

**Arlington School Committee  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Thursday, April 14, 2022  
6:30 p.m.**

**DRAFT**

**6:43 p.m.** The Regular School Meeting was called to order by the new Chair, Ms. Exton.

**6:44 p.m. Public Comment**

Ms. Exton read the public comment parameters and invited the first speaker.

A long-term parent and Chair for SEPAC (I. Hwang) spoke on behalf of the HGI Committee in favor of the Heterogeneous Initiative and believes Heterogeneous should be a go. Ms. Hwang is also in support of the nomination of Allison Elmer in the new role we will be voting on later in the meeting. R. Turkington, a parent of an APS 7<sup>th</sup> and 1st grader, spoke in favor of the Heterogeneous Initiative and expressed that after hearing Principal Janger, reading the proposal and speaking with ELA teachers, she is fully confident in the Team to move forward with the Initiative. C. Abbott, a parent of three who also supports the Initiative, spoke to the inclusive learning her own children can experience because of this Pilot. A Peirce parent and Co-Chair for SEPAC, S. Barton, spoke in favor of the Program and noted that the research and teachers support the move and she does too. She also supports the nomination and approval of Alison Elmer for the upcoming vote. R. Nichols, the parent of an elementary-aged student, shared her support for the Initiative. She also thinks this program should start at the elementary level and believes there needs to be continued dialogue as such. J. Zelmer used a metaphor (climbing wall) to voice her support for the Initiative and believes that it's not a race but a learning experience and that the students should be in the same class...the same climbing wall. Two other speakers were interested in speaking but did not sign up so, out of consistency, they were not invited to speak.

**7:11 p.m. AHS Student Representative.** Amy Chelariu, the AHS Student Representative was not present when the Chair called on her.

**7:12 p.m. 2022 Virtual Influencer Award and Highlights from the K-12 Library Program This Year (R. MacNeal)** Dr. MacNeal introduced the presenters. Rashmi Pimprikar introduced her Team which included: Ms. Stacy Kitsis, Liz Phipps-Soeiro and Jennifer Lauchlan. Ms. Kitsis gave a quick review of the new AHS Library Website which included content, ebook/audio book collections, the opportunity to receive help with class assignments, the updated AHS Research Handbook companion website, article requests, historic yearbooks, library news. The top three Library Program Highlights included the new website, the move of the library/temporary set up and the reconnection in person! Jennifer Lauchlan discussed District Collaborations, K-8 Outreach and Programming (including in-person Book Fairs to everyone's delight!). Liz Phipps-Soeiro discussed visiting authors at the Schools this year, new resources taking room where book circulation is up 59% comparing FY19 and FFY22, and the exciting spaces supporting the research reading and curiosity of the students and staff. With the new librarian and another in the fall we will have one certified librarian for every two or three schools.

After a short discussion with questions and congratulatory comments by various Members, the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent, the meeting moved into the next discussion.

### **7:30 p.m. Heterogeneous Grouping Initiative Presentation**

Dr. Homan provided an overview of the research from over a year that has gone into the preparation for this proposal which included the input of the Arlington Community, students, families and teachers. She acknowledged that it is never an easy conversation/decision when it's linked to disrupting structural inequity given the impact/allocation of resources--time, money and opportunity. She highlighted 1. Instructional equity – well-designed instruction – address/repair the current system, 2. Increase student engagement with access to rigorous and challenging materials, and 3. Collaborative and equity-focused leadership culture; move together to a common goal for the best results. This proposal is designed to address concerns about previous heterogeneous programs, was developed in conversations with students, families and teachers, introduces structural support for teachers to include smaller class sizes and time for collaboration and planning intentionally limited in size of scope allowing the opportunity for iteration and improvement of new practices, rigorous in its articulation of data resources to access the success of the initiatives and is supported by many.

Dr. Homan started the slideshow – a Systemic Challenge and needs to be addressed at multiple levels of the system. Dr. Homan discussed the District Content, displaying the Grade 3 thru 8 achievement gaps.

D. Janger discussed the Process and explained how/when this started, at least 9 years ago for Dr. Janger. The process included a Convened Group, the development of a proposal, community forums and a presentation to the entire School Committee. The purpose of the proposal – problems which exist (disproportionate participation rates, inconsistent classroom experiences, disparate experiences) and benefits of adopting the proposal (access to high-level tasks, access to a more diverse classroom, dedicated/additional common planning time, smaller class sizes, shared community-building activities) were shared. Dr. Janger then gave specifics of the Plan (English 9 heterogeneously grouped, choice of honors or advanced level opportunities, grading will reflect the chosen level, 18 sections with capped class size, 4 teams of co-taught sections, common planning period, what the honors level entails).

Ms. Perry then discussed the regular routines the English Department follows in their work and how they will now have two dedicated dates to focus on the HGI initiative which allows them the opportunity to adapt/change the work to be most effective in heterogeneous classes. The “May Planning Day” is a full day of planning when all teachers who teach grade 9 English will meet and the Summer Planning Days would be spent refining the scope of curriculum, setting expectations and reviewing and implementing concepts of differentiation and UDL.

