

To: Arlington School Committee

From: Arlington Human Rights Commission

Submitted by: Sharon Grossman, Co-Chair, Arlington Human Rights Commission

Date: 7/5/2020

Over the course of two meetings held by the Arlington Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Schools and Education Working Group (which included Commissioners and members of the community), student and staff issues and data related to diversity, equity, and inclusion were discussed and explored. At a subsequent AHRC meeting on June 15, 2020, the full Commission voted to submit a report with concerns and requests to the Arlington School Committee (ASC).

There was overall agreement that, while data that has been presented to the community from various sources has been different, there is significant concern related to disproportionality in the disciplining and achievement of students of color within the Arlington Public Schools (APS). While the AHRC acknowledges that there has been much work done by the SC and the APS, more must be done to address these persistent racial disparities. In addition, communication to the community and parents/guardians needs to be enhanced.

As advocates within our community who are charged with educating the public and working in partnership with other town departments, the AHRC respectfully requests that these issues be addressed and explored by the SC and APS with an outline of outcomes and metrics to meet those goals. Specific actions that we request, and include some of which that have begun, are:

- The SC includes issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and academic and discipline racial disparities on its agenda regularly, particularly since not all parents/guardians are comfortable or knowledgeable about coming to the SC.
- The SC and/or APS publicly shares timely data on discipline, including in- and out-of-school suspensions and in-school detentions, with the AHRC and the public.
- The SC assigns the following tasks to a subcommittee in which members of the AHRC can participate:
 - Continue to report and review data regarding discipline.
 - Outline the policies, procedures and philosophy of the student discipline practices within the APS. These would include evidence-based practices, reasons and rationale for suspensions, consistency, accountability, and addressing drug-related incidents.

- Address how Social Emotional Learning is being implemented within the schools, its consistency, a way to increase cultural competency and decrease implicit bias for students and staff, and aligns with discipline practices.
- Discuss the climate for staff of color. A goal of the district is to increase diversity of staff and concerns have been raised about the ability to retain staff of color, particularly given the recent difficulty in having uncomfortable conversations raised by a former staff member.
- Discuss the role of School Resource Officers and how it relates to the need for more skilled mental health trained staff.
- Address the need to intensify and be transparent in communication, specifically as it relates to discipline, social emotional learning opportunities, training of staff, and implicit bias training.

We thank you for your continued attention to these important matters.