

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts General laws, Chapter 30A, Section 20, notice is hereby given for the following meeting of the:

***Arlington School Committee
Standing Subcommittee: Community Relations
Friday, December 5, 2025
4:00 PM***

ZOOM LINK HERE

Open Meeting (L. Gitelson)

Community Relations Listening Sessions - review proposal from L. Homan and discussion

Welcome Center - review data

After school assignments for families on Buffer Zone waitlists

Human Rights Commission appointment

Approve Minutes

Future Agenda Items

Adjournment (L. Gitelson)

The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Stated times and time amounts, listed in parenthesis, are the estimated amount of time for that particular agenda item. Actual times may be shorter or longer depending on the time needed to fully explore the topic.

Submitted by L. Gitelson

Massachusetts law requires all open session meetings of public bodies to be accessible to members of the public, including those with disabilities. If you need reasonable accommodations in order to participate in the meeting, contact the Administrative Assistant to the Arlington School Committee Liz Diggins at ediggins@arlington.k12.ma.us.



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Meeting Location - Remote

Summary:

ZOOM LINK HERE



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Open Meeting (L. Gitelson)



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Community Relations Listening Sessions - review proposal from L. Homan and discussion

Summary:

- Listening Sessions Concept for Discussion, Community Relations Subcom 12.5.25

ATTACHMENTS:

Type	File Name	Description
▯	Memorandum Listening_Sessions_Concept_for_Discussion__Community_Relations_Subcom_12.5.25_(1).pdf	Listening Sessions Concept for Discussion, Community Relations Subcom 12.5.25 (1)



Arlington Public Schools

Education That Empowers

TO: Community Relations Subcommittee
FROM: Dr. Liz Homan, Superintendent
RE: Concept for Community Listening Sessions, 2025
DATE: 12/3/25

Background and Purpose:

The purpose of this memo is to outline a concept I have discussed with Community Relations Subcommittee Chair Laura Gitelson for the Community Relations Subcommittee's engagement with the community in FY26. This subcommittee of the Arlington School Committee has had many formats since the pandemic, from informal coffee conversations on Saturdays to structured discussions with community members on specific topics. It is important to all of us that the work of Subcommittees feels actionable and impactful, which is why we have tried several different approaches over the years.

As Ms. Gitelson and I discussed options, we discussed trying an approach that combines previous formats for this subcommittee and that might serve several purposes relevant to our work at the moment. Two of those purposes are here, but this list is not necessarily exhaustive:

1. **(re)Connecting with Community Members:** I would like to hear from community members in more informal conversations that allow for probing questions and understanding their experiences, especially now that we are in Year 3 of Strategic Plan implementation and will need to consider what the next iteration of our work should include. I did this as part of my entry plan and thoroughly enjoyed it, and it has been several years since I have had the opportunity to hear directly from small groups of community members in the same sort of format.
2. **Allowing for School Committee Members to hear from Stakeholders on a Topic Specific to their Role as Elected Officials:** One of the challenges of prior formats was that stakeholders might bring concerns to the School Committee on which they had not authority to act, or that the meetings were only accessible to a particular cross-section of stakeholders. It would be ideal to create a format that allows for people to share their input at a time and in a format that works best for them, and for the School Committee to hear ideas that are actionable for them as the decision-makers for the APS Budget and Policy.

It is with these goals in mind that I have developed the concept that follows for discussion by the subcommittee. I want to emphasize that *this is only an idea*, subject to significant revision, adaptation, or rejection by the subcommittee.

Listening Sessions Concept and Overview: The School Committee has heard school teams talk about their work conducting "empathy interviews" over the past several years. This is a concept that comes from the work of educational scholars who emphasize the importance of getting to know students and families' experiences through the memories and stories that stand out to them and shape their identities.



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Such interviews, or “listening sessions” as I am calling them here, are opportunities to deeply understand someone’s point of view. In these conversations, the questions are carefully structured to elicit *examples, stories, and specific instances* that capture that individual’s experience. Stories are anonymously captured and then qualitatively analyzed to surface trends that can proactively inform decision-making.

As an example, this fall the Cabinet team has conducted several listening sessions with different stakeholder groups, sometimes one-on-one and sometimes in small groups. In all of these conversations (regardless of stakeholder group or type), we have asked the following questions:

1. What is going well in APS that you would like to see continue?

Follow-up Question: Share a story or example.

2. What challenges make it harder for your student(s) or your school to succeed or thrive?

Follow-up Question: When was a time when you encountered this specific challenge?

Follow-up Question: What was most difficult about that moment?

3. What helps you feel supported and that you belong in APS?

Follow-up Question: What obstacles stand in the way of feeling supported or like you belong?

Follow-up Question: In a moment when you didn’t feel supported or like you belonged, what resources could have helped?

4. What would worry you most if APS had to scale back resources?

Follow-up Question: Why does that worry you?

Follow-up Question: Tell me about a time when [that thing you are worried about losing] was important to you.

****See Appendix A for example analysis from interviews conducted so far****

It is important when embarking on a data collection process with listening sessions that the same questions are asked, with some flexibility to follow the speakers with follow-up questions or to skip a question if necessary. Similarly, during my entry process, I asked the same questions of each group, which allowed me to analyze trends across different groups of stakeholders for similarities and differences of perspective.

