

Business and Community Advisory Council

Minutes

Meeting January 29, 2008

Todd Rowley opened the meeting and started the roundtable introductions beginning with Superintendent of Schools Jack Dale.

Jack Dale introduced the new assistant superintendent for Communications and Community Outreach, Barbara Hunter. He explained the department's importance and how combining several offices into a department better aligned the organizational structure of FCPS with the School Board's expectations. He also introduced Jay Garant as the new leader of business and industry relations and host of programming on Red Apple 21 and Carl Thompson from Budget Services.

Dale presented his proposed FY09 budget using a PowerPoint presentation. An expanded version of that presentation can be found online at:

<http://www.fcps.edu/fs/budget/documents/proposed/2009/ProposedBudget09-Presentation.pdf> .

During Dale's presentation, several committee members commented on or asked clarifying questions about the proposed budget.

Jon Wolford (NVAR) agreed that stagnant home sales may have contributed to the student enrollment increases that were not forecast.

Todd Rowley suggested that diminished corporate relocation packages may also be keeping people in the area and thus decreasing the pool of citizens and students who leave the area.

During his budget presentation, Dale noted that the achievement gap between Asian and White students and Black and Hispanic students remains high and that schools with smaller percentages of Black and Hispanic students in relation to the overall population often showed larger gaps.

Kahan Dillon asked what scale was used to measure the student gap.

Eileen Kugler and Andrea Sobel asked for statistical clarifications.

Kahan Dillon asked why the gap was greater.

Dale noted that FCPS is continually analyzing data and looking at trends and anomalies. He noted that the school system continues to work toward closing the gap and is focused on many areas, including rising expectations for all students.

During the budget presentation, Dale discussed the replacement of SASI.

Katie Lynch agreed that SASI replacement was necessary and noted that SASI was never meant to be a student information system.

During the budget presentation, Brenda Green asked if FCPS studied the impacts on learning at modified calendar schools when considering related cuts.

Dale noted that FCPS has studied academic results and that they have been mixed. He also said that schools considering dropping their modified calendars would be soliciting input from their respective communities before making any final decisions.

During the budget presentation, Nell Hurley suggested that many people care more about an absolute student-teacher cap than a systemwide student-teacher ratio.

Dale discussed ways FCPS uses reserve teacher positions to manage ratios and gaps and how this year's surprise enrollment increases affected that process.

Bill Oehlein discussed the reserve teacher process too and how cuts are going to make the process more challenging, especially at the high school level.

Brenda Green discussed the cutting process that occurred in 1983 and how the discussions about impacts on staffing affect learning.

Andrea Sobel noted that many people feel that the decision to increase class size will increase IA workloads.

Jeanine Martin asked if there will be bus depots for GT students.

Dale indicated that this discussion is in the very early stages and that no final decisions have been made.

Todd Rowley asked the committee members to hold their questions until the Superintendent had finished his presentation.

During his budget presentation, Dale mentioned several other areas of proposed cuts and cutbacks and indicated places where FCPS was working to redesign programs for maximum effect and efficiency. While discussing transportation issues, he offered a lengthy explanation of possible changes to summer school.

During the presentation, Lynn Dysart asked how summer school placement for children not passing during the regular school year would be handled.

Dale and Oerhleim paraphrased some of the summer school plans that were presented to them at the FCPS Leadership Team meeting conducted earlier in the day. As part of the explanation, Oerhleim explained the promotions process as handled by FCPS and compared the more stringent FCPS student grade promotion model to the state's model,

which allows anyone “of age” to enter ninth grade, regardless of past academic performance.

During the presentation, Ginger Shea asked for clarification of summer school site numbers.

Dale and Oerhleim responded and indicated that, at the middle school and high school levels, those numbers are not yet firm.

During the presentation, Claudia DeBose asked for clarification on the proposed activities fees.

Dale detailed the complexity of activities fees and explained how those discussions led to the determination that it would be most feasible to administer a \$100 fee only to VHSL-sanctioned sports with exceptions for students on free or reduced-price meal schedules.

Dale also discussed the fees associated with AP and IB tests, especially in relation to students on free or reduced-price meal schedules.

During the presentation, Jennifer Van Pernis asked for clarification on fee exemptions, wondering if they apply to all students receiving free and reduced-price meals or if they apply only to those receiving free meals.

Dale said that he needed additional information and would share his findings.

Todd Rowley moved the meeting to member issues.

Toby Sorensen asked how many fewer students will take AP and IB exams if paid fees are cut.

Dale said that studies show that there will be a negative impact...that fewer students are likely to take the tests. He also pointed out that FCPS currently enjoys solid kudos from respected news outlets like Newsweek because we have paid for the test and that that positive public relations impact associated with more students taking AP and IB tests would be diminished.

