focus groups with families, teachers, staff, community partners
2. Review targeted intervention support
3. Identify strengths and challenges
4. Review policies and practices
5. Make recommendations
6. Assess leadership team's readiness to address racial issues
7. Detailed analysis of data from panorama and MCAS scores
8. Special Ed and ELL
9. Hiring and retention
10. Review family and community engagement strategies to be safe and welcoming for families of color and non-English speakers

iv. Q: What is the timeline for gathering, analyzing and how do you foresee implementation of any recommendations

1. Currently talking to vendors, can take 6-12 months depending on the vendor.
2. They will also give strategic plan suggestions.
3. Will use that info to help create a strategic plan of one to five years of implementation.

v. Q: Will there be an opportunity to see findings in summer of 2022 and understand key issues.

1. Yes, the plan will begin with stakeholders in spring, then will get equity audit results over the summer then fall work to set goals with implementation in January.
- vi. Q: A police reform bill passed by the Massachusetts Senate this week would allow schools the option of removing resource officers (SROs) in districts across the state.
1. A: In the process of accessing how SRO is used, what students' feelings are about it, how the role partners with the schools. Important to understand that each program is different. Understand that there are a lot of feelings. Want to have the community weigh in. Currently sees SRO who works positively with schools, no uniform, engages with students.
 2. Q - Will you reach out to families who left the APS
 3. A- Happy to try but don't have info to connect. No, we haven't done any outreach currently with these families.
- vii. Q: Will there be any reach out to Arlington families of color who have left the district (for private school but are still residents of Arlington) due to concerns with the gap to ensure that they are getting a well-rounded picture of issues of equity in APS?
1. A: I have heard that some families have left but don't know who they are or how to reach them. Asking for help reaching out to families. Will connect off-line.
 2. Chat: The gap I'm referring to is gaps/equity related to race. Chat: I would second what Ramona has said - as the parent of an African American boy who left the district. I would love to talk with someone!!
- viii. Q: Will there be work on discipline options at elementary level?
1. A: Yes, we will look at alternative discipline and structure of the school day to build counseling, so that interventionists are accessible during the day. Mindset shift required. "We need to all own all the kids" - avoid the inclination that a child needs to be excluded, sent out of the class for the situation to be "fixed" and then returned. Beginning of a negative track/cycle for students. Need to disrupt the cycle by changing the way we structure the day.
- ix. Q: Doing a lot with data audit and listening sessions, would be great to have a website section that focuses on sharing this information with the community. Previous administration was opaque. Would be good to have results in a location where everyone can look at them. Not have to need to "know" someone to get the info Q: How are you getting the buy-in with principals for DEI and how to keep them accountable in their professional goals.
1. School improvement plans are presented at School Committee meetings. Grounded in data and disaggregated, layered data so principals can look at the data. Principals are expected to

build their initiatives based on the information and be evaluated by me.

2. Information informs budgets - what do I need to do.
 3. Has conversations often with principals, school walkthroughs, discuss what seen in lengthy sit-downs
 4. All leaders are doing instructional walkthroughs of the school as a full admin team in groups of four to five like doctors do medical rounds. Get into four to five classes, provide feedback to principals.
 5. Did disciplinary procedures trainings and Title 9 investigation trainings next month.
 6. Chat: Yes - we need more transparency and access to information.
 7. Chat: I also wonder how transparency and access can be communicated in various ways. Some people are able to lean into their professional training and education in other fields to understand language, charts and graphs, education acronyms, etc. This might seem like transparency, but is it understandable and broadly accessible and meaningful to all caregivers and Arlington community members?
- x. Q: How do you plan to increase faculty diversity
1. A - strategies using
 - a. grant writing
 - b. Found have diverse paraprofessionals - support them for their further education, certification, applications, etc to build the pipeline of more BIPOC teachers and educators
 - c. Retention strategies - meets with and supports BIPOC teachers
 - d. Looking at how we are doing outreach for job openings
 - e. Diverse coffee, ask teachers to refer people, Coffees have been fruitful.
- xi. Q: Comment about it is great that there is a plan for teacher training around DEI. I understand the capacity problems; I encourage you to extend that to non-teaching staff (especially at elementary and middle school), leadership. My question relates to what are the three to four big takeaways from your listening sessions
1. Belonging. Belonging in the district and in the community is a theme I have heard. We need to do a better job. If one doesn't feel that their voice matters then they will be silent - systematically silenced.
 2. Un-understood privilege plays a major role in the design of instruction, policies and procedures. One's privilege should not get in the way of their ability to teach. A lot of education is required for teachers, leaders and families for us to do best by our kids

