

FY2022 End of Year Report  
Budget Advisory Council

Dear Dr. Kanninen and Members of the Arlington Public School Board:

We appreciate the opportunity to have served you and the Arlington Public School community as members of the Budget Advisory Council during the 2021-2022 school year. We share the board's sentiment to have a fiscal environment that allows APS to invest and overcome the challenges from the pandemic. The compensation increase and investments in class size reduction and special education, among others, begin to address long-standing challenges noted in previous budget year cycles. Simply noted, this raises the cost per pupil from \$20,648 to \$23,386 – a 13.23% increase.

In our end-of-year report, we would like to highlight our continued concern about the fiscal sustainability may also create

conditions in the future for deficit reduction measures that could unwind the investments being made now. To conclude our report, we note, for consideration, three topic areas: learning loss and achievement gaps, class sizes, and cross-committee engagement.

### **Fiscal Sustainability**

The BAC remains concerned about the long-term sustainability of the APS budget. Future

revenue to balance the budget. We recommend that APS consider fiscal sustainability in the following ways:

- Expenses and revenue broadly in line with one another
- Budgets that stabilize staffing at levels that reflect how we wish to instruct and administer the school system without frequent expansion or contraction
- Minimal use of one-time funding to address recurring expenses

There are inherent risks to meeting the long-term budget projections that should be quantified (where possible) and addressed as part of the annual budgeting process. Specific current risks include:

- Impact of declining total student population – sources may include less children entering public school, increased charter,



students. APS has received significant one-time funds and has substantial reserves available and should be using those to invest in resources and technologies to help the students impact most to, at a minimum, return to their previous academic trajectory.

As we move into a 4th academic year that is impacted by the pandemic, we recommend that APS develop and price a comprehensive student recovery plan that builds on improvements this year to address not only learning loss experienced by students, but also their social and emotional needs, and possible trauma related to the pandemic. We recognize that for some students, particularly Black and Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and English language learners, these challenges predate the pandemic. We cannot undo the decades of historic marginalization for these students, but we can target efforts to ensure current middle school and high schools students graduate with grade-level math and literacy skills while APS undertakes other longer-term plans to improve future outcomes.

APS should look to further expand the following over a multi-year period to close achievement gaps:

- Additional math and reading tutors and specialists
- Supplemental educational technologies and subscription programs
- Expanded summer school “Learning Loss” programs – live and virtual
- Target additional resourcing using student progress metrics to supplement an evenly distributed level of resourcing to each school.

We recommend that APS develop this plan through the fall of 2022, with a presentation to the board in November, similar to the 2021 [Summer School Program Review](#) conducted in Fall 2021. The rationale is to allow APS and School Board members to consider if any closeout funds should be put towards these recovery efforts rather than waiting for the next budget cycle and a 5th budget year.

- APS should identify the improvements it has undertaken this school year that will meaningfully contribute to student recovery. For example, adoption of literacy and math resources, reduction in planning factors, retention of otherwise "excess" school counselors and social workers, relaunch of the acao-1 (t)-wi(our)-2(he)-d1 ( )5 (a)1 ( s)-b2 ( )ar, aortfo2 (

- APS should, over the course of the fall, engage with stakeholder groups similar to the focus groups it conducted as part of the Summer School Program Review in the fall of 2021 and presented to the School Board last November. This engagement will help to identify the needs, concerns, and possible remedies to build on the efforts undertaken this year.
- APS should identify currently available funding sources to develop a fiscally conscious comprehensive plan, as well as consider how 2021-2022 closeout funds can be applied to this effort. For example, how will funds from the recent \$2 million Onward and Upward grant be deployed; has APS been awarded other grant funds related to the tutoring effort; are there funds remaining from the American Rescue Plan ESSER III grants? We also echo our budget work session recommendation that additional resources be allocated

- Comprehensive review of APS planning factors to develop an ideal-state staffing model – regardless of fiscal environment. This would include the growth in the administrative staff and being in line with like jurisdictions and best practices.
- Learning loss recovery plan
- Reviewing school-level staffing and resources based on learning loss, class size, and achievement gaps
- Independent review of proposed efficiencies, especially those proposed in the Long-

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Appendix 1 – BAC-proposed FY2024 Budget Direction Items

## **Appendix 1**

### **Proposed FY2024 Budget Direction Items**

- Project an objective staffing level for APS, across all scales, and its impact on future expenses and revenue requirements
- Stress test the Superintendent's Proposed FY2024 Budget for various headwinds and scenarios and use these results to inform mitigation measures and reserve policy
- Define a set of principles to be implemented as part of its annual budget direction that clarifies on what reserves and one