
New Directions

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Arlington New Directions Coalition
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County Board Adopts Vision Statement and “Descriptors”

The Arlington County Board unanimously approved a vision statement for Arlington County in the 21st Century, which is reproduced below. At its January 26 meeting the Board accepted the vision statement as recommended by Task Force on Arlington’s Future, with the addition of “diverse” and “participating” to the lead paragraph.

The Board did not act formally on the Task Force’s recommendations regarding promulgating the vision widely throughout the Arlington community and implementing means to evaluate and update the state of the vision at regular intervals. However, in accepting the full report, the Board indicated it would move ahead on those recommendations as well. Options for doing so are under discussion by the Board and County staff.

For example, the updated vision statement has already been reproduced in a number of County documents, including as a part of the letterhead on some communications. The statement is one of several measures County staff is using to set priorities in the County’s annual plan of work. The County Public Information Office is developing a public information program based on the statement.

In an interview following the County Board’s action, Chair Chris Zimmerman said the vision statement would be the starting point of reference against which to evaluate proposed new or changes in existing policies. Zimmerman said he hoped the statement also would help motivate increased citizen participation in public affairs as groups and individuals became interested in building the type of community envisioned by the statement.

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Minorities Over-represented in Special Education Classes in Arlington’s Public Schools?

By Andi Cullins

On March 13th, Arlington’s venerable Committee of 100 heard a panel of experts and citizens address the issue of over-representation of minorities in special education classes, a phenomenon that is now national in scope. According to statistics furnished by the Arlington County schools, the number of students with disabilities in the Arlington Public Schools receiving special education services has increased in proportions consistent with the overall student population. The percentage of students with disabilities has remained between 16.5% and 17% for the last five years.

A common perception exists that over-identification for special education happens among all minority students, however statistics for Arlington do not bear this out. While over the last five years whites are under-represented in these classes (41-42% of the student population but only 35-37% of special ed population), all non-African American minorities are represented in about the same percentages as they exist in the general student population. However, African American students in particular are identified for special education at a rate much higher than their numbers in the school population. Since 1998 African American students have been less than 15% of the school population, but made up as much as 26% of all students in special ed, a rate nearly twice as high as would normally be expected. According to the APS report, efforts have been made over the last five years to reduce the number of African Americans identified for special ed. In 2001 that number is down system-wide to 21%, however this is still a rate higher than for any other ethnic group.

A closer examination of these numbers reveals another phenomenon that may be unique to Arlington, and is disturbing in its implications. According to an expert from the George Washington University Graduate School of Education who addressed the Committee of 100; nationally, over-identification occurs most frequently in schools where the numbers of minority students are most highly concentrated. Regardless of theories as to why this happens, it is not the case in Arlington where quite the reverse seems true. A school-by-school comparison of these numbers shows a very different trend. In Arlington, schools with the least number of African American students were more likely to over-identify. For example, in 1999, of the 8 African American students enrolled at Jamestown, 7 were identified as special ed. That number has fallen to 4 of 8 in the 2001 school year, but still represents half of all African American students enrolled in the school. But Jamestown is not alone. In virtually every school with small numbers of African

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Yes Virginia, There is a Better Tax System

By Mary Rouleau

It's that time of the year again...chasing down charitable deduction receipts, plugging in the calculator, visiting ye olde accountant [or wishing you could]. And, of course, the March-April weeks in Arlington feature the County budget and tax rate hearings and decisions.

As one who has attended both for several years now, I am always dismayed by the drop-off in attendance that occurs between the budget and tax hearing, as well as by the far-ranging arguments [ranting at times] made at the tax hearing which seem to confuse sources and uses of taxes, progressivity and the impact of the private market.

At times it seems we all want something for nothing.

Unfortunately for 2003 and years to come, we have the huge black cloud of the state-level fiscal crisis [catastrophe is more like it] hanging over. So far, virtually all of the Richmond debate has centered on painful budget cuts [often impacting the most vulnerable among us] and limited-use tax referenda. This band-aid approach is both fiscally and morally unacceptable.

For a state that has produced giants of American thought [flawed as persons though they might have been] it is indeed depressing to examine the lowest -common -denominator-type discourse passing for fiscal public policy in the Old Dominion.

Yes Virginia, there is another way.

It's an honest and equitable examination of our tax structure and, in fact, it's already been done to a large extent. In particular, the effort described below analyzed the burdens being put on localities by the states and proposes a different structure for the future. It also highlighted the regressive nature of Virginia's tax system, while noting that overall Virginia is a low-tax state.

We need a tax system that is fair, will produce sufficient revenue to meet important needs and is sustainable. I'm no tax expert and I would push a more progressive approach to the income tax, for example. But on the whole, I find this report balanced, provocative and worthy of immediate public debate.

In 1999, the Virginia General Assembly created the **Commission on Virginia's State and Local Tax Structure for the 21st Century (the "Commission")**, charging it with evaluating, given current social and economic trends, and the adequacy of the existing system to meet future need.

After hearings and expert testimony gathered from across the Commonwealth, the Commission issued its report in December 2000. In reviewing the evidence, the Commission identified **7 need goals**:

- establish a more efficient alignment of responsibility for the provision of public services with the revenue sources required for their delivery
- broaden revenue base of localities generally
- recognize the considerable disparity in the social and economic conditions of the political subdivisions
- arrest and reverse the erosion of existing state and local revenue sources
- establish a broad-based entity committed to a continuous and comprehensive analysis of state and local fiscal

- resources and needs
- protect and promote an environment in Virginia to sustain equitably the business community
- assure equity in tax policy for all citizens.