Ms. Basso, an English teacher at Arlington High School, spoke about one lesson that she has constructed that builds in the diversity/expectations of students. All students had an essay project, with the same prompt with an additional honors component. Ms. Basso includes graphic organizers which makes the task accessible to all levels of learning and has in-class workshoping, peer editing and one-on-one conferences.

Dr. Janger shared his excitement for the Program and his past experience of teaching a heterogeneous classroom. He believes the way the Program is prepared will give the teachers opportunities to collaborate and do regrouping and how they can support the students in different ways and addresses a

lot of the concerns folks had about the consistency of experiences across the classroom. He presented the current collaborative practice and the various Team Teaching Opportunities.

Common Planning Time (CMT) was presented by Deb Perry showing the Purpose, Structure and the Tasks with Peer observation noted as a terrific opportunity. Community Progress Reports of the initiative were discussed by Superintendent Homan, including updates to School Committee and Community, Teachers to report and administration to report on available data. The Pilot success will also be assessed by the 9<sup>th</sup> grade ELA teachers using an ongoing Formative Assessments. Closing achievement and experiential gaps will be key indicators in the success of the Program. They want all students to improve, not just some. These things need to happen to move forward. An extended timeline for potential expansion of the initiative was presented. The assessment will take place over 2 years. The next steps are unknown until the work is done and assessed. Two Arlington High students spoke in support of the heterogeneous initiative. One student mentioned how the Pilot allows her the opportunity to reconnect with other students she hasn't seen since elementary school. Dr. Homan opened the meeting to questions.

Various School Committee Members asked questions and they were answered by the representatives of the Initiative. Mr. Schlichtman specifically voiced that if there are teachers to do it and the support of the Administration, he thinks we should do it. Benchmarks, early assessments can be used to monitor how things are going. Dr. Janger spoke to the way these accomplishments will be tracked. Dr. Homan explained that Admin will be in the classrooms as well. Among the questions asked, one focused on alternative methods for the heterogeneous initiative. Principal Janger answered with examples of previous structures and research which were unsuccessful which is why they are organizing the initiative the way they are doing it. One member asked if four classes is sufficient and Dr. Janger believes it is but will adjust if they need to do so. Ms. Morgan felt it a shame that the discussion still refers to honors/not honors students and does not understand giving students a .25 boost on their GPA compared to students who don't do that. Dr. Janger discussed the grading process -- parallel expectations at higher levels. Over the course of the planning of this process, teachers will look at the rubrics and programs and grade together. And, grade weights are problematic because they generally are shown to discourage students to take on interesting, higher level and variety of different classes; Colleges do not care about them. A question was asked about how many English Teachers signed the letter in support of the initiative -- 3 out of 18 did not sign. Ms. Exton asked about having a Special Ed teacher on the team -- will it support and provide a resource to every teacher on that Team and not just that one specific classroom. Mr. Janger believes this helps inclusion for everybody. Ms. Perry provided an example of co-teaching and explained that this is already incorporated in the work teachers are already doing.

Mr. Hayner spoke in support of the initiative. Mr. Kardon said that some students on social media do not support it but don't say it because of pressures. Mr. Kardon spoke on his concerns about the Heterogeneous Initiative and will not support the initiative. Mr. Schlichtman spoke next and spoke in favor of the initiative and gave various examples of why he thinks it is a positive initiative and voiced that teachers want to do this and he doesn't see how we cannot support it. Dr. Allison-Ampe gave some background on her reasoning behind her decision to support the initiative. She found the process flawed, although not fatally, and has decided in the past few weeks to support the initiative and gave several reasons for her support. Mr. Thielman did not support the initiative and thinks we should focus on getting out of the COVID world and getting back to normal before we move forward on this initiative.

Ms. Morgan also did not support the proposal and thinks we should challenge the status quo. She doesn't think that this is a strong enough heterogeneous model. She feels that there was an opportunity to think about things more than they were. She supports the intent but is disappointed by the model. Ms. Exton highlighted that the proposal is only for 9<sup>th</sup> grade, not an experiment on freshmen or the entire class; it's only one of their classes. She is excited about the professional development opportunity for English teachers. She spoke to teaching being an art rather than a science. This is a two year pilot and careful and thoughtful.

A motion was made by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Hayner for approval of the Heterogeneous Proposals. Roll Call Vote: Mr. Hayner, yes, Mr. Kardon, no, Mr. Schlichtman, yes, Dr. Allison-Ampe, yes, Mr. Thielman, no, Ms. Morgan, no, Ms. Exton, yes. (4-3)