3. Communication 1:1, small stuff, how my concern is validated, how I feel heard, how I am brought in as a partner in my child's experience. Need to be willing to have the longer conversation to bring family in as a true partner.
 4. Chat: As a parent of kids of color as well as a Teaching Assistant in the district at the elementary level, providing training for other staff, not just teachers is essential.
 5. Chat: Absolutely agree - including cafeteria staff. We had a lot of trouble there.
- e. Open invitation to join Margaret Thomas for a conversation on video. Open to anyone. The YouTube channel, "DEI Matters with Margaret Credle Thomas." Here is the link to the first episode in which she speaks to Jillian Harvey, Town of Arlington DEI Director: https://youtu.be/AKncoxW_JfA
 - f. Final comments - we take this very seriously, we are committed. I am supported by the superintendent.
- C. **Brief follow-up re: November check-in question -- "What would you like to see change in Arlington?"**
- a. Reviewed letter to Select Board asking them to revisit the BLM banner
 - b. Voted 4 abstentions, 8 yeses to DTG signing
- D. **November Minutes approved** 5 yeses, 5 abstentions (were not present at the meeting)
- E. **Presentation and Discussion with Scott Lever, Envision Arlington Steering Committee interim Co-Chair, regarding the 2022 Envision Arlington survey**
- a. Envision Arlington is umbrella organization for DTG and puts out the Town survey in partnership with the Town's planning department
 - i. Usually 3,000-4,000 responses
 - ii. Survey shared out through
 1. census data to every household
 2. Shared on websites/facebook sites/newsletters, etc
 - iii. Information is "used to inform town decisions and town policy"
 - iv. Wants to share some of the early findings related to DEI questions and get input for questions for next year's survey.
 - v. This year's survey had wellness, education, seniors and DEI questions, approx 3300 responses.
 1. Response rate not possible to know.
 2. 90% white, 10% other races and ethnicities
 - a. Fair amount of over and under representation in comparison to census data. Our data skews older, more female, white than census data.
 - b. Gaps around Hispanic and Asian population representation
 - c. Number of responses from Black respondents was close to Town percentage of population
 - d. The sample is so large it gives a good representation of Arlington as a whole....but not slices of Arlington.
 - e. Only offered in English. Budget. Asked the Planning

Department about translating and was told no. Comment made that by not including then you are excluding, intentionally. Discussion about asking volunteers to translate and that it needs to be done professionally. Discussion to work on warrant articles regarding translations. People interested are Scott, Elizabeth, Stephanie and Louise. Consider working with AHRC as they have similar challenges.

- f. Did not capture diverse races/ethnicities within a household.

b. DEI questions

- i. Designed with help of AHRC, first time questions so no year-over-year data. Intend to ask some of the questions again next year to get longitudinal info.
- ii. Caveat about presentation slides - this is a draft
- iii. How welcoming do you perceive Arlington
 - 1. Race/Ethnicity
 - 2. Religious views
 - 3. National origin
 - 4. Sexual orientation
 - a. 73% sometimes/always welcoming
 - 5. Gender identity or Expressions
 - 6. Physical/Mental Disability
 - a. 22% sometimes/not welcoming
 - b. 22% unsure
 - c. 58 usually or always welcoming
- iv. Demographic - self ID of race/ethnicity
 - 1. White and non-white did not differ on views of how welcoming Arlington is
 - 2. Gender ID -
 - a. Women consistently rated Arlington as less welcoming across all categories.
 - b. Non-gender binary/agender - lowest rating of welcoming of any gender groups.
 - 3. Higher income residents found Arlington to be more welcoming
 - 4. No difference found between renters and homeowners.
- v. Safety
 - 1. 90-94% always or usually safe in home/community
 - 2. 19 people were not safe in their home/community. (10 were female, 5 non binary, majority were homeowners)
- vi. Experience in town, different places and groups regarding discrimination, intimidation or violence
 - 1. Most intimidation /discrimination experienced at:
 - a. Town businesses
 - b. Elected officials
 - c. APD

- d. APS
 - e. Don't have detail of which places were rated higher, can follow up
 - 2. Violence
 - a. Few reports
 - b. 11 reported violence with APD
 - 3. Q: What was percentage of white people experiencing intimidation/discrimination. A: Haven't drilled down to get that info yet.
- vii. Comfort with calling the police
 - 1. If a victim/witness, for these reasons
 - a. Mental health 61%
 - b. Violent crime
 - c. Non-violent crime
 - d. Hate crime 65%
 - e. Medical emergency 93%
 - 2. White residents are much more comfortable calling police than non-white residents.
 - 3. Q: Did you break down this question by race? A: Not yet but can.
 - 4. Positive association between being satisfied with Arlington and comfort calling the police.
- viii. Q: Can we attach slides to minutes A: should be okay but caveat is that it is a draft, not final. Clarifying language will be added to represent that.

Annotation per email from Scott Lever on 12/15/21: I'd rather not share the deck in the minutes right now because there are substantial updates I've already discussed with AHRC and I'm meeting with Adam next week on this material. So rather than sharing something that isn't right I'd rather wait until updates are made.

- c. Two requests,
 - i. If you have thoughts on what we should ask or ask differently then we would like that feedback. Can send via email or via Rebecca
 - ii. Recognize that census mailers go to homeowners and renters. We aren't reaching everyone. Suggestions on how to reach more people.
 - 1. Previous years there was more outreach to Seniors but still wasn't a problem this year as they were well represented in responses.
 - 2. Q: How mobile friendly is it? A: It is survey monkey and formatted mobile friendly but it is long so might lose engagement on the phone.
 - 3. Q: What outreach is being done to families with young kids who aren't in the school system yet. A: you're right, preschoolers

and younger people are a blindspot.

4. Q: Homeschoolers/private school students and families are also not connected A: If there are networks that we can hook into then please share them.
5. Q: Do you feel that you are very effective at communicating why we should answer the survey? How does it meaningfully impact my life in Arlington? How does it show up in schools? Select Board policy? Housing? How is that communicated to people? A: not sure. It does impact things because:
 - a. Shared with Town Meeting
 - b. Shared across Town departments
 - i. i.e., Park and Rec in previous years had questions about open space, parks and the director used info to prioritize parks/facilities.
 - c. Will ask for briefing with Chief of Police around data in this survey
 - d. Data also will be shared with AHRC.
6. "Privilege is written all over these findings and I think that is an important message to get out there. Lived experience differs depending on who you are and that shows up in our data"
Scott Lever