

Business and Community Advisory Council
January 13, 2009

Welcome

Andrea Sobel opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. She invited all to send her any ideas or topics for discussion or possible speakers for future meetings.

Roundtable introductions began with Andrea Sobel.

Superintendent Update

Dr. Dale's updates began with the boundary study for Lorton and Coppermine. There will be a public hearing at a later date.

The \$2.3 billion budget was presented showing Tier 2 with modification. A suggestion for employees to take a pay freeze in order to protect jobs was met with a general consensus. The administrative offices will need to be decreased by 5% and the schools will be decreased by 1%. This will result in the class size being increased by one child.

Studies on the changing of the bell schedule will be debated in March. Data is being collected from surveys to get input and opinions from all groups. If the decision is made to change, it needs to be determined if the change would happen in the fall of 2009 or 2010.

The school board will vote on January 22 on the grading policy to increase the weights for the IB & AP classes at the end of the semester and make those changes retroactive. The grades would be increased by .5 for the honors classes.

Comments and questions:

Question: There is a concern that the students who are below the 3.0 average are the ones who need the most help. What will be done to help them?

Answer: This will be analyzed.

Comment: Does the increase in the class size follow the state standards? The average staffing is 24 to 1 in the classroom. The concern is that the students are not receiving the level of attention that is needed.

Question: Changing the hours would be too costly. This is a bad budget year so it would not be a good time to make the change.

Answer: There would not be a major cost to make the change.

Comment: Possibility of cutting 3 transportation regions down to 1 region.

Comment: Students need consistency with the same bus drivers. How would changing the schedules impact budget?

Dr. Dale: Currently researching the effects of the bus schedules and the actual number of busses that would be involved.

Hanna Matthews – Senior Policy Analyst, CLASP (Center for Law and Social Policy).

The focus population and most vulnerable are the immigrants. Studies show that 1 in 7 children in Virginia lives in an immigrant family. The foreign-born population as a percent of the total population of all ages from 2005 -2007 shows Fairfax County with 27% according to a U.S. Census survey. Prior to the 1990's, the immigrant population was mostly a few states and in or near large cities. Due to the growth in population, the immigrant population was increased 100% to 200% in rural communities. Virginia's foreign-born population increased 83% from 1999-2000.

- Younger children are more likely to be citizens, and live in mixed status families.
- Parents have difficulty accessing services due to difficulties with communication.
- Immigrant children are less likely to enroll in preschool or day care.
- Research shows that the child is more likely to be bi-lingual which will be beneficial to the child.
- Virginia ranks 11th in country in size of the foreign-born population, 2006 and
- 12th in country in percent change in the foreign-born population, 2000 to 2006

Children of immigrants face advantages and disadvantages. In Virginia:

- 77% are U.S. born citizens
- 47% live in mixed status families with citizen and non-citizen members
- 45% have at least one LEP parent
- 20% live in households without adults who speak fluent English
- 87% live in 2 parent households compared to 75% of children of U.S. born citizen parents

See powerpoint on BCAC webpage.

Teddi Predaris, Director, ESOL Services

Impact of Immigration on Schools

- As students grow and learn together- supports cross-cultural understanding
- Helps prepare students to be members of a global community
- Cultural and linguistic diversity enriches our community

FCPS Student Achievement Goals

- 1.2 Students will learn to communicate in at least two languages.
- 1.4 Students will learn to understand the interrelationship and interdependence of the countries and cultures of the world.

Students in Fairfax County represent over 140 different language groups, from over 200 countries which shows a great diversity in socioeconomic status, level of previous schooling, and English language proficiency.

FCPS services for English Language Learners were discussed.

FCPS Language Minority Parent Outreach was discussed:

See powerpoint on BCAC webpage.

Laura Hibbon – Parent Center coordinator and ESOL teacher at Annandale Terrace

Many different countries and languages are introduced which help to introduce different customs and holidays from many different cultures. The ESOL is vitally important to encourage common language, common activities and stronger communication with the families. This builds a stronger relationship with the families who become more willing to become involved with the child and school. Written communication must be written directly to the point and not overly simplified. The schools need to apply the open door policy which would encourage parents to go to the schools with their concerns or as volunteers.

The advantages of ESOL that will impact the students are numerous

See handout on BCAC webpage.

Scott Brabrand –Principal, Fairfax High School

How We Closed the Achievement Gap for Hispanic and Limited English Proficient Students

The Hispanic and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were not performing as well as the other students and required extra attention to improve their test scores and final course grades.

The school program changes were broken down to 4 different areas:

- Rewards and Remediation Program
- Sub-school Design
- AVID Program Expansion
- Summer AP Boot Camp Growth from 65 to 300 Students

Parent Program Changes included:

- Personal conferences and personal contacts by phone and mail in the native language.
- Primary focus revolves around academic programs, resources and strategies.
- Secondary focus revolves around social and economic resources and concerns
- Concierge style events provide food, child care and activities and translation services to ease barriers to attendance.
- Single point of contact for Hispanic and LEP families

Conclusion and Implication for further study.

Parent outreach is a major key for Hispanic and LEP academic success. The concierge service and information rich sessions drive participation. The parent outreach must be matched by the school and student program reform and there is a need for an expanded role of the parent liaison.

See powerpoint on BCAC webpage.

Discussion

Question: What is the role of the PTA in regards to the changes at Fairfax HS?

Answer: The president attends the meetings and increases the membership. Encourage member involvement at the school level and then branch out into more complex levels.

Question: Is there support for PTA volunteers to become involved as liaison?

Answer: Yes, meetings are held in the evening, in the morning, and during the teachers breaks which increases the attendance and involving more volunteers.

Comment: Delighted that the focus is on parental involvement. Part of the funding that supports adult ESOL is marked to be eliminated on the tier 1 and tier 2 of the proposed budget. What can be done to save these areas?

Answer: Dr. Dale is continuing to work on other solutions.

Question: Are the African-American students given the same advantages as other ethnic groups?

Answer: Yes, they are closing the gap for African-America students by working closer with the students and parents. Parent liaisons are not limited to racial or language.

Question: Do the regional meetings have a large attendance?

Answer: There are about 2000 attendees at the meetings.

Comment: Community Outreach is trying to involve more parents as volunteers.

Comment: In regards to the budget cuts, there are other resources that can be used. Engage parents as volunteers. Have more fund raisers.

Comment: Very impressed with the program that is implemented at Fairfax High School. There is a need to set up a process that would start in the ES level, be implemented in the MS level and continue on into the HS level. Perhaps move to a pyramid approach with parents starting at the ES level.

Andrea Sobel

Thank you for attending tonight's meeting and for your input.. The topic for next month will be "Continuum of programs from K-12.

Please send any questions or comment to Andrea Sobel. The meeting ended at 9:30