**9:15 p.m. Appointment and Approval of Contract for A. Elmer, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.**

Dr. Homan explained her recommendation for the appointment and approval for Alison Elmer in this new position. She explained the responsibilities involved in this new position and why she believes Alison is the right candidate. Dr. Homan focused on Ms. Elmer's past experience, specifically her strengths in Special Education regulations and process, she knows and understands the law and shares it with her colleagues and those she supervises, models the knowledge using a Department communication, educates everyone in the system on Special Ed and the internal processes. Dr. Homan's own observations describe Ms. Elmer as a "systems thinker" and gave some examples of how/why. Ms. Elmer understands the power and the importance of strong relationships within the System and with families. Empowers her staff to deal with challenges and conflicts. Deeply committed to inclusive practices for all students. Outcomes of Ms. Elmer's work since 2016 was also presented. Dr. Homan also gave her reasons for restructuring, acknowledging all of us work for all of the students. Student services are not only about students on IEPs, but rather for all students. This adjustment will expand the capacity of our Special Education Department, expands the capacity of our Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and allows for a more seamless collaboration between student services and general Ed services. Dr. Homan feels this adjustment is made in the interest of improving equity for all students and recognizing that all aspects of the organization are intertwined.

A vote was made by Mr. Hayner and seconded by Dr. Allison-Ampe to approve and appoint Ms. Elmer to the position of Assistant Superintendent of Services. Mr. Hayner spoke of Ms. Elmer's professional manner and said that Ms. Elmer has done a phenomenal job representing APS. Ms. Morgan voiced her concern of the process even though she is supporting the contract. Mr. Kardon mentioned open searches for positions but believes this is under the Superintendent's discretion and he has no problem supporting the decision. Dr. Allison-Ampe speaks in support of both the positions here and has no problem with this process and doesn't think an open search would have found a better candidate. Mr. Schlichtman thinks it is a deserved direction and the budget allows. He feels the Superintendent's support is important to him and thinks we owe it to the Superintendent to give her the people she wants and needs.

A motion was made by Mr. Kardon, seconded by Mr. Hayner, to approve the contract and for the Chair to sign the contract.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Schlichtman yes, Mr. Thielman, yes, Dr. Allison-Ampe, yes, Mr. Kardon, yes, Ms. Morgan yes, Mr. Hayner, yes, Ms. Exton yes. (7-0-0)

### **9:30 p.m. Superintendent Update**

#### **COVID Update**

Dr. Homan reported a significant uptick in COVID cases in the community but we do not see this same uptick in the schools. She encourages families to take precautions and take antigen tests before they come back from April break. Masking will be considered, depending on cases in classrooms.

**Strategic Planning Update** – 62 stakeholders, students, families, administrators and community members. First meeting happened on April 12. One more April date is scheduled as well as five more meetings in May. Rest of the meetings are in person and they appreciate the AEF support. Members will be paid and fed! Those under 16 will have an option of volunteer hours.

#### **Other Updates –**

Dr. Homan gave an update which included that three Ottoson National History Day Projects made Nationals and that Jason Levy was nominated as NHD Teacher of the Year. There was a spectacular production of The Who's Tommy in Watertown, an Early Literacy Presentation to SEPAC, a Deeper Learning Dozen Conference coming up in British Columbia in May, an Equity Audit Update, Elementary Literacy Core Team Update and enrollments, including administrative searches.

Dr. Allison-Ampe and Mr. Kardon asked for some adjustments to the enrollment numbers to include/not include different line items and Dr. Homan answered.

### **9:41 p.m. Consent Agenda**

Roll Call Vote: Warrant #22220, April 5, 2022, \$809,834.15  
School Committee Regular Meeting Minutes, March 31, 2022

A motion was made by Mr. Hayner and seconded by Dr. Allison-Ampe to approve Warrant #22220 dated on April 5, 2022 for \$809,834.15 and the regular School Committee Minutes of March 31, 2022.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Schlichtman, yes, Mr. Thielman, yes, Dr. Allison-Ampe, yes, Mr. Kardon, yes, Ms. Morgan, yes, Mr. Hayner, yes, Ms. Exton, yes.

### **9:42 p.m. Second Read and Vote on Policies, BDA, BEDB, BID, AC, AC-R, JICK**

Mr. Schlichtman made a motion and it was seconded by Mr. Hayner to approve/amend the six policies.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Schlichtman, yes, Mr. Thielman, yes, Dr. Allison-Ampe, yes, Mr. Kardon, yes, Mr. Hayner, yes, Ms. Exton, yes.

### **9:43 p.m. Subcommittee/Liaison Reports/Announcements**

- Budget – No Report (Dr. Allison-Ampe)
- Community Relations – April 30 chat, METCO scheduled (Ms. Exton)
- Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Accountability – No Report (L. Kardon)

- Facilities – No Report (J. Thielman)
- Policies and Procedures – once we get back from vacation there is work to do (P. Schlichtman)
- AHS Building Committee – A meeting is scheduled for May 3 (J. Thielman)
  
- Liaison reports – None
- Announcements – Mr. Hayner announced the EDCO members have all committed to pay so dissolution is going forward. AEF is sponsoring its first 5K Race, signups are going fast.
- Future Agenda Items

**9:46 p.m.** A motion was made by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Kardon to move into Executive Session.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Schlichtman, yes, Mr. Thielman, yes, Dr. Allison-Ampe, yes, Mr. Kardon, yes, Ms. Morgan, yes, Mr. Hayner, yes, Ms. Exton, yes.