

MINUTES

Approved Minutes 6/20/2018

Community Relations Meeting 5/17/18

In Attendance:

Administration: Dr. Roderick MacNeal, Assistant Superintendent

School Committee: Jennifer Susse, Len Kardon, Jeff Thielman

After School Programs:

Shirley Canniff, The Afterschool Connection @ Dallin

Amy Carlson, Arlington Boys and Girls Club

Andrea Gingrande, Bright Start Afterschool @ Bishop

Emily Hammond, Ready, Set, Kids

Taffy McParland, Fidelity House

Todd Morse, AASP @ Hardy, Thompson, Brackett and

Kate Stooly, Bracket After School Program

Public: Alham Saadat, Family Advocate; Raji Bhat, Stratton Parent; Scott Lever, Envision Arlington

Meeting started at 6:05

Motion by Len Karen to pass minutes of 4/25; seconded by Jeff Thielman; unanimous vote.

After School Programs

We met with representatives of many of the after-school programs in Arlington. We discussed the long and burgeoning waiting lists and talked about ways to increase capacity, and the barriers to doing so.

Each program is licensed for a certain number of students. E.g., Dallin is currently licensed for 156 and Bishop for 104. It was quickly established that licensing issues are not the main barrier to increasing enrollment. Increasing the license capacity is relatively easy and takes about a month. The main barrier to increasing enrollment, according to many of the participants, is lack of available space. Programs can only grow in the elementary schools if they are able to use classroom space in addition to the common spaces they are using. Non-school based programs have other issues—e.g., the Boys and Girls club is capped at 99 because of the number of bathrooms and Fidelity House would have to add buses.

Other districts, e.g., Belmont and Lexington, routinely use classroom space. Classroom space is used at Hardy and Thompson. Todd says he contributes to classroom supplies at those

schools/grades so that those teachers don't feel resentful about the arrangement. Bishop uses the kindergarten classrooms. Andrea said that when they first started they drew up a contract. Each day their program has to sign off that they left the room in good shape. Teachers have an opportunity to communicate back to them if there are any issues.

Jeff asked if there were contractual issues to using classroom space. Rod answered that there are no contractual issues with using the space, but there may be practical issues. Our expectation is that teachers are ready to teach the next day. To do so they may need to be in their classroom after school to work, set up their space for the next day, or meet with colleagues. Also, custodians need to get in to clean the rooms.

Other barriers include *transportation*. The Boys and Girls Club needs 8 students to fill a van. They transport from every school except for Peirce. Bishop could take more students if there was transportation. They currently have 24 openings. Emily mentioned that both Cambridge and Wesley bus kids to various community programs. She suggested that programs could coordinate and share the expenses of buses.

Another barrier is *staffing*. The after-school hours are tricky. They often get college students, for whom Tuesday early release days are a problem.

Len brought up the issue of how to handle enrollment when a family is in a buffer zone. He asked programs to delay any decision about who to admit until May 1st when everyone knows their classroom assignments. Most of the program representatives thought that May 1st was too late. The problem with this late date is that it gives families less time to find alternatives if they don't get in. The usual fee for most programs is \$75. Rod asked what the \$75 covers and whether that fee could be reduced for families who need to apply to more than one school. It turns out that programs generally refund or temporarily waive the fee for families in buffer zones.

In response to frustrations among parents that each program has different requirements and a different calendar Kate brought up the issue of creating a common calendar and also potentially a common application. Len mentioned that a common calendar and application would be especially helpful at the kindergarten level. Andrea thought that having a common calendar would save them time answering questions from anxious parents.

At the end of the meeting Shirley mentioned that we need to remember that Kid Zone and Community Ed already use a lot of classroom space so that any consideration of classroom space use would need to account for that.

Projected increases for next year (2018/19):

- Thompson: 20
- Hardy: 20
- Dallin: 20-25
- Brackett: 10 (APS program)
- Fidelity House: 20 (if transportation)

- Stratton: 26

Envision Arlington

Scott Lever updated us on what's been happening with Envision Arlington's educational task force. He brought up five bullet points:

1. The Envision Arlington Educational Task Group (ETG) is forming a steering committee, of which Alham is part of, so that decision making can be done more effectively.
2. The ETG are focusing on helping parents learn how to sustain engagement with the schools and school committee for change.
3. ETG is focusing on issues of diversity and cultural competence. They see themselves as playing the role of engaging the community and of educating parents. Jennifer suggested that we should make sure that the various groups in town are talking to each other. These groups include school-based diversity task forces, the Superintendent's diversity task force, and the Human Rights Commission. Rod talked about the different definitions of cultural competency and pointed out that the 5 social emotional competencies support the skills that students need to become culturally competent. Len pointed out that there is a difference between how a goal is represented and how it is executed.
4. Envision Arlington's ETG is also supporting dialogue on After School. Jeff emphasized that we are engaged in a two-step strategy. First, get additional spaces for next year. Second, talk about how to centralize efforts in the future. Len pointed out that according to the CFO we will need to have a formal contract with each after school program starting next year. Alham talked about Lexington. A few years ago Lexington decided to contract with a single vendor. There was a bid process and they choose a vendor that parents are happy with. Alham pointed out that currently the programs in Arlington are very different from each other—in price, parent relations, and quality. Jeff brought up the issue of ownership. We need to discuss who is going to own the larger effort. Do we ask the administration to gather information and strategize, or is this something the school committee should do? We decided to have another meeting with the administration to determine the ownership question and our next steps.
5. The Envision Arlington ETG continues to be engaged around educational visioning and strategy. Drs. Bodie and MacNeal attended an April meeting of the ETG and presented the then current draft of the Vision of Student as Leader and Global Citizen, facilitated small group sessions, and collected feedback and input from the Envision Arlington group and the public in attendance. The ETG would like to continue to engage with the school on the development of this approach and would like to see the implementation of this Vision of Student as a District Goal for 2018-2019.

Future Business – Len would like to discuss how to engage the community on possible calendar/start time changes for our next meeting.

7:16 – Meeting Adjourned

