

Alexandria City Public Schools
Advanced Academic Advisory Committee
February 6, 2024
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Alexandria City High School
3330 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302

Minutes

Current AASAC Members Present: D. Ohlandt (Chair), Evan Smith (Vice Chair), Ettasue (Shawna) Harris (Secretary), Mike Dukes, Lillian Pace, Catherine (Katie) Baker, Willow Darsie, Amanda Shapiro

Guests: Penny Hairston (Principal Rep), Carmen Sanders (Staff), Clinton Page (Staff), Christina Constantine (Staff), Abdul-Rahman Elnoubi (School Board Member), Jeremy Miller, Natalie Dubois, Mary Beth Walker, Rene Paschal, Kelley Organek, Julie Anne Watko, Katie Niersbach, ACPS student Emmett Watko

Chair's Opening Remarks:

Chair D. Ohlandt presented a draft memo to the School Board, framed as an interim report. The memo (attached) included anticipated recommendations with direct impact on the budget, which the school board is currently in the process of editing and finalizing.

- AASAC member Willow Darsie asked when the anticipated recommendations had been discussed at AASAC meetings.
- Chair Ohlandt replied that they had not been discussed formally before now, but that she had drafted them based on the discussions at this year's meetings and was asking for feedback from the committee now.
- motion to pass the memo
- approved: Ohlandt, Smith, Harris, Dukes, Pace, Baker, Shapiro / opposed: Darsie

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

- amended October 17, 2023 meeting minutes approved
- November 28, 2023 meeting minutes presented for approval
 - AASAC member Darsie proposed several amendments to November AASAC Meeting Minutes
 - Chair Ohlandt suggested that approval of the November minutes be tabled to give all committee members an opportunity to review the proposed amendments
 - Chair Ohlandt also mentioned that the level of detail recorded in the minutes is inconsistent and the committee seeks input from the school board about this issue
 - AASAC Secretary Shawna Harris reminded everyone that anyone who takes notes during a meeting may share or submit their notes to the secretary for consideration to be included in the minutes to ensure that all important information is included
 - committee agreed to table approval of November meeting minutes

ACPS Staff Remarks:

Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner presented updates on AAS

1. We are in the final stages of the hiring process for the secondary instructional specialists. Once it is finalized, we will make an announcement noting the person and the start date.

2. We had 874 submitted referrals and 1413 total referrals for the 01/31/24 deadline. There was an overlap between submitted and auto referrals, but the final breakdown is still in progress.

3. Between now and May 15, 2024, we follow a nine-step process for screening: (Note- our goal is to get done with K-3 GIA and Grades 4-8 SAA in early April, but it will depend on the capacity of each school to manage the number of referrals with the staffing they currently have).

4. Families who submitted a referral or have a student with an auto referral will be notified by the end of this week and will receive directions on how to submit the permission to screen form on PowerSchool.

5. Our most recent full-day Advanced Academic Services Teachers meetings were on January 26, 2024, and will be on February 12, 2024. The focus is on the local plan, measuring growth with advanced learners, data reports, co-teaching, and fidelity of implementation with aligned gifted resources through team planning.

6. Continue to do walk-throughs across all schools to support the fidelity of implementation.

Several AASAC members and a few community members asked follow-on questions about Dr. Tempel-Milner's update:

- "Do you track how many referrals coming from parents vs. teachers?" *Yes.*

- "Are you tracking the appeals and success rate?" *Yes.*

- "Will there be more advertising for information about the AAS referral process?" *There is an ongoing need for more communications about the referral process and the services provided by AAS.*

- "Which standardized tests are used for auto referral and identification now, and how are we addressing the needs of EL students taking these tests?" *COGAT is now untimed as a way to better evaluate for the EL. There are some vendor issues with some of the tests we use. Using the higher score from multiple test attempts will help address some issues.*

Review of Indicators with Accountability Office:

[Indicator Report attached]

Dr. Clinton Page, Chief Accountability and Research Officer, ACPS

- Dr. Page introduced the accountability specialist, Gina Constantine

- Dr. Page: indicator data is intended to provide data about access to AAS

- purpose is to help us develop better questions, not to give us answers

Several AASAC members and community members asked follow-on questions about the Indicator Report as Dr. Page presented it:

- "Why are there so many more identified students in middle school when the last universal screening was previously in third grade?" *The reason the middle school has more identified students is because the numbers accumulate with each grade, especially from third to fifth grade.*

- from AASAC Member Mike Dukes "Do you use other variables to determine percentage shown and determine data in Table 2? Do those numbers specifically target the groups that are still under-represented to track improvement?" *No, we haven't tracked that data.*

- from AASAC Member Amanda Shapiro "What about the impact of outside testing affecting the over-representation of white students particularly?" *Dr. Tempel-Milner answered that the number of outside testing results submitted for eligibility reviews is not actually very high.*

- community member Julie Anne Watko asked if Afghan refugee students are tracked as a specific group. *ACPS staff Carmen Sanders replied that the race and ethnicity data that ACPS uses in the indicator reports comes from the forms that families fill out when they register, and so the categories that are available in the data to track are self-reported and limited to the options on the*

intake form. These options group many identities under “other.”

Committee members asked whether the Accountability Office can provide any different data points next year.

- Dr. Page answered “we can do (almost) anything, but we can’t do everything” – meaning, if the committee requests different data be added to the report, some things currently in it probably need to be removed, for staff time considerations.

Potential changes to future Indicator Reports:

- interest in seeing data about how many Young Scholars students later become AAS eligible
- some discussion about the specifics of data presented in Table 8; for example, students who are AAS-eligible are included in AP Math scores even if they are not SSA-AAS in math
- comparison of AP scores of AAS eligible students taking AP classes and non-AAS eligible students taking AP classes
- AASAC member Darsie suggested that Table 5, the number of AAS students in each grade, will need to be done differently in the future because the division-wide schedule of universal screening and automatic referrals is changing as of the 2023-24 school year

- Dr. Tempel-Milner pointed out that the number of referrals for screening for this year (2023-24) is 1,413, and the number of referrals for screening last year (2022-23) was 1,532— not a significant drop.

Public Comments:

Julie Anne Watko submitted written comments, which are attached to these minutes.

Chair Ohlandt motioned to adjourn; all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Next AASAC Meeting:

Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Alexandria City High School, 3330 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302

Attachments:

- Memo to the School Board
- 2022-23 Indicator Report
- Approved minutes from October 17, 2023 meeting
- Draft minutes from November 28, 2023 meeting, with proposed amendments
- Public comments as submitted by Julie Anne Watko