

The third meeting of the Human Resources Advisory Committee (2019-20), (Hereafter HRAC) met on Monday, January 13, 2020 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:44 p.m.

In attendance were:

- Elaine Tholen, School Board Member Liaison
- Stefanie Kline, Community Representative from Providence District
- Leonard Bumbaca, HRAC Co-Chair, Community Representative from Mason District
- Melody Thorson, HRAC Co-Chair, Community Representative from Springfield District
- Kimberly Adams, FEA President
- John McLaren, FCFT Senior Member Relations Specialist
- Brittany Burke, FCFT HR Manager
- Tina Williams, FCFT President
- Sean McDonald, Director Talent Acquisition & Management, Human Resources
- Cheryl Larsen, Community Representative from Mount Vernon District
- Helena Harte, Student Representative
- Victoria Heidt, Student Representative

The meeting proceeded as follows:

6:00 p.m. to 6:07 p.m. Minutes, Meeting Agenda, and Introductions

The minutes of the December 2 2019 meeting and the January 13 2020 Agenda were approved. All present were able to participate in introductions.

Co-Chairman Bumbaca asked for a volunteer to take meeting minutes and Student Representative Victoria Heidt volunteered.

6:07 p.m. to 6:09 p.m. New School Board

Sean McDonald re-stated that our new School Board representative is Elaine Tholen, the Dranesville District Representative.

6:09 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Employee Organization Presentations and QA

Tina Williams, representative of the Fairfax County Federations of Teachers, shared improved changes in EER energy and the change in the structure of HR.

- EER specialists not working with Federation of Teachers, employees are denied rights to accompanied representation since the beginning of the 2019/20 school year

- Regulation 4429.5 (proposed draft)
 - Rewritten, no teacher rights, only responsibilities
 - Progressive Discipline removed
 - Does not promote a caring culture
- Educators held under contract with loose definition of “just cause” for termination
- Distrust from employees in how they will be treated from central office
- Employee fear of retaliation and administrative bullying
- Teachers have called EER for information but then there is no confidentiality or support
- There is a trend of veteran teachers being pushed out of the school system which is a punitive process with no stipend or reward system.
 - Prevalent age discrimination of teachers age 40 years and older. This punitive process was used to dismiss teachers. In 2012/13, there were thirty cases.
 - Date is unknown when this began to happen but around 2011/2012
- Short and long term disability claims related to stress and workload demands have increased.
- ADA processes
 - Accommodations not met
 - Punitive, not collaborative process
 - Once an ADA form was submitted, it was assumed they could not fulfill the duties of their job instead of working with the employee to help them
- Leave without pay, employees are penalized in this area
 - John McLaren explained the process is improperly prorated. Employees often owe money when they take leave in excess of their net pay. June and December are the most expensive months whereas January is the least expensive month. Employees don’t “choose” which month to deal with crises, and the costs of lost work vary greatly, simply because FCPS uses a cumbersome payroll system.
- Workplace harassment
 - An instructional assistant was not allowed to check her personal emails during the school day until lunch.
 - Multiple memos (6) entered into local record over a three day period
 - A memorandum was not allowed to be removed from school files even though it should have been removed.
 - Many cases of leave without pay.
 - Inappropriate comments and lack of accommodations related to disability
 - Contract changes without notice
 - Age and racial discrimination
 - Conflict of interest in EER when the employee shows up for a meeting at HR to find their HR Rep with their supervisor.

6:30 p.m. to 6:34 p.m. SB Liaison Elaine Tholen Introduction

Elaine Tholen, the School Board Member Liaison arrived during a break in the School Board work session occurring at the same time. Co-Chairman Bumbaca made the decision pause the previous presentation. Elaine Tholen introduced herself and shared her excitement for working with the committee. Introductions were conducted with all present members.

6:34 p.m. to 6:49 p.m. Employee Organization Presentations and QA (Continued)

