

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Arlington Public Schools (APS) continue to offer an excellent and equitable education to all of Arlington's brilliant young minds. In 2022, APS forged ahead on important initiatives while focusing on addressing the lingering impact on the learning and mental health of students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The work ahead includes implementation of a new 5-year strategic plan for the district and welcoming students into Phase 2 of our state-of-the-art new High School facility.

APS Vision and Overarching Goals

Arlington Public Schools has high expectations for all students and offers diverse programming that allows students to pursue their passions and interests. The following vision, mission, and strategic priorities have guided budget planning and strategic initiatives for the past several years in APS. In 2022 a team of stakeholders reviewed and revised the APS vision and priorities below to inform a new long-range strategic plan for the Arlington Public Schools.

Vision

The vision of APS is to be an equitable educational community where all learners feel a sense of belonging, experience growth and joy, and are empowered to shape their own futures and contribute to a better world.

Mission

APS focuses on the whole child to create inclusive and innovative learning opportunities for all students, values diverse identities and ways of learning, prepares all staff to maintain high expectations while providing necessary supports, and sustains collaborative partnerships with families and the community.

Strategic Priority #1: Ensuring Equity and Excellence

APS will ensure equity, excellence, and access to rigorous learning experiences for all students. All graduates will be prepared to achieve their choices of post-secondary education, career, and community contribution.

Strategic Priority #2: Valuing All Staff

APS will recruit and retain an excellent and diverse workforce by creating a collaborative and supportive culture for all staff; providing high-quality and relevant professional development; expanding opportunities for leadership and shared decision-making; and prioritizing representation, diverse perspectives, and expertise.

Strategic Priority #3: Improving Infrastructure, Operations, and Sustainability

APS will maintain a system of schools that is safe, well-maintained, sustainable, and fiscally responsible, with the appropriate tools and resources to support best educational practices and an optimum teaching and learning environment.

Strategic Priority #4: Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships

APS will partner collaboratively with families in meeting the educational needs of all students; facilitate consistent two-way communication; and provide timely, transparent, relevant, and accessible information to all stakeholders.

APS 2022 Accomplishments

2022 has been an eventful year in Arlington's schools. What follows are a few of the major accomplishments of APS from 2022.

Excellent and Equitable Education for All Students

APS is proud to serve an increasingly diverse student and family population who are dedicated to continuous improvement of our schools, particularly when it comes to ensuring academic opportunity for all students.

Arlington Public Schools has a track record of high achievement over time that demonstrates the impact of Arlington's commitment to academic excellence. APS celebrated many academic successes over the past year:

- Students demonstrated high levels of academic growth in mathematics across all grade levels on the Spring 2022 MCAS assessments and typical or high growth in ELA/literacy.
- The district continues to implement adjustments to early literacy curriculum and instruction, emphasizing the importance of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, which has led to significant improvements in ELA achievement since 2017, and stable achievement during the pandemic.
- The district is in the process of selecting a new elementary literacy resource to align with the science of reading and work that has already been done to embed explicit phonics instruction.
- The district eliminated user fees for instrumental music and athletics in FY23, expanding access to extracurricular activities for all students.

EDUCATION

The district's focus over the past several years has been on expanding services to keep up with steadily increasing enrollments; during the pandemic, enrollments decreased and new but significant student needs arose, including needs related to student mental health. In FY23 the district added service providers and classroom teachers to address these needs. In FY24 the district will focus on anticipating growing enrollments at the Gibbs, Ottoson, and Arlington High School (AHS), as well as staff to support the new programming spaces in the new AHS. Though enrollments are expected to level off in the years to come, APS anticipates continued growth over the next few years and will continue to allocate resources to accommodate growing enrollments.

Strategic Planning in Partnership with the Community

In 2022 the district engaged in comprehensive planning and audit processes with members of the community, in an effort to co-create plans for the future of Arlington Public Schools in partnership with community members. This began with a convening of over 60 stakeholders to develop the new Vision, Mission, and Strategic Priorities for the district. Simultaneous with these efforts, the district conducted a comprehensive equity audit that involved community members in data analysis, collection, and interpretation, and resulted in 6 recommendations for the future of Arlington Public Schools. In the Fall of 2022, a smaller team of 25 community members used those recommendations to craft three initiatives for each of the 4 strategic priorities. Initiatives include:

- Efforts to establish an instructional vision for the Arlington Public Schools.
- Efforts to improve students' experiences with school and ensure that all students are connected to caring adults
- Creation and staffing of a Family Welcome Center, to oversee all aspects of district communication, registration, and enrollment.
- Reimagining professional learning for educators, to include more relevant and meaningful professional learning offerings and opportunities.
- Ensuring that all APS employees are competitively paid in comparison with Town Manager 12 peers.

