

**2008-2009
Early Head Start (EHS)/
Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP)/
Head Start (HS)
Policy Committee Annual Report
To the
Fairfax County Public Schools School Board**

**Instructional Work Session
May 28, 2009**

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Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP)/
Head Start (HS)
Policy Committee Annual Report**

Overview

There is a growing strong body of evidence highlighting the potential return on investment in early childhood development. The case for early learning compels public leaders to plan strategically for children to have access to high quality early childhood programs, resulting in long-term positive effects. Across the nation, state programs made major progress in expanding student enrollment by increasing funding and continuing to raise quality standards. The Virginia Preschool Initiative funding allocations continue to increase with the support of the state legislature and Governor Kaine. While federal funding has lagged behind state initiatives, the recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act focuses on the importance of early childhood education. This is particularly significant in light of the growing waitlist for the Family and Early Childhood/Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Fairfax County Office for Children has a waitlist of over 1000 children; 720 of these children are on the public school waitlist. This number represents only a percentage of children who are eligible for the FECEP/Head Start program in Fairfax County. The work of the Policy Committee is accomplished within the context of the overall program as outlined below.

Program Background Information

Head Start Program Performance Standards for Parent Involvement, (45-CFR 1304.50), Program Design and Management Responsibilities, requires Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies to involve parents of Head Start children in the overall development and operation of the Head Start program at the local level. In order to facilitate involvement, Head Start agencies are expected to provide a variety of opportunities for parents that have the potential for strengthening parents' role as the primary or first educators of their children, promoting their professional growth, increasing their involvement in their children's education, and enhancing their personal experiences.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Early Head Start (EHS)/Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP)/Head Start (HS), as a Delegate agency, received federal Head Start funds through the Fairfax County Office for Children, the Grantee, to continue operation of Early Head Start (EHS) for 40 pregnant women and/or children from birth to age three years and funds to serve 242 students, three-to-five-year-olds, in fourteen Head Start classrooms. County, School Board, and State funds supported the remaining 858 children in the program. Total funding for all programs for FY 09 is \$16,263,166. FCPS follow Federal Head Start Program Performance Standards and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars in the operation of the entire program.

In EHS/FECEP/HS, the Policy Committee is the forum for parent participation. The Head Start Program Performance Standards require that at least 51 percent of the membership of each Policy Committee consist of parents of enrolled children. The voting members of the FCPS Policy Committee are parents of EHS/FECEP/HS children. The remaining members are community representatives from public, as well as private community agencies and organizations. A representative and an alternate are elected each year to the Policy Committee by parent committees at each EHS/FECEP/HS school or site. The EHS/FECEP/HS staff members are not members of this committee and serve in an advisory capacity only.

The EHS/FECEP/HS Policy Committee elects four representatives and two alternates each year to serve on the countywide Policy Council at the Grantee level. The Policy Council serves the same functions as the Policy Committee and is composed of parent and community representatives from the Greater Mount Vernon program, Fairfax County Public Schools and Higher Horizons Day Care Center.

Program Updates

EHS/FECEP/HS conducted a program wide self-assessment the week of March 10 through March 20, 2009. The program was found to be in compliance in all areas of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. A final report of the on-site monitoring review is available upon request.

The development of the Pre-Kindergarten Program of Studies (Pre-K POS), which is correlated to the kindergarten Program of Studies (POS), is now fully implemented in the FECEP/HS classrooms. All teachers were given an electronic version of the curriculum guide and it is posted on FCPS 24-7. Teaching young children today in the 21st century requires connecting children's thinking, concepts, and knowledge through developmentally appropriate, hands-on learning experiences. All teachers received staff development regarding teaching thinking skills to young children.

Standards of Learning (SOL) data continue to be collected about cohorts of children who previously attended FECEP/HS. A larger percentage of former FECEP/HS students passed the grade level SOL exam than other children in poverty who had not attended FECEP/HS. These cohorts of students will continue to be monitored as they progress through FCPS (Attachment B).