In making [unanimously] 11 recommendations, the Commission sought to be consistent with the tax principles of equity, efficiency, adequacy and predictability. I am including more information and background findings with regard to some of the recommendations. The complete report can be found at

<http://www.novaroundtable.org/Tax/TaxStructure.pdf>.

1. Education-That Virginia "increase substantially its support for both the operational and capital costs of the local school divisions".

- Virginia should revise the "Standards of Quality" to reflect prevailing local practices and fund at least 55% of the revised SOQs
- The "composite index" should be modified to reflect comparative fiscal efforts by localities
- Virginia should bear more of the capital costs for local schools and identify a dedicated revenue source for this purpose.

Among the findings

- The contribution made by Virginia to the support of public schools [K-12] is less than the national norm. When an interstate comparison is made in relation to a state's personal income, the profile yields a level exceeded by 43 states. Conversely, the profile for Virginia localities shows them to be contributing at above the national norm, with the income comparison figure exceeding all but 17 states.

2. State Individual Income Tax- That "Virginia's individual income tax structure be modified for needed equity, efficiency and future tax adequacy"

- There should be 2 brackets in the rate structure: 5% for the first \$50,000 and 5.75% for amounts above \$50,000
- Standard deductions of \$7,000 for married filing jointly and \$3,500 for singles
- Personal exemption of \$2,500 with no added exemptions based on age or blindness
- Move toward an earned and refundable income tax credit

Among the findings:

- A 2000 Senate Finance staff report said that "[b]y all accepted measures of tax burden, Virginia is a low tax state". In FY 1998, state and local tax collections constituted 9.8% of personal income, with the total tax collections in only three states constituting a smaller percentage.
- In assessing Virginia's tax burden relative to adjoining states and the nation at a whole, the Commission concluded that Virginia "could increase its revenue collections to address the needs of its residents without placing the Commonwealth at a competitive disadvantage".
- Virginia has a regressive tax structure with middle and low-income families paying a greater share of their income in state and local taxes than do the wealthy [9.2% for \$15-26,000; 8.6% \$43-71,000; 6.9% \$295,000+]
- From the late 1970s to the late 1990s, the average real in-

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School Superintendent Introduces a Teacher Excellence Initiative

Teacher compensation is the focal point

By Andi Cullins

One of the truisms of American life has always been that the value of a community can be seen in its schools. Ask any real estate agent, anywhere. They will tell you, often the first question prospective buyers ask, especially if they are unfamiliar with the location is, "how good are the schools?" Good schools equal good property values; that's one way to look at it. Another is that our schools reflect the value we place on ourselves and our children.

But what happens when the majority of the community no longer has school-aged children? In Arlington, more than 80% of the home owners have no children in our public schools. We have become a community of empty nesters and DINKS (double income, no kids) with no first hand relationship with the schools. Will that mean that we lose touch with the concept of our next generation as a community asset? Will we continue to commit to first quality education and recognize the link between the quality of the education we provide, and the quality of life in our community? Supporting excellence in education is like supporting Mom or apple pie, everyone's for it in theory, but when the question, "Whose paying for all that pie?" comes up, will it be a different story?

Arlington is about to face just such a question. This January, Arlington Public Schools superintendent, Rob Smith has introduced a Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) to begin in fiscal year 2003. Framed within the context of four governing principles generated by the school board [see accompanying box], the proposal addresses the need to attract and maintain excellent teachers in order to have an excellent educational system. At its heart, the major issue in the TEI is teacher compensation.

Framing the problem

The TEI states "Five years ago, Arlington enjoyed a competitive

advantage over neighboring jurisdictions in many factors that affect teacher retention. While we continue to have a competitive advantage in most of those factors, on the issues of planning time for elementary teachers and on salary and benefits, no competitive advantage can be discerned. In fact, on the question of compensation, Arlington may be losing ground in the face of aggressive moves by nearby school districts to raise salaries and benefits. In addition, the following conditions further exacerbate the problem:

- over 26% of our teachers are over the age of 50
- almost 22% of our teachers are eligible to retire
- we have an annual turnover rate, voluntary and involuntary, of around 13%
- the number of well-prepared and well-qualified candidates is stable or decreasing

Arlington has not enhanced the Teacher Salary Scale since 1995. Specifically, over the last two years, with the increased costs of living and working in this area, Arlington has lost its competitive edge in salaries to neighboring jurisdictions in over 28% of the salary steps in the scale".

Add to this picture Arlington's high cost of housing, clogged roads and slow commutes, and increasing competition from surrounding jurisdictions for the same scarce resources, and the problem becomes apparent. More to the point, teaching itself has lost its allure as a profession of choice for the best and the brightest, largely by virtue of economics.

Taking a step beyond

Make no mistake, this isn't an Arlington problem, it's a national one. Arlington however, has an opportunity to take the lead, not just in raising teacher compensation a few percentage points to bring us in line with our neighbors, but to take a look at teaching as a profession and to make changes that will return it to a true professional status. As a member of the superintendent's "Blue Ribbon Panel" of professionals that reviewed this proposal, my major criticism is that it does not go far enough, in any direction, to be meaningful in the long term.