Dale noted that his proposed budget was thoughtfully constructed with input from principals and Leadership Team members and that across-the-board cuts have the benefit of bringing everyone to the discussion with an enhanced perspective on the impacts of proposed cuts.

Sorensen asked for clarification on why full-day kindergarten and foreign language programs remained in the budget and questioned why the foreign language expansion was retained.

Kugler suggested that the cuts equaled 1,000 slashed that were executed without considering the entire body and that the cuts would diminish the good work of many years. She said that she thought the cuts were not strategically selected and offered fourth grade strings as a more reasonable cut because it is an enhancement rather than a need.

Dale stressed the strategic nature of the decision and pointed out that several critical areas were not recommended for cuts including special education, elements of ESOL, and staffing needs.

Kugler noted that the IAs were being affected.

Kugler noted that increasing fees would likely lower participation rates in sports and thus increase gang activity.

Dale noted that the after-school middle school program was being left untouched.

Mosetta Whitaker asked if FCPS receives facility user fees and suggested that that's an area of possible fee increases.

Dale agreed we should consider that as an option.

Jon Wolford suggested establishing a fee for fourth grade strings.

Charles Dane asked for clarification on proposed preschool cuts.

Dale noted that preschool cuts were proposed at some point but that the commonwealth of Virginia requires certain preschool programs to be in place and that he therefore had less latitude than he originally thought.

Michele Menapace inquired about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) implementation costs in relation to outcomes.

Dale said that the estimates of cost are difficult to determine but that they range between state estimates of 16.3 million to the FCPS estimate of 120 million dollars annually.

Menapace asked if FCPS can propose adjustments in local taxing authority.

Dale noted that this topic is regularly a part of the School Board's legislative package and suggested that committee members could engage in lobbying as it relates to FCPS.

Lynn Gilmore suggested that the business community may be willing to support financial issues related to FCPS and said that Northrop Grumman provides roughly \$100,000 annually to FCPS but would prefer a focused approach to giving.

Rowley pointed out that businesses also give volunteer time.

Kerri Harris questioned the educational value of some field trips and suggested that FCPS cut, restructure, or add fees to some field trips.

Dale indicated that he would research productivity on field trips. He pointed out that he's held central office budgets to a zero percent increase over the last two years. Despite the hold-the-line posture, costs have risen. Dale cited rising fuel costs and their impacts on field trip costs.

Ellie Ashford asked for clarification of fees.

Kaham Dillon suggested greater out-of-the-box thinking on revenue generation and indicated that he could not name a single unique business-school partnership. He also detailed his company's support of students at Mt. Vernon High School via the 30/30 club, which is partnered with Washington Redskins wide receiver Santana Moss.

Jennifer Van Pernis asked for clarifications on PSAT fees.

Nell Hurley asked why FCPS supports AP and IB programs saying the two programs are similar when the AP program is twice as affordable to administer.

Dale questioned her cost estimates and indicated that IB is not twice as expensive.

Kugler noted that she felt IB was twice as good.

Hurley asked for clarification on activities fees, especially as they relate to cheerleading.

Dale said he believed that only the VHSL-sanctioned fall cheer season would have fees associated with it.

Dysart noted that level 4 GT services at a base school are not equal to those at a GT center. In particular, she noted that the class size and student interactions are very different. She recommended a lower COLA for employees, suggesting a 2.5 percent increase rather than a 3 percent increase.

Dillon asked what the average base salary for employees was.

Dale noted the average starting and base salaries for teachers.

Jeanine Martin asked if we regularly assess the effectiveness of all our programs.

Dale indicated that Dr. Moniuszko, with the Department of Accountability, regularly evaluates programs.

Martin indicated that expansion of foreign language programs is not hers nor did she feel it is the community's priority.

Cathy Lange suggested that corporations in Fairfax County would financially support students who cannot pay testing fees. She does not feel FCPS is doing a good job of coordinating businesses and nonprofits so that they can support FCPS.

Katie Lynch said it was important to maintain the 3 percent proposed COLA for morale purposes.

Martin asked how many of the 20 thousand employees are teachers?

Dale said that 12 thousand of the 20 thousand are teachers.

Martin suggested that that was not possible.

Dale then explained why counselors and other school-based personnel are counted as teachers.

Jon Wolford suggested that, like in the real estate business, it might be time to do more with less and that that's what his industry is doing. He also suggested that the housing market is showing small signs of a rebound, especially in the outer reaches of the suburban D.C. area.

Rowley closed the meeting. Some suggested that they would like to hear from Barbara Hunter at the next meeting, scheduled for March 25.

The meeting was adjourned.