



Update to the School Committee

Arlington Public Schools



Molly Blaauw Gillis
she/her

Arlington parent;
Commissioner



Dr. Roderick MacNeal, Jr.
he/him

Assistant
Superintendent



Em Phillips
they/them

AHS GSA
Vice Co-President

March 30, 2023

Year 2 Update

February 2021



Molly Blaauw Gillis
she/her

Arlington parent



Keith March Mistler
he/him

Commissioner



Em Phillips
they/them

GSA Vice Co-President

Keith, Molly and Em presented to the School Committee to update on LGBTQIA+ activities and experiences (including teen stats from the YRBS) at APS and ask for their partnership in three key areas:



Collaboration



**Senior
District-level
Liaison**



**LGBTQIA
Inclusivity**

2021 Macro Asks of the School Committee

With the Intent to Create Specific Outcomes in 2022:



Hiring

We urge that all future hiring committees include active recruitment of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, differently abled, etc.



SAFE Schools Training

Bring in (free) SAFE Schools training to all schools in Arlington annually

Director: Jeff Perrotti
[Click here](#) for more info



Curriculum Review

Include LGBTQIA+ positive curriculum for the 2021-2022 school year

The APS LGBTQIA+ Leadership Rainbow Task Force

What is the APS LGBTQIA+ Leadership Rainbow Task Force?

The Rainbow Task Force is a school community LGBTQIA+ leadership group established by Arlington Public Schools and the Town of Arlington LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission. The group is composed of APS educators, administrators, students, parents/caregivers and community members to create alignment, collaboration, and positive momentum within the Arlington community.

What is the mission of the Rainbow Task Force?

The mission of the Task Force is to promote and support continued awareness, empathy, access, safety, inclusion, and belonging for LGBTQIA+ students, families, caregivers, and staff.


Why was the Rainbow Task Force created?

Let's take a look at the data, which tells an important story.





YRBS Data

- The YRBS is:
 - Conducted by 11 districts from the Middlesex League
 - Updated every 2 years
 - Allows districts to understand the health risks that are facing youth in their communities
 - Promotes information sharing and coordination across school districts, health officials and other community based service providers
 - In the categories of mental health after the pandemic, genderqueer youth in Arlington are less likely to feel close to other people at school, are more likely to suffer from depression, are more likely to plan for and attempt suicide (especially at the middle school level), and are more likely to be electronically bullied, however, based on the data, the percentage of middle school reporting electronic bullying has decreased in Arlington
 - Genderqueer youth in Arlington also are more likely to report to be forced into non-consensual sexual activities
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The APS LGBTQIA+ Leadership Rainbow Task Force: Areas of Focus

1. District-wide Professional Development focused on creating safe, inclusive learning environments for LGBTQIA+ students
2. Collecting and leveraging data to better understand the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in our district
3. Curriculum that includes and reflects LGBTQIA+ experiences
4. Ensuring parity with regards to building facilities and resources across our schools
5. Community Engagement focused on creating environments in which our LGBTQIA+ students can thrive and creating community for both LGBTQIA+ students and caregivers



We have made significant, impactful progress in all five areas



Year 1 (2021-2022):

Established the APS LGBTQIA+
Rainbow Leadership Task Force;
Codified our Mission;
Developed & Launched Workstreams
and Programs

Year 2 (2022- 2023):

Built Momentum,
Increased Collaboration & Community





What We've Accomplished

Professional Development

- Implemented district-wide LGBTQIA+ SAFE Schools Training in 2022-2023

Data

- Beginning in 2021, updated the YRBS to use more inclusive language around gender identity and sexual orientation
- Ongoing improved data collection and analysis through YRBS and other DOE mechanisms in partnership with Kim Visco and all building and district administrators and instructional staff.
- YRBS launched today (3/30) at AHS with inclusive updates.

Curriculum



- In 2021, established the Symmes Grant Team to review and update Human Development & Growth Health Curriculum, implemented in 2022 - 2023 in partnership with Kim Visco



Parity of resources and facilities

- In 2022, confirmed direction on adjustments to the plans for the AHS restrooms and changing facilities
- In 2023, ensured all APS elementary schools have a Rainbow Alliance or are in the process of establishing one this year





What We've Accomplished (continued)

Community Engagement

- Launched a successful series of well attended **LGBTQIA+ Community Conversations: Three in Year 1; Four in Year 2**
- In 2023, **convened leadership of the elementary Rainbow Alliances, middle school QSAs, and high school GSA representing every APS school to:**
 - Create connection w/each other and district administration (Dr. MacNeal participates in every meeting)
 - Share best practices
 - Amplify student voices
 - Create community
- **On May 13, 2023, hosting our first annual district-wide Pride celebration** at AHS driven by the Rainbow groups across the district, the Task Force, and the Rainbow Commission

♡♡

**We've created partnership and engagement with the extended community:
students, parents & caregivers, educators, community members, community leaders**



Key Takeaways As We Enter Year 3

Dr. MacNeal and the extended APS team, as well as the Human Rights Commission, have been **incredible partners** to the Task Force and Commission in this work

In just over two years, we've created trust, momentum, and **a strong foundation for this work in our schools and in our community**

We have created greater connectivity and engagement with the **elementary school RAs, student QSAs and GSA** over the past year; **we are a community**

This is a journey. We need to continue to bring the extended community along with us through education, conversation, and empathy building. That approach **takes time and is highly effective** as demonstrated by the work and progress over the past two years

Our Community Conversations have provided a safe space for LGBTQIA+ students and families to convene, interact and create community

Next year, we need to do more, not less to support these families and students

We need the support of the School Committee, senior administration and the cooperation of the extended district to ensure the programs we've put in place are **sustainable and enduring**



Year 3: Ensure Sustainability of the Programs We've Established (2023 – 2024)

Build upon district-wide LGBTQIA+ SAFE Schools training w/additional learning & PD opportunities for staff

Curriculum

- **Support further improvements to the Human Growth & Development Health curriculum** through the Symmes Grant group in partnership with Kim Visco
- Ensure representation and inclusivity of **LGBTQIA+ experiences, people and topics in all content areas**

Data


- **Continue to support and champion improved data collection and analysis** through YRBS and other DOE mechanisms in partnership with Kim Visco and all building and district administrators and instructional staff



Continue to ensure parity of resources and facilities among all APS schools



Deepen partnership and expand engagement with the extended community

- **Host four LGBTQIA+ Community Conversations** with guest speakers and opportunities for interaction among the community
 - **Continue to convene the leadership of the elementary Rainbow Alliances, middle school QSAs and high school GSA**
 - Host two community building events for students, including a start of school kick-off, and annual end-of-year Pride celebration
 - Establish mechanisms for LGBTQIA+ students and their families transitioning into new APS schools to connect with one another and create community
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**Continued
Support
and
Collaboration**



**Continued
Transparency
and Open
Lines
of
Communication**



**Continued
Intentional
LGBTQIA+
Inclusivity**

2023 Macro Asks of the School Committee

With the Intent to Create Specific Outcomes:



Endurance of the Task Force and the Programs and Community We've Established

The collective work and collaboration of the Task Force with the community has made this progress possible. The Task Force requires both partnership and autonomy to be successful and endure



Deputy Assistant Superintendent Liaison

Dr. Mona Walker as our official primary liaison moving forward to ensure continuity, sustained momentum, access, action and accountability from senior leadership



More LGBTQIA+ Learning and Training

Adding onto the district-wide LGBTQIA+ Professional Learning & Training opportunities for staff



Thank You
and
Q&A