Introduce new chair, Desiree Jaworski.

Introduction of committee members.

Update from last year’s co-chair, Vell Rives.  Discuss consistency among chairs and co-chairs.  Frustration about 6-year limit on committee seats.

Note about indoor air quality.

APS updates:

1: social emotional learning commitment in schools.  Data shared at July board meeting showed struggles of students. Older levels were troubled with relationships.  Younger was emotional regulation.  Sharp uptake in suicide assessments per pandemic. Think about it at a tier one level in all classes at all levels. Each school will have a lead in this role to coordinate materials, surveys, and tracking over time. Confidentiality discussion. FERPA guidelines explained.  Staffing and budget issues briefly addressed. Survey data is too new to tell trends in emotional well-being over time, particularly since pandemic. Difficult adjustment going from isolation at home to a big setting with 2000 kids.

2: health and PE.  Debbie: Fully staffed. Training with Arlington county police for teachers on risk behaviors. Held workshops on culturally responsive teaching. In October, teacher training on askable adult, part of Project Peace, which addresses domestic violence, relationships, etc. Will also address confidentiality of sensitive information. Vaping is still a problem. Alcohol consumed in fake bottle with bottom that screws off. Teachers are being educated about tricks of the trade for substance misuse. No police in buildings or athletic events. Safety and security counselors are now in schools to replace police. Arlington police is 58 members short, down roughly ten percent.

3: Cell phone policy. Air buds should not be allowed in schools.  In HS, two scenarios: in one class, there was a clear plastic shoe organizer holding kids’ cell phones. Those kids were attentive and engaged. The other class had nothing like that, and those kids were texting under their desks, ear buds in ears, teacher had to babysit electronics in place of teaching. Phones can be a danger in an active shooting situation.   Away for the Day - rough in the beginning but gets better over time Shoe holder model works well.  At TJ, they have a two strikes and you’re out approach to cell phones, but can use phones at lunchtime.  Kids can use phones to cheat by taking photos of tests. Consistent, clear policy about phones is best. Away for the Day decision is a school by school process.  Middle schools have tried it and families have to buy into it. Facebook Arlington Education matters showed that parents are in favor of a cell phone policy in schools.  Status of Away for the Day - not formalized for approval. Principles have been made aware but they have administrative burden concerns at the expense of instruction Wakefield teacher has the shoe holder approach and it works well. Away for the Day was in the SHAB recommendations last year.

4: nutrition/food services:  Amy McCloskey.  Free meals for all ended this year with lots of concern. Many still think meals are free.  Lots of big changes.  ID cards made for those under 4th grade and scanner pin pads to use. Superintendent feels comfortable to use cards. Free and reduced meals need to be applied for this year.  29% right now.  Grace period of 30 days from last year. Pandemic waivers for free meals, including weekends, have expired. APS policy says all kids get fed a complete meal no matter what. This can lead to debt, which APS has.  Giant partnered with APS to raise money and got $26,000 to reduce debt.  Will be applied to five CEP schools, where kids are eating free breakfast and lunch each day. SNAP TANF requirement. APS gets donations, as well, to bring down debt for individual schools. PTAs have done this in the past. Letters go home to parents who owe money.  MySchool Bucks has low balance reminders, as well. Debt stays with each child throughout their school years at APS. Giant might do another drive this spring to reduce debt. Macy’s reduces meal debt in London County.  Debt doesn’t affect quality of food at schools. $11 million budget for food and nutrition in Arlington.

National school lunch program is regulated, requiring fruit and veggies.  Farm to school pilots in Arlington, as well. DoD produce is also used by Arlington to bring down prices for food.  In terms of quality, APS belongs to a cooperative, do taste tests, rate on a scale and only highest ratings get picked, then do a beta test at schools, and pick foods based on kids’ preferences.  USDA doesn’t have a sugar requirement but are working to do so.  Pre-K has a sugar requirement of not more than 6 grams in cereal. Arlington does not serve chocolate milk at breakfast.  Pandemic supply chain issues slowed some progress.  Farm to School week is first week of October. APS will participate.  National School Lunch Week is second week of October.  APS will feature local produce, including an effort to have every single food item to come from a local source. 150 miles is considered local.  Discussion about higher fat foods being more acceptable.

5: SHAB workgroup updates:  Away for Day is important and was made last year but school board hasn’t acted on it.  ACTL is trying for all committees to have a close out, for the board to come back and say how the reports factor into board decisions. Recommendation on Away for Day has been made twice.  ACTL rep is Christina Torres and she is SHAB’s rep.  We could talk with her or Bethany about how to ensure school board is accountable for SHAB recommendations If we haven’t heard by Spring, we should approach board about decisions based on SHAB recommendations.

6: Air quality: Lots of research on school air quality citations.  What should the process be for something that is actionable? Suggestion is that APS set own standards/goals for air standards, especially for new construction. Likely to have 2.5 changes per classroom, when we need 26 changes to be good quality. When buildings are SO energy efficient, is affects air quality. Need filters to clean air coming from outside. Since we invest so much money in our new construction, we should ensure we put resources toward better air quality systems. Japan has co2 standards that are above the U.S. APS should be a leader on this. Taxpayer dollars are better used to address better air quality. SHAB gave data points to FEC? High levels of CO2 affect drowsiness of students. Mold is checked in APS buildings. Facilities and operations committee is responsible for this issue. Joint recommendations are useful, but we should be aware of duplicative efforts. Vell spoke with facilities superintendent last year and they have certain targets.  We asked if those targets could be moved to a better level and to do upgrades faster.  competing interests and limited funds are a barrier. Facilities/operations is in general agreement with SHAB, but there are other school districts that do much more than APS. Pandemic is spawning new ideas about air quality.  good time to gather data and look at other districts to keep dialogue going.

Previous four subcommittees:

Screen use subgroup needs a chair.  There is still a need for it.  No decision made today.

Air Quality/Asthma subgroup

Curriculum subgroup

Outdoor/recess subgroup - big disparity among schools in terms of outdoor resources

APS support for J2 is addressed in health social emotional curriculum. Family life addresses this, too, and families can opt out but health/education cannot be overridden.

We need to look at our wellness policy and our tri-annual assessment, it’s due this April 2023.  We are supposed to have wellness councils in every school.  Last report is posted online.  Many principals are not tracking their schools’ data. Governors score card is coming back into existence this year. We need to re-read our wellness policies to determine if we need wellness councils.

Emergency Preparedness update for next week.