If the Community Relations Subcommittee wishes to hear from stakeholders across Arlington regarding the resources available (or needed) in APS, or about specific policies of interest, they could take a similar approach - with these questions, or others that are similarly open-ended - and we could schedule different combinations of committee members and administrators to join for these discussions.

Logistics and Accessibility: To give the Subcommittee an idea of what this **could** look like, I provide an example format, dates, participants, and other logistics below. Again, all of this could be adjusted or



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added to. This is not complete or comprehensive; if the committee wishes to move forward, I can work with Ms. Gitelson, Ms. Diggins, and our Communications and Family Engagement team on the details.

<i>When and Where?</i>	<i>Who and for How Long?</i>
<p>Various dates and times throughout Dec-January.</p> <p>As an example, I have held the dates and times below in my calendar (but wouldn't necessarily need to be in attendance at all of them) to give you an idea of what this could look like:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 17 Dec 2025, Wed 3 – 3:45pm2. 22 Dec 2025, Mon 8:30 – 9:15am3. 5 Jan 2026, Mon 7 – 7:45pm4. 6 Jan 2026, Tue 8 – 8:45am5. 7 Jan 2026, Wed 5 – 5:45pm6. 13 Jan 2026, Tue 7 – 7:45pm7. 15 Jan 2026, Thu 5 – 5:45pm8. 15 Jan 2026, Thu 5 8 – 8:45pm9. 16 Jan 2026, Fri 8 – 8:45am10. 19 Jan 2026, Mon 8:15 – 9am11. 19 Jan 2026, Mon 4 – 4:45pm12. 21 Jan 2026, Wed 7 – 7:45pm13. 22 Jan 2026, Thu 5:30 – 6:15pm14. 23 Jan 2026, Fri 8:45 – 9:30am15. 27 Jan 2026, Tue 8:15 – 9am16. 28 Jan 2026, Wed 8:45 – 9:30am17. 30 Jan 2026, Fri 4 – 4:45pm <p>Options to share the load:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Spread dates out across more months;2. APS administration hosts and subcommittee or full committee members join as facilitators when they are able;3. Allow the facilitators to define their own times and add to a list of session times/dates;	<p><u>Facilitators:</u> It would be important for two committee members to be present for each listening session: one to ask questions, and one to take notes. The two could include a committee member + myself and/or another member of the APS administration.</p> <p><u>Time Commitment:</u> If we held 30 sessions total, each of us would need to attend 15 sessions, for a total of about 11 hours. If other committee members or administrators joined, that number could go down.</p> <p><u>Format:</u> It would be important to mix morning, evenings, and daytimes, and to hold both in-person sessions at various school locations and virtual sessions accessible via zoom so that stakeholders have options that work, which allows for a greater cross-section of voices to be heard.</p> <p><u>Participants:</u> It would be important to limit participation to 5-7 community members if sessions are limited to 45 minutes. This allows all stakeholders to talk. If we held 30 sessions, that would allow us to hear from approximately 150-210 community members over a relatively short period of time.</p> <p><u>Sign-up:</u> It would be important to have a sign-up process that caps participation once a session fills up. Our team would be able to set this up and manage it. We could also analyze which times and formats receive the most interest, and look for additional dates that could work so that everyone</p>



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4. Something else! There are many different ways to organize efforts like this.

has an opportunity to be heard. I would recommend publicizing initial dates and times, with a promise that more dates and times will be released based on community interest.

Other/Additional Options to Consider: The committee could also consider holding larger forums in which they share information and then ask for full audience input on these or other questions in the form of a virtual survey, or for the committee to offer **both** the listening sessions **and** an open-ended survey that the district could release using our Panorama platform or a simple Google Form. This would allow community members to weigh in verbally or in writing, increasing the reach and accessibility of your efforts.

Final Considerations: If the committee wishes to do something like this, we have many “lessons learned” that we can share based on our experience with data collection processes like this. Several have been noted already. A few more include:

- **Have a protocol and stick to it.** Research has shown that protocols improve inclusivity and equity of voice. Asking the same questions of each group of stakeholders is very important to gathering data that will be useful to the committee moving forward.
- **Collect data in a common space.** The Cabinet team has used a google form to organize responses to the questions we have asked in interviews, and school teams have used shared documents, forms, or spreadsheets. This allows for ease of analysis.
- **Establish norms at the start of each conversation.** This protects participants and allows them to speak freely. One that I used during my entry process was “what’s said here stays here, but what’s learned here leaves here.”
- **Keep meticulous notes, and keep the notes anonymous as well.** It is important that community members know that their specific comments will not be repeated or attributed to them. It is also important to take low-inference notes - in other words, to write down exact quotes, not your personal impressions or opinions about what is said in the session.

