

BOARD MEMO

Date: January 29, 2020
For ACTION _____
For INFORMATION x
Board Agenda: Yes x
No _____

FROM: Clinton Page, Chief Accountability Officer
Natalie Mitchell, Director of Title I Programs

THROUGH: Terri Mozingo, Ed.D. Chief Academic Officer
Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: School and Department Improvement Planning Workshops

ACPS 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 1: Academic Excellence and Educational Equity

SY 2019-2020 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Educational Equity

FY 2020 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Leadership and Professional Development

SUMMARY:

ACPS has taken strategic steps over the past two years to build organizational capacity for making data informed decisions through an equity lens. Attending to the key environmental factors of trust, listening, and self-reflection is a critical first step in building the team’s capacity for learning from data and confronting historic inequities and the systems that perpetuate them. This work was done through workshops with school and department improvement teams in summer 2019 and will be experienced by the Board in their January 29 retreat.

BACKGROUND:

Beginning in 2018-2019, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) undertook a revised School and Department Improvement Planning process. The impetus for the change, while multifaceted, can be summed simply into the three key areas of direct alignment, strategic prioritization, and effective measurement. The revised improvement process was supported through initial staff capacity building as well as school-based quarterly chats focused on how Central Office could support schools in their improvement efforts.

As described in a July 19 Board Brief, the last quarterly chats in 2018-2019 were designed to support school and department teams through facilitated conversations aimed at identifying the root causes of their systemic inequities, and determining the key levers to spur change in the upcoming year. An external certified facilitator and accredited leadership coach, Jennifer

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Hughes, led schools and departments through these discussions.

In order to have honest and productive team conversations about systemic inequities, research points to the importance of trust, listening, and self-reflection within and across participants. These ideas were folded into the sessions with schools and departments. The Board will be provided similar experiences during their upcoming retreat to both create familiarity with what staff experienced and to create the opportunity for new learning.

Data Informed Decision-Making through an Equity Lens

Throughout the course of the 2019-2020 school year, ACPS has taken deliberate steps to build capacity within the organization to leverage data and measurement to inform the identification of systemic inequities and potential systems of solutions. These efforts have focused on the accessibility of key data structures to support data discussions, and forming a culture focused on data for learning and continuous improvement.

An example of this work is the creation of the ACPS Data Workbook. The workbook was designed to be accessible to all stakeholders and to illuminate in a visual manner the inequities that exist within our system across various areas. The workbook data were leveraged in continuously informing the Strategic Planning Committee in their creation of the draft strategic plan. Further, the workbook was the primary resource for the Board's new structure in identifying more specific budget priorities. Within both of these utilizations the workbook was not used as an accountability tool, but as an illumination of the inequities within ACPS and to inform critical decision-makers in how to best guide the organization forward in addressing these inequities.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information contained within this memo to prepare for the January 29 School Board Retreat.

IMPACT: Moving forward, under the new strategic plan, ACPS will continue to prioritize and push the use of data to inform improvement efforts. Specifically, ACPS will be transitioning to formative strategic plan progress data discussions. This will allow the organization and the Board to take a more proactive, rather than reactive, stance to improvement efforts and progress within the strategic plan throughout the school year.

ATTACHMENTS: (1) *PowerPoint Improvement Planning Workshop Review*

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