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SCHOOL BOARD PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE TEACHER EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

The Arlington School Board believes that:

1. Within the school setting, teacher excellence is the most important variable in student learning and achievement.
2. To attract, retain, and support teachers of excellence, a workplace must represent a competitive advantage over neighboring jurisdictions when considering a combination of the following factors:
 - an organizational climate that respects teachers and involves them appropriately in decision-making;
 - favorable class sizes;
 - sufficient planning time;
 - ample opportunities for professional growth and development;
 - an evaluation system that is fair, effective, uses multiple measures, and recognizes different stages of professional growth;
 - high quality teaching resources (e.g., computers, texts, manipulatives);
 - clean and safe work spaces appropriate for instruction; and
 - competitive salary and benefits.
3. Different levels of knowledge, skills, and performance should be recognized by differentiated compensation. How to fairly award such compensation in Arlington should be explored with teachers, parents, and the broader community.
4. Any plan to strengthen teacher excellence must be accompanied by evaluation procedures to show how well the proposal attracts, retains, and supports teachers of excellence.

The TEI: One Solution for an Emerging Problem

By Marjorie McCreery, Executive Director of the Arlington Education Association

The looming teacher shortage is getting the attention of the Arlington Public Schools' leadership. Already Arlington is having difficulty hiring Special Education, English as a Second Language, Math and Science teachers, as well as school librarians. The number of high quality candidates in these categories does not meet the need.

The state requires Virginia teacher preparation programs to be five-year programs. Candidates must complete a BA in a discipline, and then pursue their professional teaching courses and internships in a Masters Program. Among the 38 states that use the PRAXIS exams to screen teachers, Virginia requires the highest scores. We have teacher candidates who have completed their Masters' programs, who cannot produce the scores the state requires for a license. At the same time the state is pursuing non-traditional entries to teaching for former military personnel and second career professionals who do not have to jump through all the hoops in the teacher preparation programs, at least not at first.

Once these people, mostly young, begin teaching, a large portion leaves the profession within three to five years. It is hard work with limited monetary rewards. Many of the "best and brightest" figure out that it is not good personal economics to commit themselves for hefty college loans for a graduate degree that will net them \$30,000 per year less than their college peers, after ten years of teaching. The result is that Virginia universities are preparing fewer than 4000 new teachers a year and the number is dropping each year. Fairfax County, alone, could hire all the graduates of Virginia's teacher preparation programs, leaving the remaining 134 Virginia school districts to look elsewhere for replacements.

Starting four years ago, the leadership of the Arlington educational Association took on the teacher availability problem. An AEA Task Force did extensive research on these issues, including teacher compensation in other communities in other states that are similar to Arlington. It made a comprehensive recommendation to the administration in the fall of 2000. The proposal included dramatic increases to the teacher pay scale, and a range of fringe benefits that we concluded would make Arlington an attractive choice for teacher candidates. The TEI, described in the accompanying article by Andi Cullins, grew out of this effort.

As proposed by Dr. Smith, the Teacher Excellence Initiative for FY 2003 has a 5.7% across the board increase on the T-Scale that compensates classroom teachers, counselors, librarians, teacher specialists, speech and physical therapists, psychologists, and visiting teachers. The adjustment includes a 2.5% cost of living adjustment that all other employee groups will receive, as well as 2% for four extra days in the teacher work year. There is a further 1.2% improvement to the scale. The extra work days will provide one day each quarter for elementary teachers to prepare student report cards (like secondary teachers have had for decades), so elementary teachers may discontinue doing this work at home.

Other improvements in the 2002-2003 school year include planning for an additional child care center for the pre-school aged children of school staff and some improvement to the small stipends received by

teacher mentors and lead teachers. In the next two school years there are non-specific proposals for further improvement to the teacher pay scale, the local retirement savings match, scholarships and professional development funding, an increase to the current \$40 reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses, and an incentive plan to reduce the use of leave by teachers

One other element the Superintendent proposes is some sort of differentiated pay for teachers, perhaps with elements of pay for performance.

The Blue Ribbon Panel that reviewed TEI doubted that housing costs were a sufficient reason for Arlington to have competitive teacher salaries, but they did not hear the teachers who attended the school board forum on the TEI. Several bright young people told about struggling to pay rent in Arlington, discontinuing their telephones, and worrying that their cars will break down. The level of salary increases proposed is not going to correct these concerns.

Members of the Panel demanded that the School Board identify how these improvements will foster excellence. Some were impatient to implement pay for performance immediately.

My impressions are more mundane. These salary increases may mean a teacher will be able to afford a house cleaning service, so she doesn't have to juggle house cleaning and schoolwork on the weekends. It may mean she can place her own toddler in a better day care center where she has fewer worries about her verbal development and safety. It may mean she can afford a sitter for her own children to attend the many evening community events that Arlington principals schedule so parents can be involved in their children's education. It may mean that teachers can start tax-deferred retirement savings, or pay for college courses that the school system does not reimburse. It may mean that a young teacher can finally relinquish a second job that she needed to pay her monthly bills, and just get enough sleep. I think all these improvements will lead to better teaching, more contented teachers, and stronger community ties for our educators.

Teacher response to the pay-for-performance proposal, even as vague as it is, is hesitant. Many of our teachers are familiar with the Fairfax County Teacher Merit Pay plan that ended badly when the county suddenly withdrew funding and thousands of "exemplary" teachers had pay cuts of up to \$3000 one year.

Despite the TEI proposal, Montgomery County Maryland will still offer higher salaries for teachers on the first five steps of the Masters' Lane, the place where most Arlington teachers are hired. However, other school districts are not the hottest competitors for able teachers. Private industry is offering positions, for which teachers are qualified, at salaries of \$20,000 a year more than they are currently making and with further salary advancement available.

The challenges of providing the rigorous curricula required by the Commonwealth, the high stakes testing that the state and federal law now require, and the non-stop demands on teachers' personal time compound the challenge of attracting people, especially young people, to teaching. Arlington's extremely high housing costs represent a further deterrent. Young people can teach in the ex-urbs for comparable salaries, live in an affordable home, and avoid a lengthy commute.