Again, this is one concept for the committee to consider and adapt as it sees fit. If adopted, I believe this approach could aid ongoing efforts linked to the FY27 budget process, provide a starting point for future strategic planning, and give community members a chance to connect with us around matters of importance to them and their students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elizabeth Homan

Superintendent, Arlington Public Schools



APPENDIX: Qualitative Data Analysis Example

So far, the Cabinet team has gathered data from 13 small group interviews, which have included administrators, students, families, and staff, using the four questions above and listed again here for reference:

1. **What is going well in APS that you would like to see continue?**
2. **What challenges make it harder for your student(s) or your school to succeed or thrive?**
3. **What helps you feel supported and that you belong in APS?**
4. **What would worry you most if APS had to scale back resources?**

I. Core Strengths and Valued Programs

Theme 1: Student Opportunities and Support Systems

- **Diverse Programming:** APS is praised for its rich array of academic and non-academic opportunities, including a strong instrumental music program, arts, and P.E. at the elementary level, and a wide variety of classes, clubs, and innovation pathways at Arlington High School.
- **Athletics and Extracurriculars:** This came up in several interviews as a positive thing the community offers students. One community member said, "it's important to have the opportunity if you want to do sports."
- **Social-Emotional and Special Education Services:** There is strong appreciation for services that support the "whole child," including co-teaching models, SLCs, and the proactive work of social workers and wellness teams. In-district programs for preschool, language-based learning, and autism are valued for keeping students within their home community and saving district resources.
- **Community Resources:** The Welcome Center is cited as a "wonderful tool for connection and support," providing "real-time, real-life" resources for families. The ACE "Summer Fun" program was also mentioned as a valued community resource.

Theme 2: Staffing and Professional Culture

- **Quality and Collaboration:** Staff members consistently point to their colleagues as a primary source of support. The culture is described as highly collaborative, a feature one leader noted "is not true everywhere else." This is reinforced by structures like job-alike partners, instructional coaches, and supportive administrative teams.



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- **Competitive Salaries:** Stakeholders believe that making salaries more competitive has been crucial for "maintaining and attracting stronger teachers" and administrators.
 - **Key Staffing Roles:** The addition of Assistant Principals at the elementary level is viewed as a transformative improvement. One leader stated, "If the assistant principals go away, what will go away is the instructional leadership." Teachers noted the importance of these roles for the smooth operational functioning of buildings. The presence of literacy coaches, reading specialists, and adequate special education staffing was also considered essential.

II. Significant Challenges and Systemic Obstacles

Workload, Staffing, and Resources

- **Unsustainable Workloads:** A recurring theme is the growing and unsustainable workload, particularly for special education liaisons. Staff report that "more and more responsibilities are added without anything being taken off."
- **Staffing Shortages:** A lack of program-specific, trained substitutes creates instability, especially in special education. At the high school, higher-than-projected enrollment has led to large class sizes of up to 30 students, straining teachers' ability to provide individual support.
- **Resource Constraints:** Staff mentioned physical and material challenges, including a lack of parking, classroom space, and sufficient books and materials.

Equity and Family Engagement

- **Achievement and Belonging Gaps:** While APS performs well academically overall, there is concern that "focal groups (e.g., students of color, historically marginalized groups) are not showing growth at the same rate." Stakeholders perceive a gap between the district's dialogue on equity and the actual allocation of resources.
- **METCO Family Experience:** Families in the METCO program report serious challenges with transportation logistics and safety. More critically, they cite repeated racial incidents directed at their children with what they feel is an "inadequate response." One parent stated, "It doesn't make us feel valued when my child has to be introduced to that type of language in that environment."
- **Family-School Partnerships:** There is a recognized need to "deepen partnerships with families, especially when students are struggling," and to move away from making judgments without understanding a family's full context.

Communication and Bureaucracy



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- **Inconsistent Communication:** Staff report experiencing "mixed messages," a "lack of planning," and insufficient clarity on processes and expectations. This can lead to feelings of not being taken seriously as professionals.
 - **Systemic Inefficiency:** A sentiment was expressed that the district has "grown bureaucracy that is overly complicated," where simple issues that once required a phone call now involve help desk tickets. The rollout of new schedules at one school was cited as an example of a chaotic annual process that needs improvement.

III. Drivers of Support, Belonging, and Morale

Positive Drivers

- **Collegial Support:** The most frequently cited source of support is colleagues. Phrases like "job-alike partners," "a supportive admin team," and colleagues who "pitch in" without being asked demonstrate the value of this peer network.
- **Effective Leadership:** Leaders who provide clear and timely communication, offer autonomy, trust their staff, and are physically present and accessible foster a strong sense of support.
- **Valued District Policies:** The parental leave policy and support for employees with serious family illnesses were cited as evidence that the "district cares about you as a human being."
- **Inclusive Practices:** For both students and staff, simple acts like asking for and correctly using pronouns and names are powerful signals of belonging. Students noted the importance of "teachers welcoming diversity & inclusion" and supporting cultural events.

Obstacles to Belonging

- **Lack of Time and Overload:** The primary obstacle to collaboration and feeling supported is a lack of time due to overwhelming workloads. As one staff member put it, "Time gets in the way of this."
- **Unclear Processes and Communication:** When processes are not clear, new staff in particular feel unsupported as they are left "plugging holes." A lack of consultation on key decisions also makes staff feel their voice is not valued.
- **Leadership Gaps:** A sense of belonging is diminished when building leaders do not actively collaborate or seem to welcome support. Staff also feel a disconnect when leaders are not visible in classrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria.

