

## BOARD BRIEF

Date: March 1, 2019

For ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

For INFORMATION X \_\_\_\_\_

Board Agenda: Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No X \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** Terri H. Mazingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer  
Lisa Piehota, Ed.D., Executive Director of Elementary Instruction

**THROUGH:** Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and  
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** Update on Jefferson-Houston K-8 School

### SUMMARY

This Brief summarizes the status of Jefferson-Houston K-8 School and the work currently underway to ensure success.

**Principal Coaching and Leadership Development:** Through February 2019, Mr. MScott Berkowitz, principal at Jefferson-Houston (J-H), has been supported by KPD Education; provided via the now concluded UVA partnership. Two retired principals from Fairfax County have been at J-H several times a week to provide ongoing support with all aspects of school management. Targeted assistance was provided with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), instructional leadership through observations, professional learning, and general school management and leadership. The Executive Director of Elementary Instruction provides weekly support with teacher and staff evaluation, instructional walk-throughs, leadership development, International Baccalaureate (IB) implementation, and general school management. The Executive Director of Secondary Instruction supports middle school matters including scheduling, coursework, hiring, and IB implementation. In addition, two veteran ACPS principals serve as mentors supporting Mr. Berkowitz.

**PBIS Support:** Jefferson-Houston has implemented PBIS as a framework to teach and reward our students for displaying positive behavior. Both elementary and middle grades use a stamp system to reward positive behaviors. J-H uses *ROAR*, which stands for *Respect, Our best, Always safe, and Responsible*. Each day, students have the opportunity to earn stamps for displaying those core values.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Jefferson-Houston has hosted five monthly incentives to reward students in both elementary and middle grades. The PBIS committee has also facilitated two professional learning opportunities for staff, one during pre-service week and the other in November as a refresher. The PBIS committee meets monthly to discuss how PBIS is being implemented throughout the school and to develop strategies to improve practice.

In November, the PBIS committee initiated a PBIS Reboot in an effort to increase community buy-in and reteach our expectations to all students. After the Reboot, suspensions decreased from fifteen in November to seven in December. There will be another reboot in April after returning from Spring Break. Our PBIS monthly rewards and ROAR recognitions will continue until June. Teachers are modeling and teaching ROAR everyday through their classroom instruction and routines.

**Cafeteria Support:** Four additional cafeteria hostesses have been secured allowing for additional coverage in cafeterias and removing coaches from having this duty, thus enabling them to spend more time supporting teachers during the day.

**IB:** Jefferson-Houston is fully authorized in the Primary and Middle Years Programmes. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is a framework that supports transdisciplinary learning anchored in inquiry and during instruction teachers facilitate connections between ACPS curriculum, Virginia standards, and global contexts in an effort to develop international mindedness in students. This year, there has been a concerted effort to complete the primary grades units. Jefferson-Houston is in the sixth year as a PYP school and the evaluation visit for reauthorization of the PYP is scheduled for March 25-26, 2019. During the visit, a team from IB will observe classrooms and meet with teachers about the instructional and collaborative process at Jefferson-Houston.

Jefferson-Houston has been authorized in the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for two years. Within MYP, students are required to take a minimum of fifty hours in Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science, Individuals and Societies or History, Spanish, Physical Education, and Visual/Performing Arts in each year of the program.

## BOARD BRIEF

Instruction in each content area is inquiry-based and fosters international mindedness through connection of content and global contexts, real-world issues and current events. The following are the professional learning activities to support the IB programmes at Jefferson Houston.

- Conducted summer planning sessions in July and August, 2018 to develop and refine PYP Unit Planners.
- Full day training provided for staff new to PYP during ACPS Professional learning days in October and March.
- IB Coordinator, Principal, Academic Principal, and other staff attended IB sponsored training during school year 2018/2019. Additional training is being planned for staff for summer 2019.
- Developed partnerships with other IB schools and conducted site visits.

**SWD:** There have been many changes this year to address the gaps in performance for students with disabilities. Elementary schedules include a 30 minute intervention block in which all students with a need have opportunities for targeted interventions by the Special Education teacher or classroom teacher. At the middle grades, there are also dedicated intervention classes for students with IEPs who have needs in reading and math that are taught by Special Education teachers.

Jefferson-Houston is also engaged in embedded professional learning with Dr. Marilyn Friend. Dr. Friend is supporting high-yield co-teaching models and enhanced specially designed instruction. Teachers work with Dr. Friend in planning sessions, in the classroom and she also provides feedback to individual Special Education teachers and their co-teaching partners. The observational data collected to date shows an increase in the use of the co-teaching model and implementation of specially designed instruction.

**AVID:** Currently, there are three sections of AVID and twenty-two of these students are in their second year in the program. The focus for Jefferson-Houston has been on AVID school-wide implementation. The following are the professional learning activities to support the AVID school-wide at J-H.

- 2018-2019 focus on *Focused Note-Taking (FNT) and Writing to Learn* strategies across AVID 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades to ensure students develop accountability and strategies for gathering and application of essential information.
- Training and support to staff by local AVID Site Coordinator and AVID District Director (DD) each quarter; monthly support provided to AVID Site Coordinator by the AVID DD.
- School Improvement Plan (SIP) and AVID Site Team Goals intersect through *note-taking process and specific skills related to summarizing and reflecting* and other targeted *writing to learn* strategies to support growth for all students.
- Quarterly meetings with AVID District Director and leadership to engage in progress monitoring and discussion for how AVID resources can support school goals.

**TAG:** The TAG Coordinator and Instructional Specialist support the Jefferson-Houston TAG teacher. They both started the year by meeting with administration and the TAG teacher to discuss how TAG students were being served and sought to identify additional needs. The scope of services for K-8 includes: supporting General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) services; providing Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) services in Math, English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies; as well as supporting middle school Honors teachers. Efforts to identify more students have resulted in a growing TAG enrollment at Jefferson-Houston.

The TAG Instructional Specialist has worked with school administrators to create a schedule to include middle school Honors support, collecting DEPS, etc. Springboard resources designed to enhance the rigor of English/Language Arts Honors classes have been provided along with professional development provided by the consultants and supported by the school division.

**Communication with Staff and Community:** Mr. Berkowitz has implemented a regular newsletter to families that provides information on the happenings at Jefferson-Houston. He also distributes a weekly newsletter for staff that provides information on weekly calendar events, professional learning, and curriculum sequence and pacing. Dr. Hutchings, Superintendent of Schools, attended a PTA community meeting on February 13, 2019, to answer questions and provide an update to the school community regarding supports in place for Jefferson-Houston. He also met with the Jefferson-Houston staff on February 25, 2019, to provide them with an update. Dr. Hutchings remains in regular contact with Mr. Berkowitz to ensure supports are in place.

## RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent recommends the School Board review the information provided in the brief.

## CONTACT

Dr. Lisa Piehota, [lisa.piehota@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:lisa.piehota@acps.k12.va.us), 703-619-8317