I think the Teacher Excellence Initiative is a good start, but only a start to address this problem.

Legal Aid Expands to Serve More Northern Virginians

Low-income, disabled, and elderly Northern Virginians have new and expanded possibilities for legal assistance in civil matters, thanks to a recent restructuring of **Legal Services of Northern Virginia** (LSNV) and creation of a new legal aid program, **Potomac Legal Aid Society** (PLAS).

As of January 1, 2002, LSNV, which has served eligible Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William county residents for over 20 years, decided that it would no longer accept funding from the federally-subsidized Legal Services Corporation. This decision allows LSNV to serve **all** income-eligible residents of the area with a **full range of civil legal services**. Those services include representation in domestic relations, landlord-tenant, consumer, employment, and public benefits matters. (Since 1996 Congress has imposed severe restrictions on legal aid programs that receive federal funds through the LSC. Only citizens and certain categories of legal immigrants to the United States were eligible. Attorneys in federally-funded legal aid programs could not file class action lawsuits nor challenge the legality of welfare reform laws that affected their clients. They also could not ask for legal fees in successful lawsuits brought on behalf of clients.)

Charles Greenfield, executive director of LSNV, explained that the restriction on categories of aliens eligible for legal aid was a prime factor in LSNV's decision to voluntarily give up federal funding. As the population of Northern Virginia, including Arlington, changed dramatically over the past 10 years, Legal Services of Northern Virginia found itself increasingly unable to serve many of the potential clients who came for assistance with domestic relations, landlord/tenant, and employment and other issues. "LSNV has positioned itself to be more responsive to the needs of the local low-income community. We are now able to provide legal assistance to all eligible residents of Northern Virginia, including all immigrants regardless of immigration status. Previously, receipt of federal funds prevented us from assisting many

local residents who were in desperate need of civil legal services. We have now eliminated that barrier," Greenfield stated.

In another effort to provide more accessible service to its clients, LSNV has moved its Arlington office from the Seven Corners area to 1916 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 200. Close to the Arlington County offices and courts, the new location provides LSNV clients with offices accessible by Metro; the Courthouse stop is a few hundred yards away.

Among new programs offered by LSNV are services provided by LSNV's "Nine Eleven" legal team that assists persons adversely affected by the 9/11 terrorism attack on the Pentagon, and an Arlington income tax clinic [in conjunction with Urban Alternative] to assist eligible clients on income-tax related matters such as the earned-income tax credit. The Law Center for Children at LSNV's Falls Church main office provides legal assistance throughout its service area on issues particularly affecting children, e.g. special education.

Potomac Legal Aid Society, funded by the Legal Services Corporation, was created to provide eligible clients throughout the area rapid access to legal information, advice, and brief representation on civil issues not requiring litigation. After a short telephone interview to screen the caller for eligibility under LSC guidelines, callers are usually immediately connected to an experienced attorney for advice and counsel about the client's particular issue. A follow-up interview, either by telephone or in person, may be scheduled. If the client requires further representation involving litigation, PLAS will refer the client to LSNV. Joseph Downey, executive director of Potomac Legal Aid, stated that "Our goal is to make sure that we can help everyone who calls us, either by providing legal assistance when they call, or by referring them to a place that can help them."

For further information, please contact:

LSNV, Main Office (703) 534-4343 Law Center for Children
LSNV, Arlington Office (703) 532-3733 Courthouse area
Potomac Legal Aid Society (703) 538-3975

Columbia Pike Revitalization Plan Approved; More Work Needed

In March, the Arlington County Board adopted a revitalization plan for the Columbia Pike corridor, a three and one-half mile area stretching from the Pentagon to the Fairfax County line near Baileys Crossroads. We asked Todd Endo, who has written about the process in past issues of *New Directions*, to provide an initial reaction:

The Arlington County board has completed Stage 1 of the Columbia Pike planning process by approving the staff's recommendations without any change. The Board did stress that this was only Stage 1. In fact, over fifty suggestions for improvement were made and the Board asked the County manager to have the staff comment on each of the suggestions. It appears that the Board is willing, even anxious, to make some changes in the plan.

While the plan has progressed considerably from the early days when County staff was not considering housing, public facilities/services, employment, and education, it still has some glaring weaknesses and oversights:

- 1) At a time when the Brookings report, *A World in a Zip Code*,

- and the SARPS report hail the uniqueness of Columbia Pike's great ethnic diversity, the Columbia Pike plan has **no** recommendation that works to build on this unique asset.
- 2) The plan is tilted to large developments and large developers and slightes small businesses and small developers, especially those who live and work along Columbia Pike. It could focus more attention on developing small businesses owned and operated by neighborhood residents, create a larger small business loan fund, and create a technical assistance organization for small businesses along the Pike.
- 3) The plan has a housing study, but no action on housing or anything to preserve the rapidly decreasing amount of affordable housing in Arlington. It should state some specific steps that they will take to achieve the Housing Goals approved by the Board in December 2000.
- 4) The plan says that long range plans for transportation need further study but, it could at least state the obvious positive and negative consequences for such stated possibilities as Metro and light rail.
- 5) Most fundamentally, the Plan does not state any goals for the Pike in terms of who they anticipate will live, work, and

Housing Arlington's Poorest Residents

By Lora Rinker, Executive Director, A-SPAN
Arlington Street People's Assistance Network

The most critical challenge facing Arlington County is how to keep or make housing affordable to the present residents. A major question in this regard is "affordable to whom?" Often, affordable is defined as housing that families earning 60% of the county's median income could afford. Sometimes (but not enough) 40% of median income is used as the measure. The following chart exhibits the actual amount of income for various size families at 60% and 40% of median income for the Washington Metropolitan area based on HUD income estimates for 2002.