IV. Primary Concerns Regarding Potential Budget Reductions

Protection of Student-Facing Roles



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- **Overwhelming Priority:** The most dominant theme is the demand that cuts not affect student-facing positions. This includes teachers, social workers, TAs, coaches, nurses, librarians, and assistant principals.
 - **Call for Transparency and Top-Down Cuts:** There is a strong desire for a transparent process where cuts are "brutally made" at the Cabinet and central office levels first. Stakeholders want to "trust that 'higher up' that cuts were done FIRST and exhausted before we turned to student facing." A key question was, "Is there a prioritization of student-facing roles?"

Impact on Student Experience and Equity

- **Loss of the "Whole Child" Approach:** There is a significant fear of losing programs that define the APS experience beyond core academics, such as arts, music, theater, life skills, and athletics. The potential return of user fees for sports and music is a major concern related to access.
- **Increased Class Sizes:** The prospect of larger class sizes is seen as disastrous, undermining teachers' ability to differentiate instruction and connect with students. This is especially concerning at the new high school, where most rooms cannot physically accommodate more than 24 desks.
- **Harm to Vulnerable Students:** Stakeholders repeatedly stated that while some families have resources to supplement lost services, the "most vulnerable students would be hit hardest." Cuts to special education, literacy coaches, and MLL teachers are feared to widen achievement gaps for focal groups.

Impact on Staff and District Reputation

- **Morale and Retention:** There is a strong concern that cuts will decimate staff morale. As one leader warned, "When we're asked to do more with the same or less, good people can go and work anywhere." The potential loss of "good, young colleagues" and recently hired educators of color is a specific fear.
- **Community Trust:** Stakeholders anticipate that the community will demand accountability, asking "how did we get here and why should we trust you going forward?" There is concern that scaling back programs could cause families to see Arlington as a less desirable "district of choice," impacting enrollment and community trust.



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Welcome Center - review data

Summary:

- SC Presentation 2025 Welcome Center Ponder Threads (1)

ATTACHMENTS:

Type	File Name	Description
▢ Presentation	SC_Presentation_2025_Welcome_Center_Ponder_Threads__(1).pdf	SC Presentation 2025 Welcome Center Ponder Threads (1)



OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



Our Schools

1 PRESCHOOL

7 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
(KINDERGARTEN -
GRADE 5)

1 GRADE 6 SCHOOL

1 MIDDLE SCHOOL
(GRADES 7 & 8)

1 HIGH SCHOOL
(GRADES 9-12)



Our Students

6,113 STUDENT POPULATION

FOCAL GROUPS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

- 0.0% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 3.2% Black or African American
- 8.6% Hispanic or Latino
- 9.7% Multi-Race (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- 13.1% Asian
- 65.2% White

Our students bring a wide range of strengths and needs:

- 4.6% are English Learners
- 10.9% are from low-income households
- 15.0% have a first language other than English
- 17.7% receive special education services
- 29.6% are identified as High Needs



Five-Year Strategic Plan

2023–2028

[View Full Five-Year Strategic Plan Here](#)

Strategic Priorities

The four priorities were developed to focus the work of APS in service of the vision and mission. The community team that identified them used a broad range of resources including student, parent, and staff surveys and the district's recent equity audit to ground the development of the priorities.

1

Ensuring Equity and Excellence

The Arlington Public Schools 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.

2

Valuing All Staff

The Arlington Public Schools 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.

3

Improving Infrastructure, Operations, and Sustainability

The Arlington Public Schools 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.

4

Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships

The Arlington Public Schools 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.

A Strategic Plan is a guide for what a school district wants to achieve in the future. It helps the district make decisions about how to support students, teachers, and families, and it focuses on goals for learning, growth, and community involvement.



Initiative 4.2 Welcome Center and Registration

Strategic Priority 4	Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships	Short Initiative:	Improve family experiences and relationships with registration and APS communication through implementing, staffing, and resourcing an APS Welcome Center.
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Overarching Goal

What is the outcome that this initiative seeks to achieve in five years?

In the next five years, APS will ensure that all families – especially those new to the community – have an easy experience connecting with the district. Families will have a Welcome Center located in the new Arlington High School that they will utilize when they enter the district and for ongoing support. Initial connection and registration for school will be clear and accessible, and families will clearly understand the structure of APS, including how to get in touch with someone for important questions.

Assessment of progress on this initiative will rely on metrics such as usage and survey data administered at moments of engagement, as well as qualitative feedback from school-based administrators and faculty.

Alignment to Strategic Plan



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Initiative 4.3 Communication and Partnership

Strategic Priority 4	Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships	Short Initiative:	All families experience robust and coherent partnership opportunities and clear, accessible communication from educators, schools, and the district.
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Overarching Goal

What is the outcome that this initiative seeks to achieve in five years?	<p>APS will furnish multi-faceted, coordinated opportunities for robust family engagement, including school transitions and ongoing learning to facilitate optimal student learning. Communications with families across the district will be clear, accessible, and consistent.</p> <p>As a result all APS families will feel connected to and respected by the schools their children attend, as well as the district overall. Families will know how to connect with their child's school or the district to get the information they need. They will also understand and feel connected to the vision of what an APS graduate should be prepared to do and to conversations about curriculum, equity, and learning. Additionally, all families will have multiple avenues for sharing information, feedback, and questions.</p> <p>Communications between families and schools will be consistent and equitable across the district, such that families with students at multiple schools will have a similar experience and will have access to translated materials and translation resources consistently.</p> <p>With these features in place, families will all be able to support learners in their growth and development in partnership with schools.</p>
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ENTRY SIDE VIEW 1

