Information Technology: A Foundation for Data-Based Decisions

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Dear APS Parents, Students and Arlington Community Members:

As the new Interim Assistant Superintendent of Information Services, I am honored to lead the department of Information Services to serve and support the information technology and service needs of our students, staff, administrators and families of Arlington Public Schools.

The Information Services (IS) department had a great year in 2011-12 that included upgrades to the core infrastructure under the umbrella of Phase I of our Platform Project that include the following:

- A New Email System
- Upgraded Digital Storage System
- The Windows 7 Upgrade

The IS department has also rolled out a new web-based data dashboard that presents APS data to our families and the Arlington community. (*http://dashboard.apsva.us*)

I strongly believe that the 2011-17 Arlington Public Schools Strategic Plan appropriately places emphasis on "Measurement and Analysis of Performance" as a core foundation of the decision-making process and for continuous improvement of all aspects of the school division. The Strategic Plan also calls for a "Comprehensive and Integrated Fact-Based System" that has accurate, integrated, and timely data that is longitudinal, actionable, contextual and interoperable. It also calls for the systems to be reliable, secure and user-friendly. The philosophy, methodology and the framework of the current Strategic Plan provide the basis for the top initiatives of the IS Department for the coming year.

Fact-Based Systems

The biggest priority to which the department's Leadership is fully committed is to provide APS with the tools and infrastructure that are efficient and reliable to support every administrator and teacher in making the right decisions as they tailor their instructional programs to meet the true needs of our students. As a part of this effort, Information Services will design, implement and deploy a new Student Information System (SIS) and the Data Warehouse (DWH) that will constitute the core of the APS Fact-Based Systems. Various stakeholder groups participated in a collaborative effort to identify the new Student Information System (Synergy – Edupoint) and the new Data Warehouse (Student Smart) products that will support the specific needs of APS.

- The new Student Information System that IS will be rolling out is an integrated product suite consisting of a core Student Information System, Grade Book, a new Special Education Module (IEP), an Integrated Parent Portal and a Student Portal. Implementation and training will take place during the 2012-13 school year, and these new components will be available for use by the start of the 2013-14 school year.
- Phase I of the Data Warehouse rollout that will target school and central office administrators will be completed by the end of March 2013. Phase II of the project will include access for teachers. That component will be available by the start of the 2013-14 school year.

We also believe that business and administrative departments need the right tools to evaluate efficiencies in their respective operations and processes. As a part of this effort, IS will be upgrading our Enterprise Resource Planning Software that is used for many of our "business" functions including Finance, Personnel and other services. In addition to the upgrade of the core Oracle eBusiness Suite, Phase I will also include more integration and automation among these functions which will allow APS to monitor business and operational details in real time. This Phase will be completed by November 2013.

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Reliable, Secure and Efficient Infrastructure

I believe that the strength of our services is dependent on the strength of the foundation on which the services are built. In an effort to consolidate our Technology Platform, IS will also complete Phase II of our IT Infrastructure upgrade that was started last year. By June 2013, we will add the following new Platform enhancements:

- The Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) to support the ever-growing needs of the APS staff and students;
- A Single Sign-On Gateway for all core applications supporting APS staff and students; and
- A Wireless Infrastructure Upgrade to support the huge influx of digital devices sharing access on our network.

Our department will also be working closely with the Arlington County to implement a Network Operating Center (NOC) that will greatly enhance the reliability and operations of the existing services and will ensure our ability to maintain operations during disaster or emergency situations.

Integrated Instructional Technology

We the leadership in the IS department strongly believe that Technology is not a replacement for efficient Instruction but is a very powerful supplement and foundation for the most effective delivery of Instruction. We believe that it's a challenging but exciting opportunity to address the needs of instruction in the face of constant changes in technology the world is seeing. It is for this reason that we are truly proud of our colleagues i.e. Instructional Technology coordinators placed in the schools who support Instruction with various technology initiatives and support the needs of Administrators and teachers to enhance learning in the class rooms. Our focus this year for this group will be to help design and develop a core framework of tools and applications that will take advantage of the new foundational technology and data systems that are being implemented to provide the most efficient and effective Instructional Supporting IT platform/toolkit. I personally will meet regularly with the ITCs to pilot new tools in schools and to constantly gather feedback to inform our efforts to establish the core of tools to effectively support excellent instruction in our classrooms. This work will be discussed and developed in partnership with staff work groups throughout the year. The final instructional framework will be documented and a training plan will be developed and deployed by the summer of 2013.

This is an exciting time for the Information Services Department as we are closing in on reaching our goals to provide the right tools to our administrators and teachers; exciting and engaging opportunities for our students; and a platform to help us to engage and partner with our parents and the community.

The key to achieving the high goals we have set is through constant and thorough communication with our stakeholders. Ongoing communication will provide us with feedback to gauge our effectiveness, efficiency and execution, and I will be reaching out for comments, recommendations and feedback through multiple channels including the APS advisory groups, as well as through surveys and forums on our website and through other APS communication outlets.

Sincerely,

Raj Adusumilli
Interim Assistant Superintendent of Information Services

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Detailed Entry Plan Objectives by Constituency Group

Constituency	Entry Plan Objectives
Students	• A unified web portal that provides access to individual student information including assignments, grades, calendars, schedules, transportation, performance reports, instructional supplements as well as communication channels with teachers and administrators.
Families	• A unified web portal that provides access to all related student information such as assignments, grades, calendars, schedules, transportation, performance reports, instructional supplements as well as communication channels with teachers and administrators.
Teachers and Administrators	• A unified SIS that includes all core functionality including attendance, grade book, and reporting, and will also include integration of the Special Education modules. • A Single Sign-On for all core applications supporting Instruction and Administration. • A standard method to communicate with all and families and students as needed. • A standardized Data Warehouse that helps staff access and analyze longitudinal, actionable, contextual and interoperable student data. • A data dashboard platform that will provide data in a wide variety of formats representing various aspects of Instruction as well as business operations. • Access to all services through a secure, reliable infrastructure that is redundant and available for access from any place, anytime.
Central Office Staff	• A Single Sign-On for all core applications supporting Instruction and Administration. • Improved Enterprise Resource Planning software that is integrated and automated to bring greater efficiency and to reduce manual business processes. • A standardized Data Warehouse that helps staff access and analyze longitudinal, actionable, contextual and interoperable student data. • A data dashboard platform that will provide data in a wide variety of formats representing various aspects of Instruction as well as business operations. • Access to all services through a secure, reliable infrastructure that is redundant and available for access from any place at any time.
Superintendent and Leadership Groups	• A Fact-Based System that will allow school leaders to collect and analyze data. • Access to instant, longitudinal and contextual data that supports the development of action plans. • Implement a Plan, Do, Act and Study process improvement methodology across the systems and evaluate them.

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