The School Readiness Collaborative, launched in 2006 through a Virginia Early Childhood Partnership grant, works with educators and parents to help children enter school ready to succeed. Neighborhood teams are made up of elementary principals, early childhood teachers, child care professionals, parents and others working together to support young children's school readiness. Research suggests that transitions work best when partnerships link children, families, schools and preschool programs before kindergarten begins.

Four elementary schools and their neighboring early childhood programs recently joined the collaborative: Centre Ridge Elementary School in Centreville, Hybla Valley Elementary School in Alexandria, Lynbrook Elementary School in Springfield and Providence Elementary School in Fairfax City. The Schools and neighborhoods already in the program are: Annandale Terrace Elementary School, Freedom Hill Elementary School in Falls Church, Hollin Meadows Elementary School in Alexandria and Lake Anne Elementary School in Reston.

The School Readiness Collaborative neighborhood teams also provide a common understanding of what young children should know when they enter kindergarten, and give child care professionals the knowledge and skills they need to set the stage for children's success in school. The resource booklet, *Paving the Way to Kindergarten*

was collaboratively developed and published this year to assist schools and communities as they support children transitioning to kindergarten.

Staff members participated in a number of professional development opportunities throughout the year. In addition to the local training programs offered by FCPS and the Fairfax County Office for Children (OFC), EHS/FECEP/HS staff members attended a variety of conferences and workshops including the following:

- The Brain and Learning
- Office of Head Start National Dual Language Institute
- Patterns of Thinking Method
- National Association for the Education of Young Children's Professional Development Institute National Association for the Education of Young Children National Conference
- Family Service Symposium
- Zero to Three National Training Institute
- Office of Head Start Birth to Three National Conference
- Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education
- Abuse and Neglect Training
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Conference
- Home Visitor Training – Module 1

The Early Head Start program was involved in the following collaborative projects during the 2008-2009 School Year:

- Concluded The Culturally Responsive and Aware Dual Language Education (CRADLE) – Expansion Project. The CRADLE project supports EHS programs create system's changes within their programs and communities that impact aspects of dual language acquisition for families with infants and toddlers.
- Provided early childhood development information to pregnant and parenting teens in FCPS high schools' teen support groups in cooperation with the Virginia Health Department.
- Continued participation in Fairfax County Kinship Care Committee (a network of county agencies that provide respite care and support to adults raising grandchildren and other relatives).
- Joined with Early Head Start National Resource Center at Zero to Three to disseminate early childhood best practices. This included capturing images of best practices for infant and toddler program service delivery at the classrooms at Clearview Elementary and the program specialist participating as a panelist in the NRC national webinar focusing on the importance of sleep in the lives of infants and toddlers.
- Worked with the Head Start Collaboration Office to develop a guidance document on home visiting best practice.
- Participated in Northern Virginia Mission of Mercy (MOM) Project, which provided needed dental services free of charge.
- Continued participation in development of additional portions of the Baby ArtsPlay pilot, in a collaboration with Wolf Trap Institute, to create and implement a program for infants and toddlers in the classroom. In this program, an artist models

experiences that teachers can use to integrate art and music into daily routines, e.g., greeting, diapering, feeding, and playtime.

- Developed relationships with area universities to support the education of college students in the area of infants and toddlers. This included student visits/ observations and internships
- Participated in *Bright Smiles*, a state-wide preventive oral care initiative for infants and toddlers. Through this program, volunteer dental professionals offered and provided screening and varnish applications for EHS children, with parental permission. Additionally, EHS staff members referred children to the *Smiles for Children* program that finds dentists for children with Medicaid. They also made referrals to the county's Health Department's dental clinic in Reston and Herndon for dental examinations.

Review of 2008-2009 Policy Committee Activities

In accordance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the EHS/FECEP/HS program provided many, varied opportunities to promote the fullest involvement of parents in their children's education and in the overall operation of the program. Members of the Policy Committee worked closely with staff in the areas of planning, general administration, personnel selection, budget, and program evaluation. Highlighted below are the major activities and accomplishments of the Policy Committee during program year 2008-2009. Most of these activities are required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards and, as such, are ongoing in the program.