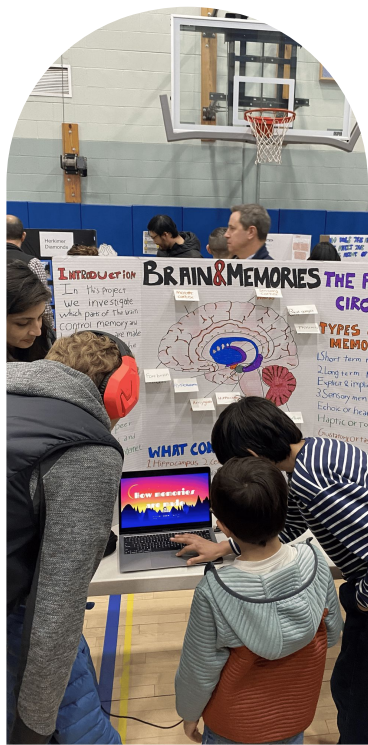


CORRIDOR SIDE VIEW 2

What We Do



Arlington Public Schools
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01

Oversee the APS Welcome & Resource Center

02

Guide families through the enrollment process

03

Manage district-wide communication

04

Provide translation and language access

05

Support family engagement initiatives

06

**Support our sustainability initiatives and
Sister City Partnership**

Welcome & Resource Center



Arlington Public Schools
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SUPPORT - HOW WE HELP

- Navigate the registration process
- Access translation and interpretation services
- Get connected with community and sustainability resources
- Transition smoothly to new schools, especially for multilingual learners and newcomers

HOW TO CONNECT



welcome@arlington.k12.ma.us



781-316-3332



Welcome Center Website



14 Mill Brook Dr

2nd Floor, Connected to AHS

Family Support Request Form

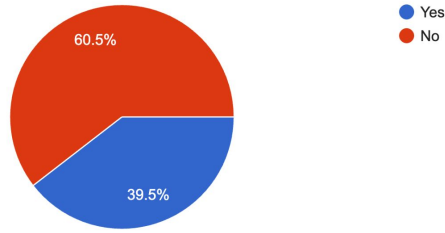


A direct channel for families in need to request help confidentially.

This tool opened the door to previously unidentified needs, allowing the district to respond more equitably and rapidly.

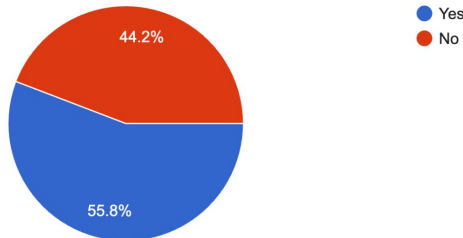
Do you need support having enough food for your family?

129 responses



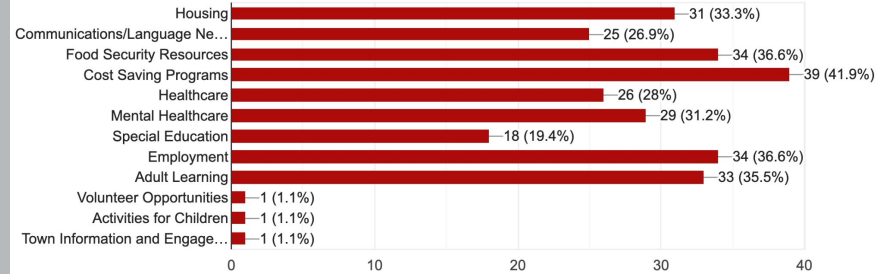
Do you need support getting items such as clothing, shoes, winter jackets, gloves, and hats for your child/children?

129 responses



Check any other topics/resources you are interested in learning more about.

93 responses



APS Support
Request Form



Support Request Form & Community Partnerships



The Family Support Request Form gives families an avenue to request support and helps the district and schools understand the needs and concerns of families in order to provide the most effective support and resources.

When a family reaches out, the Welcome Center connects them directly with the resources they need.

- **Housing and Employment** - Arlington Community Resource Specialist Denisa Burt
- **Food** - Arlington Eats
- **Clothing & School Supplies** - the Spy Ponder Threads Closet team and APS Sustainability Project Manager Rachel Oliveri
- **Mental Health Support** - Magali Oleander for Elementary and Middle Schools and Scott O'Brien for AHS
- **Registration** - APS Registration & Enrollment Office
- **After School Care** - Todd Morse
- **Wifi, Transportation,** and other requests- the Welcome Center Team



SPY P  NDER THREADS

SUSTAINABILITY IS ALWAYS IN STYLE

What is Spy Ponder Threads?

The Spy Ponder Threads Closet is a community closet benefitting all APS students, families, and staff. It is an expansion of a existing that was start by a nurse at AHS This central closet is a welcoming, organized space where the APS community can access clothing, shoes, personal care items, backpacks, and school supplies.



Arlington Education Foundation Grant



Arlington Public Schools
Education That Empowers

ARLINGTON
EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

In January 2025, the Arlington Education Foundation awarded \$20,000 to the APS Family Welcome & Resource Center for the expansion of Ponder Threads.