- Want to get more support to teachers who are starting their careers: mentors, clearly set them up for success by explaining what is expected of them, relevant professional development, block of time to meet with their mentors or some time to observe other educators to watch through observation.
- Teachers want to ask but they do not want their administrator to believe there is a weakness or a flaw. Seeking out help should be welcomed as everyone has failures; we learn from our mistakes as we tell our children and the same concept should be shared in education. There should be a level of support — we are here for you.
- Braddock Elementary has a mandatory substitute teacher form that is filled out at the end of the day that asks questions such as “Did you follow the lesson plan?” Subs want to go to this school because of the different process.
- A sense of “team” regardless of your position at the school. Everyone from the custodians to the counselors are valued and treated with respect. Everyone should be able to have a voice at their school. Our educators are credited professionals with incredible experience and deserve the same respect as anyone else in any other profession.
- IA’s come from broad perspectives and should be paid accordingly. Some IA’s have PhDs and choose to be IA’s.
 - Very often IA’s feel they are not respected and perform jobs that they are unprepared for (i.e.: special education teaching or being the sole teacher)
 - As roles become blurred and/or improperly defined, scope creep makes the work load untenable.
- Workload conditions are contributing to burnout. Studies have shown that teachers put in 10 hours weekly into their job beyond teaching (i.e.: grading, emails, parent conferencing).
 - Teachers are often asked to cover for other teachers which takes away from their planning time.
 - Specialists often have to take over for others and thus, miss their lunch periods.
- Special education issues go unaddressed as teachers are worried about retaliation, impact on their career, or job loss. It is easy to find who filed the report.
 - Teachers need to be trained on de-escalation and the proper uses of restraint. This is being worked on in throughout county.

- Cheryl Larsen asked the question “Have we done any research on specific regions and schools that experience these issues?”
 - John McLaren: This was done over a period of time so we did not compile regional information but we still track it.
 - Co-Chair Bumbaca: Is there a cluster of schools that we are aware of?
 - Central office is pretty widespread, but whenever we get calls we separate it by region and then track by week, per year, etc.
 - Is this brought to the attention of the region assistant superintendent?
 - Yes.
 - Have we been successful? Or is the trend still going down for employees?
 - We can get things solved individually, but we want to solve the big issue instead of it being this “quiet” thing. Ad hoc solutions are not addressing systemic needs or trends.

6:49 p.m. to 7:05 p.m. Fairfax Education Association Presentation with Kimberly Adams

- There is a lack of central office staff to deal with ADA issues.
 - Helen Nixon has focused on this, and we are hopeful for changes.
- Kimberly Adams is relatively new to the position.
- FCPS seems to only recognize a problem as a problem when it rises to the level of a grievance. “There must not be an issue because there was no filed grievance.” As in the classroom, their job should be to deal with everything at the lowest level of escalation.
- People are worried that retaliation is coming.
- FEA has been working on “silent witness” rights for around 15 years. Getting someone else in the room so allows for increased professionalism and decreased volatility. It protects all sides by preventing selective recollection.
 - In the process of this happening but not to the extent that they hope. Having a second person in the room would help keep the employer accountable.
 - Prince William County has a form that the silent witness fills out, why can’t FCPS do the same?
- Looking for more support from the region assistant superintendents, especially more communication between HR and these officials.
- Looking into after-school commitments and if it is compensated for middle school teachers
- *Survey about workplace issues:*

The survey was presented in a PowerPoint presentation and the results are as follows.

- 481 participants
 - Differing positions in FCPS
- For those that live in FCPS, there is a direct correlation with a 2nd job being held ○ Issues

- Workload - 48%
- Administrative burdens - 47%
- Planning Time - 36%
- Salary/benefits - 33%
- Workplace environment - 32%
- Class size - 32%
- Staffing Shortage - 30%
- Do you feel safe in your workplace? Overwhelming yes.
- Hours per week in CLTs (collaborative learning time)
 - Around 2 hours which they would like to be lower
 - Co-Chair Bumbaca → How productive are these meetings? They have moved away from being administrator led to teacher led. Their planning time is still being held but it can still be a burden.
 - What do off-periods mean in high schools?
 - Teacher workdays are being filled with meetings instead of following the purpose of a teacher *workday* .
- Have you been denied leave due to sub shortage
 - Yes - 6%
 - No - 49%
 - No, but coverage was placed upon a colleague - 45%
- Workplace bullying?
 - No - 58%
 - Yes, from administrator/supervisor - 28%
 - Yes, from co-worker - 16%
- Recent years have seen multiple HR Assistant Superintendents, and this has also been observed in key HR positions. This has impacted consistency of progress, working relationships between FEA and HR, and systemic approaches to systemic issues.

7:05 p.m. to 7:14 p.m. Committee Discussion

- Co-Chair Bumbaca: Is HR properly staffed to fit the needs of a growing size of employees?
- Co-Chair Thorson: How can we standardize regulations? Interpretations are different for each reader?
 - Brittany Burke: There needs to be some consistency in understanding.
 - Tina Williams: Employee voice should be present. There needs to be equity. This is great marketing and shows that FCPS cares about others.

- Co-Chair Bumbaca: It demonstrates the employee's bill of rights (i.e.: this is what you can expect and here is where you can go if you are not treated properly).

Sean McDonald asked the questions of: After having collected this data, what is the next step?
What is your vision?