Median income for family of 1 [\$64,050]	60% of median = \$38,430
	40% of median = \$25,620
Median income for family of 2 [\$73,200]	60% of median = \$43,920
	40% of median = \$29,200
Median income for family of 3 [\$82,350]	60% of median = \$49,410
	40% of median = \$32,940
Median income for family of 4 [\$91,500]	60% of median = \$54,900
	40% of median = \$36,600

Based on the above chart, in order to pay no more than 30% of one's income for rent (the standard for what is considered affordable to the family unit), the amount of income needed for a family of one at 60% of median is \$38,430 per year or about \$18.50 per hour and at 40% of median is \$25,620 or about \$12.30 per hour. If we look at housing costs in this way, and then think about our hourly wage and that of the people around us, we can see the enormity of the problem. Beginning teachers and entry level police officers and fire fighters fall into a salary range of 40% to 50% of median income. A single person earning \$10.00 per hour (well above the minimum wage) earns 30% of median income. Someone working for the minimum wage earns about 20% of median income. Present definitions of affordable housing do not begin to touch the needs of the poorest of our residents.

This exposition of costs and affordability demonstrate the kind of barriers faced by many Arlington residents – specifically, the very poor, a great many of whom are homeless people who have overcome momentous odds and are now attempting to stabilize their lives and get off the streets. Many of the working poor and homeless people have part

time or sporadic employment. Others are disabled and attempting to live on entitlements and other assistance. The gap can only be filled with deep subsidies and/or radically different types of housing.

Those who are lucky enough to qualify for and receive Section 8 vouchers face barriers in their ability to make use of them.

1. In addition to application fees of \$30 per person, most managed properties are requiring security deposits at the time of applications as "holding fees". These range from \$100 to \$250. Though the holding fee is refundable, it is difficult for voucher recipients, especially ones who are homeless and have depleted their resources, to pay these amounts.
2. Some properties state they accept Section 8 but apply a minimum income standard to applicants with vouchers. This can be as high as \$28,000. This obviously eliminates many if not most voucher holders from eligibility for tenancy.
3. Section 8 applicants seem to be submitted to the same credit profiling as market-rate applicants. Some property owners use a credit rating system called Scorex. Many managers have stated that they use this system to avoid discrimination. But there is concern that this rating system may in fact discriminate against low-income individuals who are more likely to have unpaid medical bills.

There are also barriers in housing availability. Many section 8 vouchers are not used because individuals are not able to find housing where the vouchers could be used. In some communities (like Fairfax County) this has caused a Section 8 voucher crisis due to the fact that (according to the Washington Post, Friday, March 15, 2002) HUD is requiring at least 97 % of the vouchers to be used in order for localities to qualify for more vouchers. The reason given is "because some parts of the country have greater need for the vouchers than others, the guidelines for usage are intended to make sure that vouchers go where they are needed most." In fact, failure to use the vouchers most often has nothing to do with need and everything to do with available housing.

If Arlington is going to solve the affordable housing crisis for residents with the lowest incomes, including those living on benefits and entitlements and those who are homeless, we must face squarely the need for permanent affordable housing to include (among other needs) small efficiencies and single room rentals for singles, available at costs that are significantly lower than the rents presently being charged for apartments in the County.

Vision for Arlington County in the 21st Century

Arlington will be a diverse and inclusive world-class urban community with secure, attractive residential and commercial neighborhoods where people unite to form a caring, learning, participating, sustainable community in which each person is important.

— Adopted by the County Board, January 2002

Finding an Affordable Apartment is Tricky in Arlington

By Lois Athey, Steering Committee, BRAVO
Buyers and Renters Arlington Voice

Arlington's vacancy rate has dropped to .8%. The lowest vacancy rate in 30 years is coupled with a steady increase in rents. In some affordable complexes, rents have skyrocketed — up as much as 20% in 2001. As the number of affordable housing units shrinks in Arlington, families scramble to find units that meet their needs.

The low-income population, many of whom work in service and construction jobs, are hardest hit by a rental market that clearly favors the landlord. For example, many apartment owners only offer month-to-month leases. Tenants almost always prefer one-year leases because that guarantees rents will not go up for at least 12 months. It also provides more legal protection for a tenant if he or she requests maintenance repairs or is threatened with eviction. When a tenant is on a month-to-month lease, it is easy for a landlord to evict a tenant by issuing a 30-day notice to vacate. Since a tenant feels lucky to have found an affordable unit, he or she is reluctant to complain about maintenance, leaky roofs or cockroaches.

Finding housing is a byzantine and complicated process. For non-English speaking immigrants it is particularly obtuse. While some complexes do maintain waiting lists, others give oral encouragement that an apartment “may be available” but give no guarantees. A potential tenant must make repeated visits to the office to inquire about “upcoming openings”.

At all complexes, apartment managers require fees for each individual applicant. That means that if both the husband and wife or companion work, each must pay a fee that covers a credit and reference check. At one complex, the applicant is required to pay an application fee, as well as \$100 to reserve a unit. If a unit became available, the applicant has to respond within 15 days or lose the \$100 deposit. Thus, many tenants are forced to apply to several complexes to ensure that one will end up offering a rental lease.

Frequently, an applicant is told that apartments rent for one price, but once the unit actually becomes available, the rent has suddenly increased. At another complex, the waiting list is not prioritized. For example, if a two-bedroom unit becomes available, everybody on the waiting list is called and whoever scrambles fast enough to get to the Management Office gets the unit. That system penalizes tenants who cannot leave their jobs in the middle of the day or do not have transportation available at the drop of a hat.

