

Metropolitan Area Foreign Student Advisors
February 18, 2011
Meeting hosted by Fairfax County Public Schools
Minutes submitted by Silvia Hoke

10:00 – 11:00 – Discussion of MAFSA bylaws. Draft version was distributed and updated. The group will continue with the bylaws discussion and possible adoption at the next meeting.

11:00 – 2:00 – General Meeting

- Welcome and Introductions. Membership list was passed out for corrections.
- Minutes – Silvia Hoke shared that the minutes for MAFSA meetings are being posted to the website (www.WorkNotes.com/MD/MAFSA/member). All future minutes will be posted to the website as well. Donations were collected from members in order to pay for the website renewal in April. Renewal of the site costs \$39 and is charged to Silvia's credit card yearly.
- Yahoo group – Amy Harris (Anne Arundel) agreed to be the moderator.
- Presentation by Fairfax County Public Schools (Le Hang Pham): Overview of Major School Systems: Their Application Around the World. Le Hang shared an organizational chart of the main school systems around the world – American, British, French, and Soviet. A version of this chart is included in the MAFSA Power Point training and can be found on the website.
- Australian Grading Scale – Cheryl Brower, Department of State Community Liaison Officer for Australia, and guest of Lori Miller (Howard County). Ms Brower discussed the grading system in Australia, where students are not assigned grades based on getting correct answers, but rather on a bell curve. Most students in a class receive a grade of C. This can be explained culturally – there is no cultural reward in Australia for being the best, but it's most important to be the 'best mate'. Socialization is considered more important than competition. Grades do not have the same meaning as in the U.S. A grade of C = student has mastered the content. Grades on a transcript are not the determining factors for going to college, but high school exit examinations are taken after the 12th grade and rankings of students determine admission to college.
There was a discussion about possibility of changing the Charts? It was proposed that the Charts not be altered but districts should make individual decisions or have the State Department (attaché) do the evaluation for the student.
- Best Practice – Anne Arundel County started a few years ago to compile a best practices document regarding grade placement for ELL students. Amy Harris agreed to continue with the document. She shared a draft document and different districts discussed their placement policies. Placement based on age depends on what each district can offer as support. Research has shown that in cases of adoption the chronological placement doesn't always work in the best interest of the child, and that retention is not beneficial for students. Amy would like to have a one-page statement with guidelines for placement and retention from MAFSA. There are OCR requirements on retention and district regulations to consider. It was suggested that the information be posted on the website. This position

statement would identify guidelines and recommendations that follow the purpose of MAFSA. A committee was formed to work on the revised draft.

- New Business:
 - Iran – Lori Miller (Howard County). The school system has changes – a pre-university year was added after grade 11 in the Reform system. WES considers grade 11 as graduated. Charts will be modified removing Grade 12 from the Charts.
 - Do we want to collect scholarship information for undocumented students? Anyone who has information please email to Lori Miller or bring to the next meeting for compilation.
 - Refugee enrollment – Candice Hindmarch (Baltimore County) had a question about enrollment. Refugee students must provide the same documentation for residency and proof of address and it's difficult for refugees to comply. In Baltimore County, families must provide three pieces of mail. It was suggested that the office work closely with the refugee organizations so they can help provide the correct data. FIRN can also send out mail if needed.
 - Do other districts re-do evaluations from other states? Silvia Hoke (PGCPS) has had cases where evaluations done in other states have been very wrong. Montgomery County indicated that they do not change transcripts evaluated by other districts, but they send them to the guidance supervisor for the final decision. In Fairfax, VA all evaluations from outside the U.S. are re-done.
 - Ghana - Silvia Hoke (PGCPS) shared information about the one year, 2009-2010 where a 4th year of secondary school was added to the school system. That has been discontinued, but we may still receive transcripts for students who were enrolled in that system.

- Next Meeting:
 - Friday May 6, 2011
 - Hosted by Prince George's County Public Schools
 - Agenda Items:
 - Counseling immigrants towards college
 - Separation and reunification
 - Ghana
 - Draft of best practices
 - Scholarship information
 - 10 -11 a.m. will be for bylaws revision