A formal structure of program governance is established annually. This structure provides parents, the governing body, community representatives, and staff members an opportunity to participate in shared decision-making for the benefit of the EHS/FECEP/HS program. Parents are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of the program. Parents have the opportunity to be involved in three levels of participation:

- Parent Committee: The first level is the Parent Committee, comprised of family members of children currently enrolled in the program. Quarterly Parent Committee meetings are held at each school. In order to meet the needs of families, different meeting models are considered. The models include daytime or evening meetings. Parents identify topics of interest and often receive training, presentations, or resources at these meetings.
- Policy Committee: Parents from each school-based Committee are elected to represent their respective schools and serve as representatives to the Policy Committee. Policy Committee members work with key management staff and the governing body to plan, make decisions, and review program policies and procedures. Policy Committee members are also actively involved in the annual assessment and the selection of personnel. (Attachment C and D)
- Policy Council: Parents from all Fairfax County EHS/FECEP/HS programs, including FCPS, are elected to represent their respective programs on the countywide Policy Council. These parents work with Fairfax County's Office for Children staff to plan, make decisions, and review the program policies and procedures affecting all three of the Grantee's programs. Policy Council members are also involved in the annual program assessment, the grant application, and the selection of personnel.

By mid-September 2008, Parent Committees were formed at each EHS/FECEP/HS school and officers (Chairperson/Representative and Co-Chairperson/Alternate) were elected. The representatives and alternates from each of the schools met on September 10, 2008 to form the Policy Committee. Community representatives were invited to serve with the parents on this committee. The Policy Committee officers were elected at the October meeting and installed that evening.

Policy Committee meetings were held on a monthly basis throughout the school year. During these meetings, parents had the opportunity to learn more about the program, provide input, vote on applicable aspects of the program, and present concerns and/or ask staff members' questions. Dinner, child care, and \$15 travel reimbursement were provided for each of these meetings, as required by the Head Start Performance Standards to encourage socialization and attendance. Parents also had the opportunity to learn more about the program and expand their own skills by serving as Policy Committee officers and/or serving on the committee's various sub-committees (Budget Sub-Committee, Code of Operation Sub-Committee, Personnel Sub-Committee, and Male Involvement Sub-Committee) that met on a periodic basis, as needed.

Parent attendance and their engagement at this year's monthly Policy Committee meetings increased 50% when compared with last year (Attachment E). The Policy Committee meetings gave parents an opportunity to connect across schools and increased the opportunities for parents to advocate for their children and classrooms they represent. Parent attendance at all the Policy Committee sub-committee meeting increased during the same period of time.

In October, 2008, the Policy Committee approved Ms. Kaye Kory, Mason District School Board member, as the FCPS School Board – EHS/FECEP/HS Policy Committee Liaison. Ms. Kory continues to ensure effective communication among the program, parents, and the School Board through the following actions:

- Attending monthly EHS/FECEP/HS Policy Committee meetings, as her schedule permits, to provide applicable information and training.
- Receiving and reviewing applicable program information and all Policy Committee meeting agendas, minutes, and handouts.
- Sharing highlights or specific information with other School Board members, as appropriate.
- Participating in the annual self assessment.

Program for Children Three-to-Five Years Old

The FECEP/HS program is a child development program for three- and four-year-old children from income-eligible, low income families. The program involves parents, community volunteers, and representatives from public and private agencies and organizations, working with staff to provide comprehensive services that address children's educational, emotional, social, health, nutritional, and mental health needs as well as the needs of the children's families. The program is funded to serve 1,100 children in 55 locations (70 classrooms) throughout the county.