**This space was
made possible
thanks to a grant
from the
Arlington Education
Foundation**

Satellite Locations



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Spy Ponder Threads has 4 Satellite Closets:

- ❖ Thompson Elementary
- ❖ Gibbs Middle School (6th Grade Only)
- ❖ Ottoson Middle School (7th & 8th Grade Only)
- ❖ AHS Nurse's Office (original closet)

Each satellite closet has clothing, shoes, and supplies specific to the sizes and needs of students at those schools (e.g., deodorant, menstrual supplies, and concert performance attire for the middle and high school grades).



Need for Spy Ponder Threads

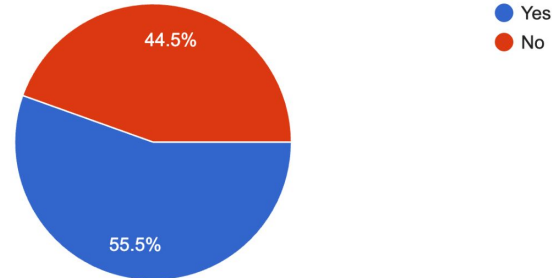


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Over half (55%) of families who submit the APS Family Support Request form indicate a need for items provided by Ponder Threads.

Do you need support getting items such as clothing, shoes, winter jackets, gloves, and hats for your child/children?

128 responses



Sustainability is Always in Style



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The Spy Ponder Threads closet motto “Sustainability is Always in Style” reflects the district’s commitment to reducing its environmental impact through waste diversion and environmental education initiatives.

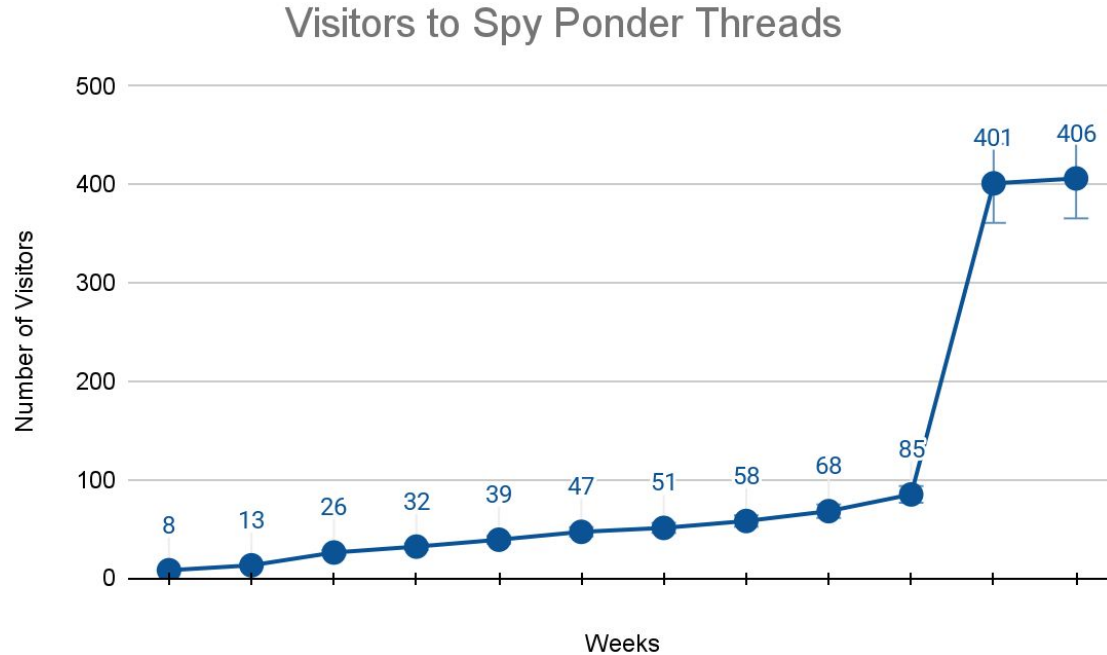
Spy Ponder Threads promotes reuse of clothing and supplies with the majority of closet items originating from donations, Lost and Found collections, and Arlington’s Swap Shed.