APS is grateful for the hard work of the stakeholders who joined us to craft an innovative strategic plan, which when implemented is sure to improve the experiences and outcomes of Arlington students for years to come. APS is also grateful to the Arlington Education Foundation for funding strategic planning efforts as part of a District Improvement Grant.



The strategic planning team meets to finalize initiatives (top) and Dr. Homan presents new vision statement (bottom).

Building Shared Leadership Structures and Practices

In 2022, APS continued expanding opportunities for teachers to share in the decision-making work of the district, particularly in support of instructional improvement. All schools studied and then implemented Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) thanks to the support of the Arlington Education Foundation, who funded a Development Grant to support the rapid expansion of teacher leadership teams. The district also recruited its first cohort of teacher leaders to the Arlington-Brandeis Teacher Leadership Fellowship, which engages four APS teachers in graduate-level work in teacher leadership and requires them to complete and action research project in APS schools as members of their school-based ILTs.



Administrators engage in Instructional Rounds at Hardy Elementary.

Each summer before the start of the school year, APS holds an All-Leader Workshop to set the tone and begin strategic planning for the year. In 2022, the All-Leader Workshop welcomed teachers for the first time, with over 120 people joining the convening in August to explore ways to improve sense of belonging across APS schools. During the year, APS leaders engage in

Instructional Rounds, which consists of groups of leaders visiting classrooms and then debriefing what they notice and sharing takeaways with school leaders. This approach is designed to improve instructional coherence through frequent and rigorous conversations about instructional practice. In 2023, APS looks forward to welcoming more teachers into Instructional Rounds as well as APS leadership planning.

Accomplishments Across APS Schools

Arlington High School

This past year, we were thrilled to return to in-person instruction after the yearlong separation created by the pandemic. We were also excited to move into the new Phase 1 sections of our new building. Beginning in February, we saw immediate positive impacts in collaboration and student activity caused by the new facilities and the proximity of science, technology, engineering, visual arts, and mathematics (STEAM) and the performing arts. We were even able to use the new facility to host our first underclass semi-formal dances in many years, with over 370 students attending in the 2021-22 school year and 500 students attending in the 2022-23 school year.

The building remains at 100% capacity and the building project complicates logistics. This continues to affect programming and scheduling. Moving in the middle of the year put added strain on our already strained staff. Many students continue to deal with the social and mental health impacts of the past few years of disruption associated with the pandemic and the larger social environment.

Following the conclusions of a study group on leveling practices and equitable access to deeper learning, the AHS English Department launched a pilot of heterogeneous grouping in grade 9 English classes. This means that all English 9 students in general education classes are grouped together in their English classes and can choose their level of curriculum challenge. The program has begun smoothly and is currently showing higher levels of Curriculum H participation across multiple subgroups and positive grade outcomes.

In the fall, a trained group of Arlington Public School staff facilitated full-day Voices United Student Leadership Workshops for all grade 9 students. The training is designed to help students understand and address instances of bullying, bias, harassment, and degrading language among their peers. The Voices United training supports the notion that while teacher training and commitment is important, only student leadership can change interactions and climate among students. These workshops helped our students develop the understanding and skills they need to build a school community that is more positive, safe, and inclusive.

AHS continues to focus on social-emotional learn-

ing, cultural proficiency, and educational equity. This year, we are pleased to welcome the return of Wellness Workshops in the fall and Inclusion Workshops are planned for the spring. All students participated in Wellness Workshops for one hour weekly throughout the month of December as part of their advisory program. These Wellness Workshops are part of an annual program started by AHS Social Worker Andrea Razi over 15 years ago. The goals of the event are to:

- Increase awareness and decrease stigma associated with mental health struggles.
- Practice self-care skills and promote help-seeking behaviors.
- Take a break from the usual routine and provide time for community members to come together and take care of themselves.

The Inclusion Workshop programming was canceled due to the COVID 19 pandemic, but we are in the process of planning for this spring. Following a similar format to the Wellness Workshops, Inclusion Workshops are intended to highlight and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the school community through activities that promote sharing and discussion.

