

EHS/FECEP/HS Advisory Committee 2009 Staff Responses to Recommendations

In the 2009 annual report to the School Board, the EHS/FECEP/Head Start Advisory Committee representative provided a review of the committee's work during the 2008-2009 school year and offered recommendation. Listed below are the committee's recommendations (in bold), followed by staff responses.

- 1. Recommendation:** The growing wait-list highlights the need to continue to pursue funding for the expansion of EHS/FECEP/HS classrooms.

Response: For the current school year, 2009-2010, FECEP/Head Start converted the last two double session classrooms at Saratoga ES and Weyanoke ES to four full day classes. One of the Saratoga full day classes moved to Newington Forest ES and one of the Weyanoke ES full day classes moved to Bren Mar Park ES.

New sites with one classroom each were opened at Bonnie Brae ES, Brookfield ES, and Hollin Meadows ES, and a second classroom was added at Westlawn ES. Each full day classroom has a funded enrollment of 16 students. This increase in the number of classrooms is due to funding from the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).

Additionally, the grantee has applied for federal expansion money for Early Head Start. If federal funding is received, two Early Head Start classrooms would be added at Dogwood ES, serving 8 students in each class. With the conversion and the new classrooms, 68 additional students are being served this school year. If the additional 16 Early Head Start students are funded, the total would be 84.

Projections for 2010-2011 are to add a second classroom at Lynbrook ES with Virginia Preschool Initiative funding and possibly a classroom to serve the Herndon area; adding 32 new spaces for the program.

- 2. Recommendation:** The economy has greatly impacted families. Offer parent education and/or skill development opportunities to families so they can learn a skill in this difficult job market.

Response: FECEP/Head Start parents who are interested in education and/or skill development are referred to a variety of resources in Fairfax County, many of whom offer courses sometimes free of charge or at a minimal cost. Parents who wish to strengthen their English skills are often referred to the Fairfax County Public Library system's free "Practice Your English" weekly sessions or to local churches that often provide free English classes. For more formal classes, parents are referred to the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, where they can register for classes near their home for \$40 for approximately 20 classes. For parents looking for advanced Adult ESOL classes, FCPS Adult and Community Education (ACE) offers intensive classes throughout the county at a cost ranging from \$150 to \$340 depending on the level and number of classes.

For FECEP/Head Start parents who are looking to develop or enhance a skill for employment purposes, the Skill Source Group offers "One Stop Offices" that provide

workforce resources free of charge at five sites in Northern Virginia. Staff from Skill Source presented information to Policy Committee representatives at one of their meetings last year and will most likely be invited back to speak to this year's committee. Individual families who express an interest in employment counseling are referred to Skill Source for one-on-one assistance. Skill Source provides skill assessment, career training, job placement, personalized counseling, interview and resume preparation and job search assistance. There is also access to fax machines, computers, the internet as well as interview coaching and information on job listings and job fairs at each site.

FECEP/Head Start parents who are interested in pursuing degrees or certificates in various programs, such as computer software or the medical field, are encouraged to take classes through Fairfax County Public Schools Adult and Community Education (ACE) programs. The FECEP/Head Start program is currently developing a system through a partnership with ACE to provide limited financial aid to program parents who enroll in these certificate programs. This system might also help to defray the cost of other county certification programs such as Training Futures, an intensive 22-week "workplace simulation" program that includes internships and job placement assistance.

Parents are also encouraged to meet with academic and financial aid advisors at Northern Virginia Community College regarding admission to degree/certificate programs.

- 3. Recommendation:** Continue the exploration of strategies to increase parent involvement, particularly focus on male (fathers/male figures) involvement.

Response: This year staff was very intentional about inviting and encouraging men to participate in the policy committee. As a result, twenty men were in attendance at the first Policy Committee meeting. Staff will work with the Policy Committee to develop specific opportunities for male involvement. Some ideas that will be explored include:

- Hold a fitness activity clinic ensuring male and female fitness experts on hand
- Opportunity for a building project, gardening project that may require heavier labor – on the weekend
- Father's appreciation breakfast
- Special orientation for fathers
- Fathers' support group
- Topics of interest to fathers such as becoming employed, becoming self-employed, going to school offered by male speakers
- Mentorships - fathers from previous year with new fathers to program