Number of Families Served



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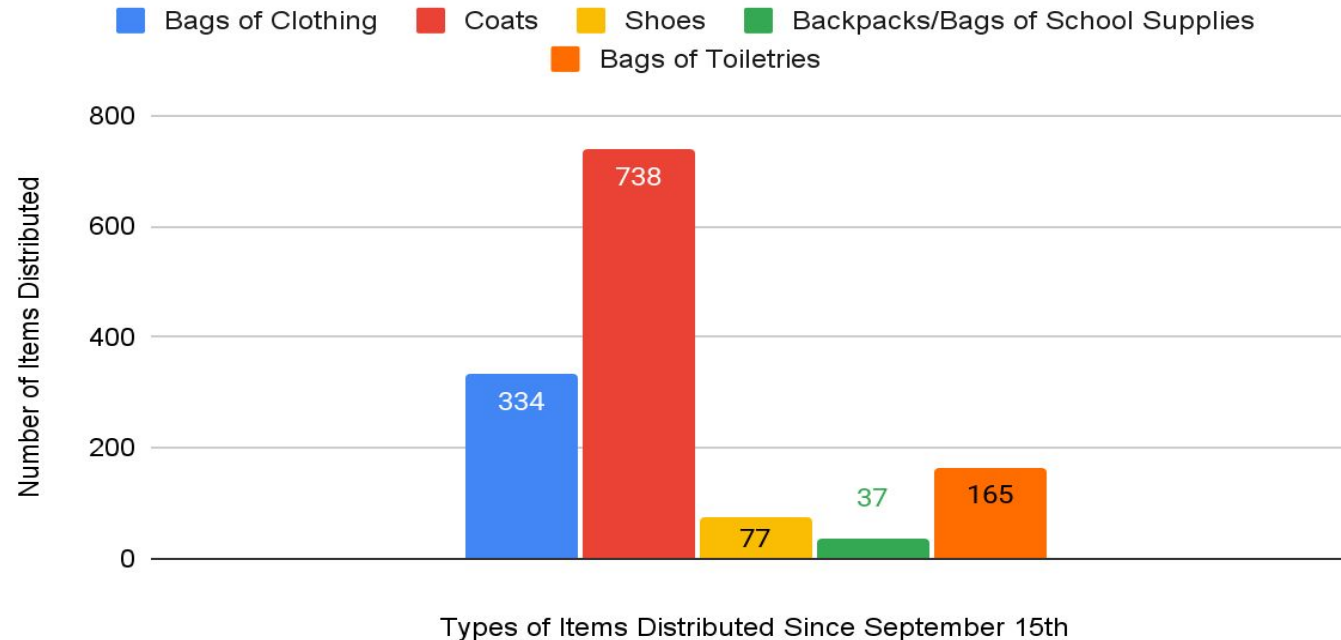


Inventory Distributed



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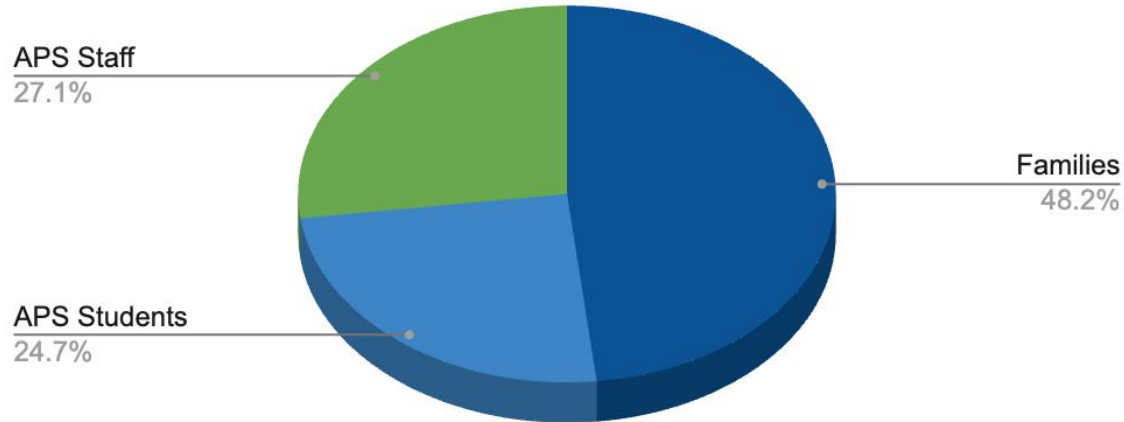
SpyPonder Threads Inventory Distributed



Who is Visiting the Closet

Visitor Demographics

Welcome Center Location



Thread Ponderings

- ❖ A family in need reached out through the Support Request Form and we invited them to visit the closet to pick out clothes and toiletries. They came back to shop the next month with donations to contribute and said it felt good to be part of a supportive community.
- ❖ A single mother found two fancy pink dresses to give to her daughter for her birthday and was so happy to have a gift to give her child.
- ❖ A high schooler came to pick out new shoes for his little sisters because theirs had worn out
- ❖ A transportation worker who didn't have a real winter coat picked one out.
- ❖ *"They say it takes a village-- I'm a single mom, I don't have that. This? This feels like maybe I have a village after all."*
- ❖ A staff member who provides academic support in the middle school was excited to be able to get binders and school supplies for her students to help them get organized and keep up with their classwork.
- ❖ A high school student who needed professional clothing for an interview found a button down shirt and dress pants at the closet.

Process



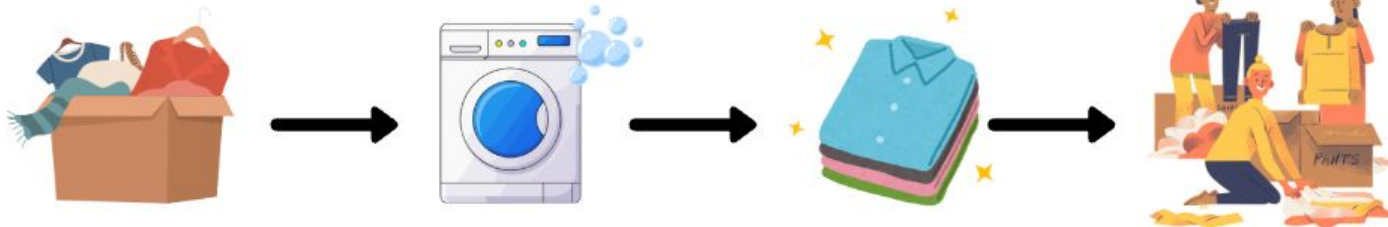
Arlington Public Schools
Education That Empowers

We receive donations from the community, PTO drives, PTO Lost and Found items, the swap shed, local churches, etc.

