

Business and Community Advisory Council
December 9, 2008

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 outlined the FCPS FY2010 Budget Breakdown. The budget currently is showing a \$223.1M deficit which reflects there is no change in county transfer carry over from the school year. There will not be a 2% cost of living increase as previously planned which will help to reduce the deficit. The GASB fund is an account where funds are set aside for FCPS retirees. It is a legal requirement to have this fund set up, but there are no provisions for adding to the fund this year. Due to the current market, state revenue is showing a loss from the previous year.

Dr. Dales' budget will mirror Tier 2. He may still have to make further reductions.

Dr. Dale would like feedback about freezing pay increases. The HR staff researched what the impact would be if there was not a pay increase planned in the budget. His concern is that some employees are still angry about the freeze from the 1990's.

Comments:

Possible ways to cut expenses could be to have the county manage the Planetariums and save the cost of rehiring instructors within FCPS. Possibly outsource with National Science Association or similar companies or organizations providing free field trips.

Unfunded mandates from the state need to be pursued more. Is there a standard to inform the governor and legislation concerning the unfunded mandates?

The cutbacks within the health department are impacting the clinic aids in the schools. These cuts will affect the students.

Dick Reed:

There are three components within the education group.

How much work is expected of each employee?

The salary of each employee.

What kind of development plan for the employee.

There may not be any control over a possible salary freeze or with an increase in classroom size but it is possible to develop employees more and provide available training.

Steve:

Challenge organizations to come up with ways to cut costs. Encourage coaches and parent to come up with new ways to cut costs. There could be an overall reduction within the sports programs. An example was given where there was not enough money to send teams from two different schools to an invitational. Those two schools teamed up together and were able to save on costs and both teams were able to attend.

Pat Murphy, Assist. Superintendent, Accountability

Grading scale within FCPS is based on the 6 point scale. The background for grading policies is within the framework of context. College admissions are broken down into either in-state or out of state, and private or public.

Fairgrade is based on these questions:

How does FCPS compare with the 10 point grading scale?

What impact do the IB and AP courses have on college admissions?

A review of 1,000 transcripts from 11th grade students applying for colleges showed that there is a .5% for IB and AP classes and the impact on the admission awarded higher weights for honor students. Under the 6 point scale, any student with a + would be turned into the next higher grade. For example, a B+ would then be rounded up to a grade of A. A survey conducted at over 100 colleges showed that 76 school districts in Virginia made the same adjustments with the grading policy. FCPS showed lower weighted and unweighted GPA's than other divisions. A change in the grading scale could increase the GPA's for a greater number of students. Students who take more AP and IB courses will also see an increase in their GPA's.

Preliminary results from the survey show that the core accreditation is the most important factor that is considered. The SAT scores and the GPA's are the most important factors in placement of colleges.

Dr. Dale will review the results from the survey in December 2008 and will present his recommendations to the School Board in early January 2009. The school board should take action on this by the end of January, 2009.

Judy Hingle, Career Connections

There is a wide range of opportunities and student participation and succeeding after high school and college. National trends show that there is an increase of high school graduates that apply to colleges today. It is easier today to apply to colleges through the internet and which increases the competition. Students have more access and may apply to several colleges which show that colleges are now accepting less than 50% of all applicants. There seems to be a change in the roles in the community within the families. In the past, parents were contacting and corresponding with the college admission. Today, the students are more proactive and are contacting colleges themselves.

There is also a change in perception of marketing. The 90's were based on a ranking system which is now considered to be negative. We are now considered to be in more in the

technological era where companies and firms provide marketing opportunities and partnerships with and focusing more on students.

Colleges are aware of the range of SAT scores according to zip codes.

Meghan McLaughlin, Fairgrade President/Co-Founder

A study has shown that 70% of applicants are accepted at the first choice and 31% go to their selected college. There is concern of weather the current grade point system is working for the students or against them.

College application offices look at all factors when considering a student for admission. A study was conducted with schools throughout the United States which rated and compared the schools. Colleges are looking at performance and for higher standards.

