
TO: Arlington School Committee
FROM: Dr. Elizabeth C. Homan, APS Superintendent
DATE: 10/18/22
RE: CFO Search Recommendation

Dear Arlington School Committee,

As you are aware, we have conducted a thorough search for a Chief Financial Officer for the Arlington Public Schools. Our initial search committee interviewed seven candidates and moved two finalists forward for consideration. Those finalists interviewed with members of the central office staff, administrators, teachers, and community members, and completed a performance assessment to demonstrate their skills on four tasks required of the role of CFO.

At the conclusion of this search, after some reflection, I reached out to our current Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Michael Mason, who as you know was recruited by the Town of Arlington to fill the role of Deputy Town Manager. In partnership with the School Committee, I provided Mr. Mason with a counter-offer that includes a title adjustment to Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, which he has accepted. It is my recommendation today that you approve the proposed contract in your materials, appointing Mr. Mason to this role effective January 1, 2023.

As you know, the Arlington Public Schools has undergone a rapid expansion of staff and students over the past decade, without many changes to central office reporting structures or capacity. This is a role that is common in districts the size and scale of Arlington and will allow us to remain competitive with neighboring districts. Appointing Mr. Mason to this role will accompany a reorganization of Central Office administrative and operational functions, which I will address later in this memo.

This was not a role I was able or willing to offer our finalists, but it is one for which I can recommend Mr. Mason with no hesitation. Mr. Mason already informally leads those who will come under his direct supervision in this new role with great success. He has overseen, as CFO, many aspects of district operations and the development of implementation of several forward-thinking and equity-focused budgets during his tenure in Arlington. He is an innovative leader who takes initiative; considers alternative solutions to challenges; and responds to the needs of families, staff, and most importantly, our students. He approaches budgeting with our values at the center of his decision-making, and communicates budget decisions clearly and with great transparency to the School Committee, the Town Finance Committee, and the community of Arlington.

Equitable access to all of the opportunities the Arlington Public Schools offers drives Mr. Mason's approach to district leadership. He builds procedures and systems that will support all staff in meeting the needs of our students and families. Mr. Mason is a capacity-builder, who supports leaders and staff in his department and across the system to understand the financial procedures and regulations in place so that they can do their work effectively and efficiently. He makes time and finds opportunities for growth for those who report to him and maintains networks that allow him to recruit

and retain an effective and diverse team in the business office, skills I know he will bring and continue to develop in his new role. He successfully liaises with town departments to accomplish goals, and identifies ways in which the schools can use resources more efficiently to allow for more resources to directly impact student learning. I am so pleased for the school system that he has decided to join us on our journey to creating a more equitable, joyful, and empowered educational community.

Building the capacity of a system to support all students and staff requires leaders, myself included, to provide both *high accountability* and *high support* to all departments that fall under their purview. Expansion of staff and students requires us to assess our structures and the extent to which they allow leaders to have high expectations and provide the support required for their staff to meet those expectations. Building capacity and retaining talent also requires us to recognize excellence and provide opportunities within the system for upward mobility. The contract proposal you are receiving today and the reorganization that will accompany it accomplishes these goals.

The reorganization of the Central Office and appointment of two new Assistant Superintendents within a few months are adjustments that individuals need to have an opportunity to ask questions about and discuss with the leadership team. In the next two months, I will present to the school committee and share with all staff an overview of central office changes that have already occurred, will occur during this school year, or will occur as part of our recommended budget and planning for FY24 and in the future. Additionally, Ms. Elmer and Mr. Mason will present and conduct entry plans this year as they develop visions for their new departments, aligned with our developing district strategic plan. These adjustments will provide opportunities for growth within our leadership team and will distribute and share leadership across the offices that provide the effective functioning and leadership of the Arlington Public Schools. Such adjustments parallel our work creating shared leadership structures across our schools and departments, and are aligned with actions we are taking throughout the system to improve the experiences of families, students, and staff.

I appreciate the Committee's and the community's support, and congratulate Mr. Mason; we are so happy to have - and keep - you on the APS team.

Sincerely,
Dr. Elizabeth C. Homan
Superintendent, Arlington Public Schools