- Co-Chair Bumbaca responded to this by saying that we are inviting the representatives of the Principals' Association for the February meeting, and then we are inviting Regional Assistant Superintendents for the March meeting. We wanted to start at the ground level before transitioning into higher positions. We wanted to look into intervention and grievance reporting — the whole process. We hope to assess what the conditions are before creating our proposal with suggestions.
- John McLaren: He had an employee that forgot to get a Virginia state survey done in time. The member was threatened to be fired; how can this be considered "just cause" to fire someone?

7:14 p.m. to - 7:17 p.m. Engagement Survey

Sean McDonald shared that the engagement survey was opened in October and there was a vendor (K12 insight) that helped collect and organize the data. On December 10th, the results were shared with LT. Dr. Brabrand should be sharing more of the results in the coming weeks. K 12 consults are being met with in February. Sean McDonald is unsure of when Dr. Brabrand shares this information with the School Board but a work session is being looked into for early spring to share the results in more depth with School Board members.

7:17 p.m. to 7:37 p.m. Data Collection Update

Last year, HRAC spent a lot of time looking into teacher retention and a note was made for someone from ORSI to come in to an HRAC meeting in the future to update on the results of their proposal. HR is already having Fall 2020 staffing conversations with site leaders and will be conducting "Unconscious Bias" training with administrators.

Updates from the proposal that was made to the school Board last year in June:

- Region assistant superintendents working with school-based leaders
 - Working to make sure that school-based leaders ensure properly allocated planning time for teachers
- Calibrate and benchmark the school master schedules
 - Working to make this commitment
- Regional assistant superintendents are willing to come to provide specific information about these directives. Co-Chair Bumbaca is hoping they can come in for our March meeting.

- Sean McDonald's office is also responsible for retention. They have been having plenty of meetings with stakeholder groups. They have started a new initiative in which his team is going to schools to speak directly with principals to ensure his team knows the unique needs for schools.
 - Looking into the make-up of staff (diversity) — from a recruitment standpoint are looking for more ways to diversify the staff while having strong retention rates. Perhaps encouraging staff to delay retirement if possible. They are not seeing a tremendous amount of diversity in teacher training.
 - With these meetings, they get to walk the school and helps them be responsive to the needs of the school — it is a listening and learning process. They have had positive feedback from the principals that they have met with. They want to provide as much support as they can.
 - There is a teacher shortage in the United States, especially with special education and ESOL departments. They want to build pipelines and pathways of teacher talent to get people excited about teaching such as Teachers of Tomorrow. They initiated a spring event last year that focuses on operational events; they need people to work in building services area, IT, etc. A school division has many professions beyond teaching which is neglected by plenty seeking employment.
 - There will be conversations about unconscious bias in hiring the upcoming weeks. What experiences have led employers to be the people they are and how have these experiences impacted the way they approach employment?
- Cheryl Larsen: Workload has come up over and over again about why people leave their jobs in FCPS. We keep getting good people, but they do not want to stay because of workplace conditions. How does this fit into your pipeline?
 - Sean McDonald: This happens on the school-level. Retention is an everyone in FCPS issue. We want to show that there is a connected system of support. They have identified workload as an area of concern; "Overwhelmed" is a word that teachers repeatedly associate their jobs to. What is it that we can remove from folks' plates so that they can ultimately focus on the main plate — students learning? It is on Dr. Brabrand's radar.
 - Cheryl Larsen: CLT meetings and other things come directly from the School Board instead of principals. It is under the realm of "this is what the school has been told to do by FCPS and here is how it is going to affect you all."
 - Sean McDonald: Principals have the largest impact. Dr. Brabrand and his leadership team are looking into removing asks that are unnecessary.
- Co-Chair Bumbaca: Time and the demands on it remains problematic. For example, discipline and redirection in FCPS has turned into a paperwork-intensive system. How do we create a system that recognizes a balance of needs (student/teacher/parent) that is something that teachers are capable of doing when they have five classes of students?
 - Sean McDonald: The conversations are happening throughout the leadership team.

7:37 p.m. to 7:44 p.m. Areas of Focus (AOF) for 2019-2020, Wrap-up and Agenda Setting for Next Month

Co-Chair Bumbaca (at the request of Steve Fiumano in the December meeting) proposed an amendment to our charge by inserting "...based on professional, affirming expectations and existing/updated..." With unanimous consent, the change was made.

February and March meetings will have principal representatives come out and give their perspective. We will be looking into getting ORSI to come in March

April and May will be working meetings as we prepare and finalize the HRAC report. Our 3rd hour is still out there for a meeting as we had previously deferred it.

The Co-Chairs adjourned the meeting at 7:44 after reiterating that the next meeting will be on Monday February 3, 2020.