

**Superintendent's Community Advisory Council
Minutes
Meeting September 26, 2006**

Lynn Terhar called the meeting to order and asked Superintendent Dale to provide updates.

Dale said that school had a smooth start this year. He mentioned that the role of SCAC members is to provide:

1. Advice, feedback, and perspective to him, the leadership team, and the School Board on issues that he identifies.
2. Be key communicators on important issues with their communities.

He said that the school system was still analyzing performance data but that it appeared FCPS is going in the right direction. In general, gaps are closing. Scores in grades 4 and 6 math are anomalously low throughout the state, including FCPS; we are still analyzing this anomaly to determine the reason for it. AP and IB scores are up, and especially participation rates for these tests.

Enrollment growth is flat. It looks as though enrollment peak has been reached and that there will be a slight decline in the near term followed by a slight increase. There have been and will continue to be shifts in student population within the county. A demographic consultant is currently helping us predict what shifts will occur in specific attendance areas.

Dale said that the Board and the school system continue to work on their goals, which will emphasize empowering students and families to determine what each student's education should encompass.

He mentioned that US Secretary of Education Spellings visited Annandale HS, where Arabic is taught, to announce a grant for teaching critical languages, like Arabic and Chinese. She visited an Arabic language class.

Terhar asked Council members to introduce themselves, which they did. She then presided over election of officers. Todd Rowley was elected chair and Ramona Morrow vice-chair.

Rowley took the chair and introduced Paula Patrick to discuss the Board's commitment to eventually have every FCPS graduate competent in two languages and how the effort to implement this are being phased in.

Patrick used a PowerPoint presentation to discuss the plan.

<http://www.fcps.edu/supt/scac/foreignlanguage0607.pdf>

She discussed her own experience learning German living as a child in Germany. She noted that the most important factor for learning a language is to start learning while young. An early start should be followed up with continuous language instruction throughout schooling. She said that Fairfax County's is probably the only school board in the nation that has recognized foreign language competence as a key goal for all students. Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) is the key program.

Ginger Shea asked how many schools currently have FLES and what are the plans for expansion? Patrick said nine schools have FLES this year (plus 13 elementary schools that continue to have partial immersion programs in various foreign languages).

Dick Reed said he did not know why this must be done. He asked what the trade-offs would be, what about students who were incapable of learning a language in elementary school, what about a student moving into the county from places that did not have this requirement? Patrick said there were no trade-offs, that FLES was aligned with what the regular teacher was teaching; she said that regular teachers in schools that have FLES welcome the extra lessons (in foreign languages) in topics they are teaching. She said most industrialized countries teach languages at these grade levels and their students seem to be successful. She also said that students coming into the county can jump into the program and catch up to whatever level they come in at since language is recycled into the lessons at each grade level.

Johnnie Miles said that it was about time this was done and asked what the roll-out plan would be. Patrick said the task force for doing this projected beginning implementation in approximately 24 schools per year, meaning it would take 7-8 years to get this into all elementary schools.

Katie Lynch noted that staff development would be needed for middle and high school language teachers, as well as curriculum development for those levels to ensure adequate follow-up for students who come through FLES. Patrick said that language offerings at middle and high schools would one day include career path courses and that curricula would need to be tweaked.

Lynn Dysart asked when students would master a foreign language's grammar. Patrick said they would learn both writing and speaking grammar in elementary school.

Dysart asked how the specific language would be chosen to be offered at each school. Patrick said that the school's community would provide input into the decision but that the Superintendent would make the final decision.

Rick Baumgartner said he was surprised to see that even starting early students—after 8-12 years—only reached intermediate-level competence. Patrick said even some native speakers are at the intermediate level. Baumgartner asked how, then, ESOL students are expected to master the language more quickly. Patrick said one can learn it more quickly if one lives in the country and everything (newspapers, radio, TV, shopping, socializing, etc.) is in the other language. Her experience learning German while growing up in Germany is an example.

Charlie Dane said it might be a good idea to shift resources from offering 11 languages (as FCPS currently does) to offering 4.

Daraius Unwalla said schools should be sure that the language the student studies is not his/her native tongue.

Shea asked if this program might mean an end to Monday early dismissal for elementary schools. Dale said it would not.

Brenda Greene asked if a student moving from one school to another and thus from language to language could be a problem. Patrick said the recommendation was not to have pupil placement.

Joe Bury asked about the use of computer technology for language instruction. Patrick said it would be used for the distance learning classes at middle and high school levels for Chinese and Arabic.

Eileen Kugler supports the FCPS approach to learning languages by using them in a meaningful and purposeful way. When visiting schools in China with a group of educators, she found that Chinese elementary school students were learning English by just reciting English phrases out of context. Then she met high school students who had been studying English there for years and yet they could not converse in English.

Jeanine Martin asked if a school in a community with a large Spanish- or Korean-speaking population would want that language taught. Patrick said this is not necessarily true.

Lynn Terhar asked if enough teachers can be recruited to staff this program. Patrick said George Washington University (GWU) has been setting up a masters' program to prepare such teachers and that the GWU

dean who started work on that program is now President of Mary Washington University.

Joe Merenda asked how colleges will react to our graduates having second-language competence. Patrick said colleges have said that they will see these graduates as better prepared.

Dale mentioned the ongoing boundary study process in the south county. He said that reasons for South County Secondary School (SCSS) being overcrowded when it was open included a large influx of students who had been pupil placed to other FCPS schools and students who had been in private schools, both of which were unprecedented. He said there will be additional space at Lake Braddock and Hayfield Secondary Schools, which the boundary study will consider.