AHS Athletics continue to field competitive teams in the Middlesex League and in the MIAA State-wide Tournaments. Some highlights include:

Winter Season 2021-2022

APS had over 360 students participate in the winter season. Girls Hockey won the Middlesex League Liberty Division Championship for the third straight and made it all the way to the MIAA Division 1 State Championship. Wrestling won the Middlesex League Liberty Division Championship for the fourth straight year and competed at the state sectional and all state meet. Boys Hockey made it to the final four in the MIAA Division 1 State Hockey Tournament. Indoor Track and Boys Swimming had a number of students compete in the sectional and State Meets.

Spring Season 2022

APS had over 440 students participate during the Spring season. Baseball won the Middlesex League Liberty Division Championship for the second straight year. Baseball, Softball, Girls Tennis, Boys Tennis, Boys Lacrosse and Girls Lacrosse all qualified for the MIAA State Tournament. Track and Swimming also participated in the MIAA State Meets.

Fall Season 2022

APS had over 470 students participate during the season. Four teams won Championship in the Middle-

sex League. Boys Soccer won the Middlesex League Liberty Division Championship for the third straight year and finished the regular season undefeated. Girls Cross Country won the Liberty Division Championship for the second straight year and finished undefeated at 6-0. They also were the Middlesex League Meet Champions for the second straight year. The team advances to the Sectional Meet and All-State Meet. Boys Cross Country won the Liberty Division Championship for the fourth time in five years and advanced to the Sectional Meet. Girls Swimming won the Middlesex League Freedom Division for the second straight year. Cheering, Girls Soccer, Field Hockey and Golf also qualified for the MIAA State Tournaments. Football participation has increased in each of the last four years with 60 students on the team this past fall.

Ottoson Middle School

Although the daily school experience for students improved during the first half of 2022, the Ottoson Middle School was still feeling the effects of the pandemic. Early in the year there was an Omicron surge that caused many of the students and staff to miss school. Throughout the remaining part of the 2021-2022 school year, the students and staff were constantly reminded that the pandemic was not over. Many of the students and staff were still wearing masks for protection and the nurses and administrators were still conducting weekly pool testing.

One of the school's greatest concerns during this time period was students' social-emotional wellbeing. To support students, the counseling staff surveyed their mental health. Based on the results of the surveys, counselors provided both individual and small group counseling throughout the year. The Ottoson Middle School was fortunate to hire another school counselor to assist students, and that the Bridge Program was up and running. The Bridge Program started in the fall of 2021, and by the beginning of 2022, it was well established. The program helps students transition back to school after a period of extended absences.

Academically, the Ottoson Middle School added extra teachers to reduce class sizes. During the 2021-2022 school year the school added half a learning community, and a reading teacher. The additional teaching staff helped give students the support they needed. In the fall the state reported that the Ottoson's spring 2022 MCAS results were strong, and the school received an accountability score of 97%.

As the 2021-2022 school year ended the Ottoson staff and students took time to celebrate. They had an opportunity to commemorate the 100th birthday of the Ottoson. They held the first ever Ottoson Day, in which students selected from over thirty workshops. Some of the workshops explored racial identity, while others

focused on active engagement through playing rugby, learning yoga and painting a mural. The Ottoson also had the chance to honor the students with an outside promotion ceremony.

During the summer, teachers and administrators met to discuss how to transition students back to school and planned a one-day orientation for all students so that their first day of school focused on connecting with each other and their teachers. The emphasis of the second half of 2022 would be belonging. As a result, the Ottoson Middle School increased their extracurricular activities. Clubs and safe spaces were offered for students who were seeking a sense of community. In addition, an Advisory block was created in which students met once a month and engaged in activities in small groups, led by their ASPIRE teachers.

To increase teacher engagement and ownership over instructional decisions, the Ottoson Middle School created an Instructional Leadership Team, which meets once a month. In the fall of 2022 the team conducted observations of team meetings in order to improve their efficiency and share best practices across the school. The team is also observing colleagues and deciding what instructional practices they want to focus on improving in the spring of 2023.

The Ottoson Middle School continues to look at how to best meet the needs of their students. For the 2022-2023 school year, the Ottoson added another half learning community (bringing our total to 10 learning communities overall), a special educator, and a part-time wellness teacher due to enrollment increases. It also continues to provide social emotional support to their students.

Gibbs Middle School

As a one grade school, Gibbs School is unique. That one year status also brings and amplifies its own challenges. Gibbs School requires continuous improvement each year to manage its innovative concept as the sole 6th grade transition school in Arlington. Each year a new cohort of Trailblazers enters Gibbs with their unique aspirations, fears, and needs. It is the Gibbs Team's job to anticipate, recognize and be prepared to use, modify, and improve upon existing practices and protocols to ensure the best year possible for each student. Gibbs' School Improvement Plan objectives focus on how best to tackle these challenges strategically and as timely as possible to benefit each grade during their year at Gibbs.