If the donations need to be washed, we give them to the APS Life Skills class, who washes, dries and folds the laundry as part of their curriculum.

Volunteers help sort the donations by size into labeled bins and racks.

Families either reach out to the welcome center through the support request form, or show up in person.



School Partnerships & Collaborations



Administration & Main Office Staff

Nursing

Counseling

Registration

Teachers identifying their students needs

AHS Life Skills class

AHS Student Volunteers

AHS Student Clubs



APS nursing team visits the closet

Community Partnerships



Arlington's Health & Human Services Network

Arlington Community Resource Specialist

Denisa Burt

Arlington Eats

Arlington Reuse & Recycle Center - Swap
Shed

Who is donating?

Karen Li, Arlington Swap Shed manager

PTOs (Lost and Found, clothing swaps & drives)

APS families and staff bring in donations

Local churches/houses of worship

Mirak Car Dealership



PTO Support



Arlington Public Schools
Education That Empowers

ESSENTIALS DRIVE SUPPORT ARLINGTON FAMILIES

A Town Wide Effort: November 12th-18th

URGENT SUPPORT NEEDED!

Every day, families in Arlington are in need of essential daily items. Arlington School PTOs are joining forces to support our APS Family Welcome & Resource Center and Arlington Eats. Your donations help those most in need in our community.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Donate a requested item
- Donate a grocery store gift card
- Donate \$ to Arlington Eats
- Fulfill an item off the APS Family Welcome & Resource Center Wishlist

RESOURCES

www.arlingtoneats.org

APS Supports: <https://bit.ly/4otBHJG>



SCHOOL COLLECTIONS

Brackett: Gently Used/New Winter Boots (all sizes)

Bishop: Winter Hats & Waterproof Gloves (all sizes)

Dallin: New Socks (all sizes)

Hardy: New Soap & Body Wash

Thompson: New Shampoo & Conditioner

Peirce: New Underwear (all sizes)

Stratton: New Deodorant, Toothbrush, or Toothpaste

Gibbs/Ottoson: Gently Used/New Winter Coats (all sizes)

The Arlington PTOs are incredible!

They do things such as:

- Collecting items left in the Lost and Found, washing them, and donating them to the closet
- Hosting clothing swaps and give us what's left
- Volunteering with us
- Telling their community about Welcome Center events
- Running supply drives gathering huge amounts of toiletries, coats, and winter gear

SUPPORTED BY THE PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS OF ARLINGTON

Who is Volunteering?

- ❖ The AHS Life Skills class helps us do laundry.
- ❖ Interns at the Welcome Center learning communications skills
- ❖ Arlington Community Members
- ❖ APS PTO Members
- ❖ AHS Student Volunteers who need community service hours
- ❖ Senior Citizens

What our volunteers are saying:

- *"This is such a great way to be part of the community"*
- *"This is so much better than sitting alone at my house. Ever since my husband passed away I get lonely; this is much better because I'm with people, doing something"*
- *"I've been looking for ways to participate since I moved to Arlington"*
- *"The world is crazy right now, and it feels good to do something about it"*

Tools for Back-to School

Supporting Families Before Day One

A two-part event in late summer designed to help families start the year informed, prepared, and supported.

- **Part 1:** A Virtual New Family Orientation providing families with general district information, guidance, and answers to FAQ
- **Part 2:** In-person event to connect families to the Welcome Center, community resources, and announce the opening of the Spy Ponder Threads Closet by providing clothing and school supplies



Warm Up For Winter

Supporting Families Through the Cold Months

A districtwide event connecting families with:

- Winter coats and clothing
- Essential toiletry items
- Welcome Center & Community Supports



Areas for Growth/Further Consideration



Arlington Public Schools
Education That Empowers

- We have several people who want to donate money specifically for the Welcome Center/Spy Ponder Threads Community Closet, and there currently isn't a process for doing that
- Several of our donors have asked for documentation for their taxes.
- We need more storage space
- We would like to have our volunteers help with laundry

District Resources for Families



[APS Welcome & Resource Center](#): Provides support with registration, clothing & school supplies, food resources, and various other resources. Location: 14 Mill Brook Drive, 2nd floor School Year Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9AM - 3PM [Schedule a Welcome Center Appointment Here!](#) Email: welcomecenter@arlington.k12.ma.us Telephone: 781-316-3332

[APS Family Support Request Form](#): A form that families can use to request support with situations such as food insecurity, clothing needs, mental health support, housing needs etc. Responses may be shared with school based social workers from the Welcome Center based on needs requested.

[Arlington Community Resources](#): Resources families can access in the community. This includes things like food pantries, mental health resources, and various other school and community based resources.



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

After school assignments for families on Buffer Zone waitlists



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Human Rights Commission appointment



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Approve Minutes



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Future Agenda Items



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Adjournment (L. Gitelson)



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Submitted by L. Gitelson