In addition to these fees, most landlords require two months rent prior to moving into the unit. Given the high rents, this means a tenant must provide an average of \$2,000 up front just to occupy an apartment that rents for \$1,000.

Since the shortage of housing is so severe, tenants are rarely shown the apartment prior to the move-in date. Landlords often move tenants in and out within 15 days — allowing little time for repairs to a unit that may have damaged walls, broken appliances, and missing doors or broken locks. Most tenants move into their new unit relieved that they have found a place. Within a week of their move-in, they notice that their new unit has problems that most landlords promise to repair. But in reality the oral promises are just that; repairs are never made. Landlords know that once a tenant has paid moving expenses

and the accompanying deposits, the resident has no choice and has to put up with maintenance problems.

For tenants who cannot qualify for an apartment because their credit is damaged or income is not enough to meet a complex's standards, the only alternative is to sub-lease from a friend or relative. This informal housing system has become standard in affordable complexes in Arlington. A symbiotic relationship develops between the tenant who is sub-leasing and the tenant who holds the lease to the apartment. Each needs the other to survive in this tight rental market of high rents and low vacancies. This is increasingly the case with the limited number of two-bedroom units that exist today in Arlington.

Tenants who sub-lease have absolutely no rights — they cannot complain about maintenance because they have no standing, nor can they ask for help if they need it. Their living situation is stressful, often requiring them to live behind closed doors inside an apartment or behind a screened section of the living room.

For those families who cannot afford the cost of housing, housing grants help pay the high rents. But tenants cannot access these grants unless they have a signed lease. But since tenants often cannot qualify for the apartment unless they have the housing grant, there is no solution. The family thus may be forced to sub-lease a unit rather than live independently.

In conclusion, this housing shortage has led to more people being homeless, families doubling up, and others paying close to half their income for rent. Most tragically, low-income tenants who are virtually powerless in this rental market must move frequently, thus uprooting children from their schools and neighborhoods. Studies show that stability in housing arrangements is beneficial for young children, and the current rental housing squeeze disrupts families and brings added suffering to those struggling to keep a steady job and pay the bills.

New Directions is the newsletter of the Arlington New Directions Coalition (ANDC). ANDC reports on local news and presents formal ANDC positions. *New Directions* also publishes articles and opinion pieces consistent with ANDC's mission and values concerning critical public issues in Arlington County.

For more information about contributing an article or opinion piece to *New Directions*, contact Mary Rouleau at: (703) 527-1063 or 1maryr@comcast.net

Editorial Board

Jack Cornman, Carlos Luna, Charlie Rinker, and Mary Rouleau.

Zimmerman said that quality indicators of progress on attaining the vision might be established department by department, and as individual measures were created, rather than attempting to develop a comprehensive set of indicators at one time.

Zimmerman and County Manager Ron Carlee encouraged civic groups to review the vision statement in general and those parts of the statement which link to a group's particular mission, and to determine how they might best help the community attain the vision. The groups should also develop suggestions/recommendations as to how the County can effectively implement and evaluate the vision.

Vision for Arlington County in the 21st Century

Arlington will be a diverse and inclusive world-class urban community with secure, attractive residential and commercial neighborhoods where people unite to form a caring, learning, participating, sustainable community in which each person is important.

Descriptors:

**** As an inclusive community,***

- Arlington will continue to be home to a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-aged, and economically mixed population, with a range of housing options serving the needs of its entire population.
- Arlington residents and business people will have a widely shared commitment to the common stake individual and commercial neighborhoods have in the well being of the entire community.
- Arlington will be a tolerant community, actively promoting respect for all individuals who live or work in the community and will work strenuously to eliminate all practices of discrimination.
- Arlington will be a participating community, actively promoting the involvement of all its residents in community affairs and the political life of the county.
- Arlington will have a range of programs providing its youth population with opportunities to learn about and to make meaningful contributions to the community.

**** As a secure community,***

- Arlington will have top-rated safety and emergency care personnel and programs serving its day and nighttime populations.
- Community policing will continue with collaborative problem-solving efforts fostered between public safety groups and civic associations, community activists and business cooperatives. Resident participation in enhancing personal safety and in general crime prevention will assume a greater role.
- Arlington residents will utilize state of the art crime prevention and information technology systems to enhance their quality of life.

**** As a community with attractive residential and commercial neighborhoods,***

- Arlington will be visually appealing.
- Arlington will have world-class public art, architecture and landscape design to distinguish spaces and places.

- Arlington will underground unsightly utility infrastructure that prevents the highest quality aesthetics in the community.
- Arlington will strive to preserve and enhance its cultural heritage by conserving and designating appropriate historic buildings and places of significant merit.
- Arlington will have ample and high-quality parks, open space, and indoor and outdoor recreational facilities.
- Arlington will have an increasing number of walkable live-work-shop neighborhoods.
- Arlington will have a transportation system and a built environment that provide easy, timely and accessible transit services throughout the community and reduce reliance on the automobile.

**** As a caring community,***

- Arlington will have the public- and private-supported social services required to meet the needs of all its residents and workers.
- Arlington will be a physically and mentally healthy community, meeting the basic public health, medical care, and mental health needs of its entire population.
- Arlington will have high-quality day care and early education programs meeting the needs of its residential and worker populations.