Parent Training Opportunities

- During August and September, 2008, FECEP/HS staff provided a Family Orientation to the program for all parents. The orientation was designed using nonlinguistic representations, video, and power point to meet the needs of the program's diverse population and to convey important information about the program.
- Parent education continued to be the focus of the quarterly Head Start Parent Committee meetings at the program's local schools, with staff and community participants providing workshops of interest to parents, for example: Orientation to the Program, Program Governance, Child Development, Literacy, Discipline, Personal Safety, Fire and Home Safety, Transition to Kindergarten, Family Reading, and Nutrition. These meetings also provided opportunities for parents to learn more about the FECEP/HS program and develop a more in-depth understanding of their rights and responsibilities as FECEP/HS parents. After the parents received appropriate coaching, the selected chairpersons and co-chairpersons assumed responsibility for planning and conducting their local school Parent Committee meetings, with guidance and support from staff.
- During the program's monthly Policy Committee meetings, parents received training and information about Governance, advocacy, the role of the School Board, budget preparation, the program's self-assessment, safety, child abuse prevention efforts within EHS/FECEP/HS, health and nutrition, personnel and interviewing procedures, the program's Service Delivery Plan, health insurance information, employment information, and the services provided by the Policy Committee's community representatives. Policy Committee members also received copies of the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Code of Operation.
- Forty-six EHS/FECEP/HS parents attended the fall Parent Institute Conference at Robinson Secondary School on October 18, 2008. The Parent Institute gave parents from Head Start classrooms across the county a chance to collaborate with one another and receive practical information from professionals in various fields. Fairfax County Office for Children (OFC) and FCPS cosponsored the event. The theme of this year's Institute was "Family Success". The conference offered a variety of topics in the areas of school readiness, education, employment and managing finances. While the parents attended workshops, children played games and socialized with child care providers and university student volunteers. Wolf Trap musician and entertainer "Kinderman" was the highlight of the children's day with sing-along fun.
- Thirty-eight EHS/FECEP/HS parents attended the second Parent Institute. This institute was offered monthly and featured a specific required topic. The topics included Child Development & Discipline, Child Safety, How to Budget for the Family Budget and I Am Moving, I Am Learning. Parents who attended all sessions received a certificate. All sessions were offered in English and Spanish and childcare (two years and older) was provided.

Special Events and Committees Involving Parents

- Parents contributed 2,910 volunteer hours. The volunteer hours decreased by 50% for reasons not known at this time. Parents, who were able, supported the

program by helping in the classrooms, going on field trips, participating in Parent Committee, Policy Committee, and Policy Council meetings, program Self-Assessment, and Male Involvement activities. Parents also attended a Public Hearing at the School Board and Public Hearing and Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to advocate for the program.

- Family literacy continued to be an ongoing initiative. In partnership with the National Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) program and Reading Is Fundamental of Northern Virginia, EHS/FECEP/HS provided three free books for all students during distribution events in November/December, February/March, and April/May. Teachers were encouraged to highlight each distribution with a special event or theme, the reading of stories, and the selection of a book by each child. Volunteers are often invited to read stories and helped place the child's name in his or her book. In addition to RIF, FECEP/Head Start was given a First Books Grant and all FECEP/Head Start children received three books from this program.
- Male Involvement continues to be a Head Start focus. This initiative promotes male involvement in children's curricular and extra-curricular activities. The Policy Committee's Male Involvement sub-committee was not able to meet quarterly. Male involvement continues to be a challenge for the program. In an effort to increase male involvement, the parents approved a "Family Day Out" field trip and picnic lunch for the dads and their families. The program provided bus transportation to the parents who needed to get to the Museum.
- Health Services Advisory sub committee (comprised of parents, community members, and staff members) continued to meet. Its purpose is to focus on health issues that affect Head Start families in Fairfax County. This year's speakers included a representative from the Fairfax County Health Department discussing how to access health insurance and representative from Women, Infants and Children (WIC) sharing information about *I Am Moving, I Am Learning* (a Head Start initiative to increase physical activity and make healthy food choices). Committee members also learned about safety in the home from a Clinical Toxicologist with the National Capital Poison Center.