The 10 point scale is not reviewed in a lesser degree and would not have much of an impact and would not be a disadvantage if FCPS were to change to the 10 point scale. The main focus is weather a change would be to the advantage of the students.

Sara Pacque-Margolis, Fairgrade Board Member

Comments were made that residents moved to Fairfax County specifically because of the school system but due to Fairgrade, they would reconsider the move.

The cost of colleges has risen three times faster than the average family income. The competition is much higher and there is a 20% increase in students from FCPS applying for college.

The main areas that are considered are:

- 1) grades and college prep courses;
- 2) IB and AP classes;
- 3) SAT test scores; and 4) overall GPA.

A student completing an AP or IB class would gain an additional .5% to the grade. However, Montgomery County (for example) adds 1% for AP and IB classes.

Susan Rexford, Career Center Specialist, West Springfield High School

It is not only important that the student is accepted at a college, but that the college is a good fit for the student. Colleges are trying to build a community with a specific plan in place. They are looking for particular skills and may even offer merit money as an incentive. They are looking for 1st generation students from lower incomes. There is also a movement away from early decision or acceptance which enables the less advantage students more opportunity.

The acceptance rate from over 3,500 colleges and universities in the U.S. is much higher than those applications that are denied. William & Mary University and the University of Virginia are among the highest ranked colleges in the country.

High school juniors were given a list of over 60 items to consider when choosing a college to enable the student to find a college that fits their needs.

Questions and comments:

Loren:

What repercussions will there be if the grading scale is changed? Why weights and scale?

Pat Murphy:

FCPS researched the grading scale system and the 6 point grading scale began during the 1960's. Then there seemed to be a timeframe in the 70's when the scale was more independent. But in 1978 it was re-evaluated and the decision was to keep the 6 point scale. The IB and AP classes were introduced during the 1980's and brought about the need for the weighted system.

Megan McLaughlin:

Agrees with Pat but questions weather there would be a loss in academic standards. The GPA's need to be more in line with the other 36 school districts in Virginia.

Dick Reed:

Request for the PowerPoint presentations that were shown at the meeting.
Does this mean there will be more money awarded for merit scholarships?

Concerned about the income gap and the GPA gap for those students not taking the honors classes. Students who take the honor classes (IB an AP) will receive a .5 added to the grade and will give them an advantage not offered to the other students. Would all students get the same grades or would the tests need to be changed?

Pat Murphy:

Answer: The tests would be changed.

Robert Thurman:

What is the cost of changing the grading system?

Answer: Unknown at this time.

Colleges are looking for academic and personal qualities and there is concern that many students will not be considered if the grades are lower.

The most common grading scale within Virginia is the 10 point scale. The 6 point scale is more common nation wide.

Nell Hurley:

Colleges tend to look at not just merit but also the honor programs as well as the average student. Students need to be given more information at an earlier level to better prepare

for college. A 9th grade student taking an AP History class is not receiving the weighted credit. More information needs to be made available to the students regarding what classes are being offered in high schools and what credits are accepted for colleges. James Madison University looks at applicants with a 3.75 GPA and a SAT score of 1300. Who gets hurt in this process? The students who do not take the AP and honors classes.

A Robinson:

More school districts have changed from a 6 point to a 10 point system. None have gone to a 10 point to a 6 point system. There are concerns that while many people relocate to Fairfax County based on the reputation and quality of the education here, there are those who may decide against moving here based on the grading scale and the disadvantages they feel their children will receive when applying to college.

Khallin D:

Question: Now that there is a plan in place, how do we implement it? What is the next step and what is the timeline perspective?

Pat Murphy:

Answer: The plan will be presented to the superintendent by mid December. The School Board will review the plan in early January and the final decision will be made by the end of January.

Khallin:

Should the BCAC be a part of the decision?

Pat Murphy:

No.

Khallin:

Where do we go once the option is decided?

Pat Murphy:

Attend the board meetings.