Gibbs ended the 2021-22 School year reinstating two important Gibbs Norms: Gibbs Administration & Teams Reps visits to each of the district's 7 elementary 5th grade classes; and, the 5th graders visit to Gibbs in June for a brief orientation facilitated by 6th grade trailblazers:

- Instead of two sessions of Trailblazers' Guide to Gibbs, Gibbs held four to allow parents/guardians more flexibility with their summer-time management.
- Trailblazers' Guide to Gibbs - two 3-days sessions in August - (315 students).
- Trailblazers' Meet & Greet with the principal & assistant principal; one session for all parents/guardians; and 2 additional sessions, one for parents of students with disabilities and one for parents with ELL students.

In the last school year, Gibbs was very concerned with the number of our students needing more support and teaching regarding their capacity with self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. As a result, Gibbs created the "First Nine Days" orientation with embedded team building activities and opportunities for staff to introduce our core values for students to learn what being a Gibbs trailblazer looks, feels and sounds like. Gibbs is happy and excited to report this year it had a much more positive, fun, enthusiastic, and welcoming opening than ever before.

Elementary Schools (Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 5)

APS strives for consistent programming across all elementary schools, while allowing each neighborhood school to develop its own identity and supportive school culture. In 2022, APS had seven elementary schools: Bishop, Brackett, Dallin, Hardy, Peirce, Stratton, and Thompson; additionally, the Menotomy Preschool was housed at the Parmenter Building while awaiting a new space in Phase 2 of the New High School. Accomplishments across our elementary schools include:

- Introduction of Instructional Leadership Teams at all APS Schools;
- Implementation of common planning time blocks that allow teams of teachers, administrators, coaches, interventionists, and specialists to meet once a week, during the school day, in an agenda-driven, data collection, action-oriented format;
- Ongoing implementation of early literacy phonics and phonemic awareness instructional materials and professional development for teachers, K-3;
- Development of comprehensive School Improvement Plans in collaboration with School Councils and teacher leadership teams;
- Construction of new playgrounds at Bishop, Stratton, and Peirce elementary schools, designed for and with Hardy students and families;
- Revision of the APS Coaching model and full-time Math and ELA coaches at every elementary school to support ongoing and embedded teacher professional development at the elementary level; and
- Elimination of elementary instrumental music fees, resulting in significantly increased enrollment in instrumental music.

Elementary school students across Arlington continue to receive access to excellent and comprehensive programming in the core subject areas, fine arts, physical health and wellness, and social-emotional learning. Also, APS continues to build its capacity for collaboration with families as the district emerges from the pandemic. These are just a few of the accomplishments that the schools celebrated in 2021.

Opening Phase 1 of the Arlington High School Building Project

The first wings of the new high school opened to students in February 2022 after six years of planning and hard work. Construction of the new school remains on budget despite the continued challenges of the pandemic and the new school is anticipated to be complete in December 2024.

The new wings that opened in February 2022 include the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and Performing Arts wings. The STEAM wing includes 6,500 square feet of interdisciplinary makerspaces, a 120 seat Discourse Lab with technology for a variety of teaching and learning modes, and 21 classrooms and 17 science labs. The Performing Arts wing features an 826 seat auditorium, as well as dedicated band and chorus rooms, a digital production studio, and practice rooms.

In March 2022 Phase 2 began with the demolition of part of the old school (Collumb House, Lowe Auditorium, and the Links building). Demolition was followed by site work and then steel framing, with the framing of the central spine, Humanities classroom wing, Library, Cafeteria, exterior courtyard, District offices and Menotomy Preschool completed in January 2023. The AHS class of 2023 was invited to sign the final Phase 2 construction beam which was lifted into place on top of the Menotomy Preschool/District Administration wing. Phase 2 buildings are expected to open to students in September 2023.

In order to avoid disruption to students at the beginning of the next two school years, the AHS Building Committee and School Committee voted in October 2022 to delay demolition of parts of the old school. This decision accommodates the start of school before the Phase 2 buildings are available at the end of September 2023. As a result, there will be an overall delay in the

EDUCATION

completion of the new school buildings by three months.

Phase 3, the construction of the Athletics wing, is now anticipated to take place from October 2023 to December 2024 and will complete the new school buildings. Nine additional months of Phase 4 site work will follow with the construction of two additional synthetic turf multi-sport fields and a connector from the Minuteman Bikeway to the school. The entire project is anticipated to be complete by September 2025.

