



May 2017

Dear APS Families,

Arlington Public Schools (APS) is committed to providing all students and staff with a healthy and safe learning environment. While our primary goal is to focus on learning, it is also important to take steps to ensure the safety of every child and of everyone in all of our schools. An essential component of this effort is to make sure that schools are free from the presence of illegal substances (marijuana, cocaine, heroin, opiates, stimulants or tranquilizers), and to eliminate misuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications and related paraphernalia such as syringes.

APS proactively works to educate students about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol and to provide guidance and help in problem-solving, making positive choices and developing supportive relationships. We provide additional resources to students through our school counselors and other community agencies including the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD).

At the same time, we also have a professional responsibility to take appropriate actions when students are in possession of or using illegal or prohibited substances while going to and from school, and during school-related events. (Information about this policy is included in the APS Handbook on page 29.)

Recent local and national news reports have highlighted the alarming rise in the use of illegal drugs. This dangerous trend is occurring in every state and community throughout our nation. In an effort to proactively address this trend in our own community, APS and ACPD will be partnering in a collaborative effort utilizing specially trained Canine (K-9) dogs to conduct searches of school property. These non-aggressive dogs will be used to detect the presence of substances prohibited by law and APS policy.

Please be assured that students will not come into contact with the dogs; all K9 searches at our secondary schools will occur between now and the end of the school year, and over the summer after school hours. Strict measures will be taken to maintain student safety and privacy. We value our partnership with ACPD and appreciate their assistance to support our efforts to send a clear message that drugs and alcohol are not allowed in our schools.

This is just one step APS is taking to make sure our schools remain a safe and secure place for all of our students to learn and grow. We are also taking additional steps to maintain school safety at each of our high schools through the use of school surveillance and radio systems, as well as surveillance equipment on all school buses. We value our partnership with all APS families and appreciate your cooperation and support as we begin to implement these added measures in the closing weeks of this school year and during the summer months ahead.

We welcome your comments as we endeavor to provide the safest learning environment possible at APS. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school administrators or Cintia Johnson, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services, at 703-228-6008 or cintia.johnson@apsva.us. We look forward to your continued support as we strive to keep our schools safe and drug free.

Sincerely,

Patrick K. Murphy
Superintendent

Nancy Van Doren
School Board Chair

Chris Willmore
Wakefield HS

Gregg Robertson
Washington-Lee HS

Raymond Pasi
Yorktown HS

Casey Robinson
H-B Woodlawn

Barbara Thompson
Arlington Community HS

Margaret Chung
Career Center

Cleveland James
Langston HS

Chip Bonar
New Directions

Cintia Johnson
Assistant Superintendent

M. Jay Farr
Chief of Police