

Arlington School Board  
English Language Arts Advisory Committee (ELAAC)  
May 5, 2023

Sarah Cruz

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One of the most common complaints that our committee hears from parents is that their students are not being given consistent writing instruction that includes meaningful assignments and actionable feedback. In APS, teachers are largely on their own to develop writing assignments and expectations for their classes. Although some teachers may be providing rigorous writing instruction, this is not consistent across APS. Students and families report extreme variations from school to school, and sometimes even from class to class within the same school. APS alumni feedback that our committee gathered in 2019 suggested that APS graduates do not feel prepared for the rigors of college writing. The alumni suggested that APS consider more research-paper assignments, more teacher feedback, and more writing experiences in general to better prepare students for college and career. Further, anecdotal stories suggest that some students entering the AP and IB programs feel unprepared for the extent of writing required in those programs.

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- B. The writings should evolve over the course of multiple drafts to encourage revision. The revision between drafts should be guided by substantial, qualitative written feedback from teachers.
- C. The writings should be argumentative / persuasive, where students develop and support their own arguments in response to the arguments of others.
- D. Students should have significant choice in their topic, argument, and genre.

By the end of middle school, APS should ensure that all students are effective in the mechanics of writing to prepare them for lengthier writing assignments in high school. We recognize that many students enter high school without a firm grasp of writing mechanics. In order to support such students, APS might consider creating student-led Writing Centers at each high school, where students could go after school to receive feedback and writing support from peers. Not only would this be a benefit for students who have not fully mastered writing mechanics, but it would also provide an extension opportunity for students who are more skilled in this area.

. There is simply no excuse for students graduating APS having never received substantive writing instruction and feedback. We recognize that teachers may need wide-ranging professional development in order to deliver high-quality writing instruction, which APS will need to plan for as well.

Budgetary implications: Funding for professional learning is included in the ELA department budget; creating a plan for writing instruction should be a current function of the ELA department.

This recommendation aligns with the following core values and goals in the Strategic Plan:

- **C** : Equity, Inclusivity, Excellence, Innovation
- : Student Success
  - - Embed the 5Cs (critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship skills) into curriculum and instruction.
    - Deliver curriculum through innovative and relevant instruction that is differentiated to meet the diverse needs of each student.

Committee Vote: 9 yes, 0 no, 1 no vote

APS has proven success with the current grant-funded one elementary literacy coach and one secondary literacy coach. Our recommendation is that APS add an additional two coaches per level to enhance the

ability of the ELA office to provide job-embedded professional learning for teachers. Teachers continue to request more differentiated support, which a coach can provide. The professional learning that the coach will provide to teachers will include data analysis, diagnostics and intervention planning, writing instruction, provide

Sources:

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Recommendation 2:

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