For more information on the AHS Building Project, including a virtual tour of the Phase 1 wings, design renderings, construction progress videos and photos, weekly construction updates, and more, visit www.ahs-building.org.



AHS project enters Phase 2 of Construction.



MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Leadership Transition

Dr. Kathleen A. Dawson became the Superintendent-Director of the Minuteman Regional Technical School District on July 1, 2022, following the retirement of Dr. Edward Bouquillon, who led the district for 15 years.

Dr. Dawson was hired following a unanimous vote by the Minuteman School Committee on January 26, 2022. She arrived at Minuteman from her most recent position as Deputy Superintendent of the Orange County Schools in North Carolina. During her tenure with Orange County Schools, the district had the highest number of schools exceeding academic growth in the state, even during a pandemic. She also was integral in increasing the graduation rate and increasing the number of underrepresented students in advanced courses as part of her equity work. Her extensive professional background includes launching five career technical education academies in less than a year and increasing the number of students graduating with associate degrees during her tenure as Chief Innovation Officer for the Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, North Carolina. Dr. Dawson previously served as a public-school teacher and administrator in the Boston Public Schools, along with public school districts in Duluth, Minnesota, and Nashville, Tennessee. She received her master's degree in School Leadership from Harvard University in 2001 and her Ed.D. in Educational and Organizational Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania in 2015.

Minuteman Achieves All In-District Enrollment

For the first time in the Minuteman district's history, all ninth-grade students are in-district (resided within the nine member towns) at the start of the 2022-23 school year. Across grades 9-12, in-district enrollment is at 88%, an increase from 59% during the 2017-18 year.

According to the official October 1, 2022, figures, total student enrollment was 692 students, which included 215 from Arlington, the largest number of any district town. Within that 215, there are 66 freshmen, 60 sophomores, 55 juniors, and 34 seniors.

The total enrollment of 692 is over the school building's design capacity of 628 (at 85% capacity). Minuteman is progressing with the North Building project which will house the larger and noisier advanced

manufacturing equipment. The administration is exploring options for the renovation of the East Campus Building. The renovation of the east campus building will allow the school to increase its capacity to approximately 800 students; it will involve no additional borrowing to the member towns.

Expanding Future-Ready Programming

In July 2022, Governor Charlie Baker visited Minuteman, where he announced the allocation of \$32 million in grants from the Workforce Skills Cabinet for high school and adult career technical education programs statewide, which included more than \$1.2 million for Minuteman. This funding is being used for the high school's welding program, along with the Minuteman Technical Institute's adult evening programs in carpentry, CNC (computer numeric control) machine operation, facilities management, plumbing code, and welding. These grant-funded programs are free to individuals who are unemployed or qualify as "under-employed;" most recent high school graduates qualify.

Additionally, Minuteman continues to expand its new Animal Science career major that launched in the fall of 2021. Veterinary medicine is one of the fastest-growing industries in America with employment opportunities growing 16% by 2029, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. With program advisory partners such as Blue Pearl Pet Hospital and Zoo New England, students receive both classroom and hands-on field training.

Athletics Expansion

Minuteman launched the girls' volleyball team in the fall of 2022, following the full opening of the outdoor athletic complex in the spring of 2022 and a complete return to student athletics following the height of the pandemic. The boys' and girls' soccer teams qualified for their respective state tournaments in the fall of 2022.

The entire athletic complex, located at the former site of the old school building, is a state-of-the-art addition to the Minuteman campus. The multisport field includes an adjacent competitive running track. Two additional fields host a baseball complex with a multi-purpose field, as well as a softball complex with an additional multisport field.

Minuteman has capitalized on rental opportunities with the new outdoor sports facilities, which are regularly used by the Boston Bolts, Leslie University, and other organizations.

Positive Student Outcomes

Each year for the past several years, about two-thirds of Minuteman graduates entered college/university and about one-third entered employment in their fields of study. Every student is required to graduate with at least one industry-recognized credential to demon-

EDUCATION

strate proficiency and/or certification to future employers; most students obtain multiple credentials. Class of 2022 graduates enrolled in many distinguished higher education institutions, including Arizona State University, Bentley University, Clemson College, Colorado State, Emerson College, Johnson & Wales, Merrimack College, Regis College, Rochester Institute of Technology, Texas A&M, Tufts University, and many others.

District Budget

The approved district operating and capital budget for fiscal year 2023 is \$29 million, a 4.96% increase over the previous year. Arlington's share is \$7,947,938, which is an increase from the previous year (of \$1,152,481) and includes operating, capital, and debt assessments.