School Readiness and Transition

- Ensuring smooth transitions from the EHS/FECEP/HS programs to the next stage in the children's education remained a focus for the program. The transition team, met on a monthly basis to monitor program-wide transition activities and discuss strategies for enhancing the process for students and their families. Continued emphasis was placed this year on enhancing relationships, sharing resources, and ensuring two-way communication with private preschools, neighborhood child care providers, and the local community. To facilitate the attainment of this goal, a Fairfax County Public Schools kindergarten teacher, a FECEP/HS Early Childhood Specialist, and a Family Services Specialist were invited to become part of the team. A common transition form was revised to be used by children and families in EHS/FECEP/HS, Higher Horizons, Greater Mount Vernon, Neighborhood School Readiness Teams, and other early childhood programs. This shared document ensures that similar information

across programs is conveyed to the kindergarten or FECEP/Head Start teachers thus contributing to a successful transition for children.

In addition, the following transition activities took place during the 2008-2009 School Year:

- ▶ Transition to Kindergarten Parent Committee meetings were held at each FECEP/HS school so parents could learn more about the kindergarten daily routine, what to expect at kindergarten registration, and activities they could do with their children during the summer. Many of these transition meetings were scheduled to coincide with the base schools' kindergarten orientations to maximize parent attendance at both events. Similarly, transition was also a topic for the Spring EHS Parent Committee meeting at Clearview Elementary School.
- ▶ Substitute teachers were provided so kindergarten teachers could visit FECEP/HS classrooms to begin the development of relationships with the children they will be receiving and to develop strategies for supporting the children's transition. FECEP/HS teachers were also provided with substitutes so they could visit kindergarten classrooms and EHS classrooms to gather information to best support smooth transitions for children and families.
- ▶ Early Childhood Specialists and/or Early Childhood Resource Teachers will notify school personnel about specific children and families in need of extra support in their transition to kindergarten.
- ▶ Early Childhood Education staff participated in the eight Neighborhood School Readiness Collaborative teams throughout this year in a partnership to help all young children in our county enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Education Focus Area of Parent Involvement

- Parents worked in collaboration with teachers in planning and implementing their children's educational programs, which included a written, formal agreement, the Student Progress Summary Report. A portion of the report is used by parents and teachers to collaboratively develop goals for the child that can be addressed both at home and school.
- Teaching teams conducted at least two home visits with parents during the school year, and parents attended at least one on-site school conference. Staff members were also available to support parents as needed through consultation, home visits, and assistance.

Program Involvement by Policy Committee

- The EHS/FECEP/HS Policy Committee approved the Pre-Kindergarten Program of Studies (Pre-K POS) curriculum and the program's Service Delivery Plan after extensive review.
- Selected Policy Committee members participated in the program's self-assessment.
- The Policy Committee Executive Board approved the use of some of the funds reserved for parent activities for emergency cases. The Executive Board used

the emergency fund to purchase a youth bed for a Head Start child, to pay for the Car Seat Safety Training (parents who completed the training received a car seat for the child) and to pay for the electric bill of a Head Start family.

- On the countywide Policy Council grantee level, two EHS/FECEP/HS parents were elected to the leadership roles of vice-chairperson and parliamentarian. This committee, comprised of FCPS representatives and representatives from the other two county EHS/FECEP/HS programs, participated in the grantee's curricular, personnel, fiscal, and policy decisions.
- The Policy Committee Secretary represented the EHS/FECEP/HS and addressed the Fairfax County Public Schools' School Board regarding the Budget on January 27, 2009. One other parent also was at the Hearing to support the parent who spoke for the program.
- Two FCPS parents represented the program and addressed the Fairfax County Board of Supervisor on the proposed budget cuts for to the FECEP/Head Start program.