**** As a learning community,***

- Arlington will have top-rated public schools, continuing education and work force development programs, and programs to meet the language and other educational needs of its entire population.
- Arlington will have educational facilities and systems that will enable its residents to understand and contribute to the well being of the community through knowledge of its human and natural history, social and economic institutions, and sustainable practices.
- Arlington will have strategic alliances with educational institutions for such purposes as fostering adult education programs, enriching K-12 curricula, and helping develop public and private sector options for addressing community challenges and opportunities.
- Arlington will be a vibrant center for the arts, culture, and entertainment.

**** As a sustainable community,***

- Arlington will have a diversified economy with a broad range of commercial activity and a balance between large and small as well as nationally and locally owned businesses.
- Arlington will have economic development, energy use and environmental policies and practices consistent with and supportive of its vision of a world class urban community.
- Arlington will have policies and practices that encourage energy efficiency, promote the use of renewable resources, and decrease the demand for energy.
- Arlington will be an environmentally healthy community, working effectively within the region to ensure clean water and cleaner air.
- Arlington will guide and inform its transportation sys-

tems, building construction, and other economic activity with a thorough understanding of opportunities and limitations presented by its topography, climate, solar radiation, geology and soils, water resources, and other natural resources and phenomena.

** Finally, as a world class community,*

- Arlington will anticipate, embrace and accept change, responding effectively to emerging opportunities and challenges with solutions based on best practices as well as innovation.
- Arlington will use the latest technology to gather and share information, to help deliver services, and to help project and plan for the future. It also will use technology to improve the quality and environment impacts of such basic public services and water and sewage treatment, trash disposal, and energy production and conservation.
- Arlington will attract and retain the highest caliber of employees and will be a regional model of effective and efficient governance.
- Arlington will be a leader by example and strategy on regional issues affecting economic growth, transportation, technology, energy supply and usage, and the environment.

Continued from page 3

What is really needed here is a set of remedies that would help to move the profession of teaching, at least in Arlington, back into the realm of a career of choice. This includes a wide range of programs from compensation and non-cash benefits, to housing, to professional enrichment and increased decision making. It starts with professional pay for a professional job, but doesn't end there.

On the other side of the equation, the TEI raises some issues that have drawn concern from teachers. Board principle number # 3 calls for differentiated compensation based on differentiated skills, and the related performance evaluation to support this. Critics point to merit pay programs that have failed in other jurisdiction as sufficient reason to not even explore such a concept here. However, just as in the compensation area, Arlington need not follow other jurisdictions, but could forge a workable program of our own construction. If teachers expect to be compensated and respected as professionals, they must also understand that all professionals are evaluated and remunerated based on skills and accomplishments. The question shouldn't be should we differentiate, rather it should be how to do it in a way that is fair, understandable, and responsive to true excellence. Differentiated compensation, done right, could help us become one of the most attractive school districts around.

You can find the complete text of the Teacher Excellence Initiative on the APS website at www.@arlington.k12.va.us

Continued from page 2

come of Virginia families in the lowest 20% decreased by 1.4% while the top 20% grew by 42.7%. The average income of Virginia families in the top 20% is \$151,117 while the average of the lowest 20% is \$14,141.

- The Commission noted the roll back on the food sales tax and the new tax credit for low income household members [income not exceeding 100% of the federal poverty line] but noted that because the tax credit was not refundable and did not apply to the near poor, that more needed to be done.
3. **Permanent Fiscal Study Commission- That a permanent body be established to “offer on a continuing basis critical and objective comment on the long-term trends affecting state and local fiscal resources and service responsibilities”.**
- [Author note: A recent report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities notes that states are in financial distress and are likely to find it necessary to raise taxes but that few states have developed the capacity to analyze how proposed changes would affect different income groups. Only 3 states require that a distributional analysis be done.]
4. **Social Services- That Virginia assume the full operational costs of all mandated services provided through the Comprehensive Services Act, the public health departments, the Community Service Boards, the local and regional jails and the social service/welfare departments.**

Among the findings:

- Some localities have overly burdensome social services costs because of concentrations of residents requiring them
 - Local expenditures for public safety and health and welfare increased far more rapidly than for any other functional area
 - Direct state aid for health and welfare has declined in recent years both in real terms and absolute dollars
5. **Sales and Use Tax- That Virginia preserve the role of the sales and use tax in funding public needs**

Finding: Sales and use taxes as a percentage of revenue has declined for several reasons including the shift to a service economy, internet sales and a multitude of exemptions

6. **Income Tax Support to Localities- That at least 6% of Virginia’s annual net individual income tax collections be dedicated for return for localities, distributed on a formula that incorporates a variety of measures.**
7. **Transportation- That “greater opportunity be afforded localities to work in concert to address regional transportation concerns”.**
8. **Economic Development-That “localities be accorded greater flexibility to address on a regional basis their economic development concerns”.**
9. **BPOL Taxes-That localities be permitted to continue to exercise their present authority to levy merchants’ capital and business, professional and occupational license taxes.**
10. **City-County Equalization- That the distinction in the taxing authority of Virginia’s cities and counties be eliminated.**
11. **Tax-Exempt Real Property- That a review be conducted of exemptions and the current practice of applying service charges to non-federal tax-exempt property.**

Continued from page 5

shop along the Pike in ten years, twenty years. Without a sense of who this development is for, the Plan is either a physical plan void of a sense of a community of people or a disguised Plan to gentrify the Columbia Pike neighborhoods by raising the cost of housing and doing business beyond the reach of a large percentage of current residents and business owners.

The Board has said it wants to consider the many suggestions for improvement in the plan, but has not set any timetable to do so. We should persuade the Board to decide on improvements before they move on to Stage 2 within the next couple of months.