**Fairfax County Public Schools
EHS/FECEP/HS
PROGRAM FUNDING SOURCES
FY 2009**

<u>Program</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Federal /State/ County Funding</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>FCPS Funding</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total Funding</u>	<u>%</u>
Federal Head Start (PA-22)		\$1,554,009		\$0		\$1,554,009	
Local FFX OFC Supplement		\$82,697		\$0		\$82,697	
Local FCPS Head Start Supplement		\$0		\$986,350		\$986,350	
Total Head Start Funding:	242	\$1,636,706		\$986,350		\$2,623,056	
Early Head Start (PA-25)		\$643,508		\$0		\$643,508	
Local FFX OFC Supplement		\$60,126		\$0		\$60,126	
Local FCPS Supplement		\$0		\$101,694		\$101,694	
Total Early Head Start Funding:	40	\$703,634		\$101,694		\$805,628	
FECEP - FFX OFC		\$3,608,192		\$0		\$3,608,192	
STATE VPI FUNDING		\$905,780		\$0		\$905,780	
FEDERAL USDA		\$650,000		\$0		\$650,000	
FECEP - FCPS/VPI		\$0		\$7,670,810		\$7,670,810	
Total FECEP/VPI Funding:	858	\$5,163,972		\$7,670,810		\$12,834,782	
TOTALS:	1,140	\$7,504,312	46.14%	\$8,758,854	53.86%	\$16,263,166	100.00%
Total Funded Enrollment:	1,140						
Total Cost Per Child:		\$14,266					

Review of 2008-2009 Recommendations of the Policy Committee

1. Parents would like to continue pursuing funding for the expansion of EHS/FECEP/HS classrooms to serve more children.
Response: The Commonwealth of Virginia has increased funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative. The anticipated increase will fund four new classrooms and the conversion of two double session classrooms to four full day classrooms. Head Start funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will be applied for but the limited space at schools will limit the number of new classrooms.

2. Parents would like more parent education and skill development opportunities by having trainers/speakers come to the Policy Committee meetings instead of sending one or two parents to attend the statewide conference training.
Response: The program provided two Parent Institute Conferences. The Fall Parent Institute was held on October 18, 2008, at Robinson Secondary School. The Spring Parent Institute was offered specific topics over four months. The program continues to have speakers come to the Policy Committee meetings.

3. Parents would like to continue the exploration of strategies to increase parents' attendance and to get more men (fathers/male figures) involved.
Response: Male Involvement continues to be a challenge. The program continues to provide Male Involvement activities. This year a field trip to the National Museum for the Marine Corp - *A Family Day Out* is planned for May 16, 2009.

4. Parents would like to explore ways to communicate by using modern technologies, such as My Space or chat rooms.
Response: The program has been using various ways of electronic communication to communicate with the parent Policy Committee this year:
 - Power point has been incorporated into the monthly meeting to show the Policy Committee meeting's agenda, reports and other presentations on the big screen at each meeting.
 - Email has been used to communicate with the Parent Policy Committee members. Monthly email is sent with agendas and minutes from the previous meeting.
 - A secure website was established. The Executive Board members received training on how to navigate and post information. The Policy Committee Executive Board members manage the website. Access was provided to Policy Committee members to view meeting schedules, minutes, agendas, flyers and other related information. <http://sites.ggoogle.com/site/ppcfcps/>

5. Parents would like to see the reimbursement for the Policy Committee and Sub Committee meeting travel expenses increased due to the rising cost of gasoline.
Response: Parent Policy Committee approved moving the National Head Start Parent Conference funds to support the travel reimbursement fund. Parents previously voted not to send parents to out-of-state state conferences. On September 10th, 2008 the Parent Policy Committee approved the recommendation to increase the travel reimbursement to \$15 for the parents who come to Policy Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

2008-2009 Recommendations of the Policy Committee

The Parent Policy Committee is proposing the following topics for consideration:

1. The growing wait-list highlights the need to continue to pursue funding for the expansion of EHS/FECEP/HS classrooms.
2. 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.
3. Continue the exploration of strategies to increase parent involvement, particularly focus on male (fathers/male figures) involvement.