Continued from page 1

American students – with the notable exception of Taylor - these students are twice as likely to be designated as special ed.

At the secondary level the pattern continues unabated. At Williamsburg Middle School where there are 77 African American students, 36 have been identified as special ed. In comparison, Gunston middle school with an African American population of 175 students identified only 45 for special education. Wakefield High School has 410 African American students with about 25% in special education; however, at the other end of the county, Yorktown with only 102 African American students has 45 in special education. The accompanying charts show a chilling pattern. North of Rt. 50, the smaller the Black population, the higher the incidents of referral to special education. [All statistics furnished by Arlington Public Schools and are available under the Freedom of Information Act]

The implications of this are profound.

For most students with physical, emotional or perceptual difficul-

ties, a special education designation and the accompanying *individual education plan* (IEP), can mean the difference between drowning in a sea of failure and school success. But for too many, the misapplication of the special education designation can mean a diminished set of expectations and a slippery slope that ends in a student falling farther behind with each passing year. Too often, special ed becomes a destination rather than a prescription, and a life sentence to second-class citizenship. Students can spend their entire academic careers in special ed and may wind up at the end with a general education degree instead of the normal high school diploma. This often means a daunting challenge in seeking employment or entering post secondary education.

While the reasons for over identification may be complex and difficult to unravel, we must nevertheless demand a full examination of the reasons, and an immediate addressing of the underlying issues. At a minimum we should be asking how students are identified and to what degree cultural and ethnic differences influence the tools and the interpretation of the results. If in fact the tools themselves are not culturally biased, as may be the case, how then does the system explain the raising

Elementary School	AA Pop 2000	AA in Special Education	AA Pop 2001	AA in Special Education
Abington	108	22	138	18
Arlington Science Focus	61	23	73	17
Arlington Traditional	37	14	37	14
Ashlawn	16	10	15	7
Barcroft	84	11	49	5
Barrett	32	9	31	9
Carlyn Springs	75	24	84	18
Claremont	47	22	47	15
Drew	131	29	159	28
Glebe	72	24	59	12
Hoffman-Boston	73	21	114	22
Jamestown	8	4	8	3
Key	37	4	28	5
Long Branch	66	19	67	23
McKinley	16	4	16	7
Nottingham	12	11	10	7
Oakridge	108	24	89	15
Patrick Henry	90	27	83	14
Randolph	106	22	82	13
Taylor	17	1	14	0
Tuckahoe	14	6	18	6

incidence of identification with the move northward. To what degree does teacher perception or cultural awareness influence identification? And, how can we account for the difference between Patrick Henry which identified 14 of its 83 African American students for IEPs and Long Branch, only a short walk on the other side of Rt.50, where fully one third of its 67 African American students are designated for special ed? How is it that the simple act of heading north hampers students' abilities?

Over identification in special ed may be only one of a number of identifiable patterns plaguing African American students in Arlington schools. Black students are similarly more likely to be under identified

for intensified and advanced placement courses, sometimes comprising less than 1% of the student population, and at the secondary level, are overwhelmingly over represented in disciplinary actions with system-wide rates as high as 41.5% in 2001. To accept these statistics as an accurate picture of the educational prognosis of Black students is to endorse the notion that African American students in Arlington are most likely educationally challenged, unruly, and unable to achieve in a climate of academic rigor. As a progressive and informed community, Arlingtonians must reject this notion and demand instead to know the real reasons behind these appalling trends.

House Joint Resolution 640, passed by the 2001 General Assembly, requests that the Virginia Board of Education review and consider certain recommendations made by the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Overrepresentation of African-American Students in Special Education Programs.

At the request of the joint subcommittee, the Board will undertake the following activities:

- Monitor and report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly information concerning the number of African-American and other minority students in special education; the number of school divisions identified as having a disproportionate enrollment of minority students in special education; and the number of students with disabilities, by race/ethnic designation who drop out of school

The Department of Education, with advice and consent of the Board of Education, will undertake the following activities:

- Disseminate information to parents concerning the right to withdraw consent for placement of their children in special education
- Encourage school divisions to provide training to teachers in the identification of students with disabilities as part of continuing professional development opportunities
- Provide cultural competency training to school division personnel
- Continue to provide programmatic and fiscal support for the development of building level instructional support teams
- Continue to provide programmatic and fiscal support for parent resource centers

Middle School	AA Pop 2000	AA in Special Education	AA Pop 2001	AA in Special Education
Gunston	178	49	175	45
Jefferson	156	55	169	57
Kenmore	119	29	124	32
Swanson	39	13	39	11
Williamsburg	78	46	77	36
HB Woodlawn	numbers	included in	High School	figures

High School	AA Pop 2000	AA in Special Education	AA Pop 2001	AA in Special Education
Arlington Mill HSC	35	5	42	5
Wakefield	451	113	410	120
Washington Lee	214	52	216	56
Yorktown	105	36	120	45
HB Woodlawn	49	7	44	4

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Visit the ANDC Web Site

<http://www.arlingtonnewdirections.org>

Read the ANDC 2001 report.

Post a Message or a Meeting!

Update on Gates of Arlington!

Affordable Housing Complex at Risk! Use the ANDC website to learn about and monitor activity at The Gates of Arlington, a 465-unit affordable housing complex located in North Arlington at Glebe & Pershing. A group of community activists and the Gates' tenant association are exploring a pro-active solution to keep the Gates affordable. Because of its location, the Gates is vulnerable to redevelopment.

Please help support this newsletter, our web site and community activities by supporting ANDC. We are a 501[c][3]. Please mail donations to:

**Mary Rackmales
874 N. Jacksonville St., 22205**