

Metropolitan Area Foreign Student Advisors  
October 23, 2009  
Meeting hosted by Anne Arundel County Public Schools  
Minutes submitted by Silvia Hoke

10:00 – 11:00 Transcript evaluations and general questions

- LeHang Phan – Afghanistan
- Silvia Hoke – Guinea
- Gloria O'Brien – Cameroon
- Tracy Jackson – Morocco grading scale
- Dianna Rogers-Ford – Dominican Republic

There was a discussion on 'bundling' credits; i.e. combining courses in order to grant either a half or a full credit. Most districts will do this for courses taken in the same year (like Biology, Chemistry, and Physics combined for one credit of Science), but it is not done across years (like Biology for 2 hours a week in grades 9 and 10 cannot be combined for a full credit).

11:00 – 2:00 General Meeting

- Newcomer Program presentation by Dr. Marci Rodriguez, Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Dr. Rodriguez presented the program for newcomer students with limited formal schooling and limited English proficiency held at Annapolis High School. A computer program (Leamos por Computadora) is used to teach literacy, Foundations of High School Math (ALEKS) is being piloted for math, and there is a lot of technology infused in the curriculum to help students progress in learning English and in basic academic skills. The power point can be obtained by contacting Dr. Rodriguez at [mrodriguez@aacps.org](mailto:mrodriguez@aacps.org)
- Newcomer Program presentation by Jen Ruby, Howard County Public Schools. Ms. Ruby presented the program in Howard County that runs out of River Hill High School for newcomer students with interrupted education. English instruction as well as literacy classes and counseling support are part of the program. A copy of the power point can be obtained by contacting Jen Ruby at [Jennifer\\_ruby@hcpss.org](mailto:Jennifer_ruby@hcpss.org).
- The minutes for the October meeting were discussed, and adopted without alterations.
- During lunch, the video on Family Reunification (by Arlington County) was shown. Ahmed Ousman shared his personal experience as a refugee from the Sudan, and the hardship of family separation he went through 11 years ago.
- World Education Services (WES), a credential evaluation service, presented a workshop on their services. Marybeth Sowa, the regional director explained the following:
  - WES is the largest evaluation service (non-profit), with 50,000 evaluations last year and 100 employees.
  - It has liaisons with institutions in Eastern U.S. – The main office is in New York, with reps in Chicago, San Francisco, and Toronto.
  - How WES works:
    - Ensuring authenticity
    - Credential analysis

- Current issues in evaluation
- Issues that WES has been dealing with:
  - Relying on student-supplied records
  - Determining authenticity
  - Not knowing if school is ‘accredited’ (most countries use Ministry of Education certification)
    - WES tries to get records directly from schools when possible. Check their website to see what they require per country in order to complete an analysis of transcripts.
    - MAFSA members can call/email Marybeth Sowa for help with documents from particular countries, especially if family says they cannot get records. Students can also go to the website ([wes.org/required](http://wes.org/required))
    - Some questions to ask:
      - Is the school recognized by the country’s Ministry of Education?
      - Is it a ‘diploma mill’? There are 437 such schools on the WES database – some schools may pose as distance learning institution, or their webpage may end in .edu. There is an Oregon site that is useful in determining if a college is unaccredited (a diploma mill). Check [osac.state.or.us/oda/unaccredited.html](http://osac.state.or.us/oda/unaccredited.html)
- How does WES determine equivalency?
  - Level
  - Scope (length of course)
  - Intent (purpose of diploma in the country)
- Evaluations can be by document (\$100) or course by course (credential analysis)
- Free Resources from WES:
  - [Wes.org/wes\\_tools](http://Wes.org/wes_tools)
    - Grade conversion scales (university level)
    - Country profiles
    - WENR
    - Ministries of Education
    - Bologna Process Monitor (46 countries where students can transfer between colleges easily)
    - Indian 3 year degree
    - Diploma mills
- Contact information:
  - Mary Beth Sowa
  - [Msowa@wes.org](mailto:Msowa@wes.org)
  - 202-331-2928
  - [wes.org/ca](http://wes.org/ca) > Educator > WES Profiles > Register for info on secondary systems
- Comparison Charts update
  - Kosovo (Elena Morozova) – High school goes to year 13, which is a college prep year. No changes to Charts.

- Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan (LeHang Phan) – Update chart submitted
  - Democratic Republic of Congo (Beverly Pariser-Foster) – Updated to be added to Chart
  - Jamaica (Silvia Hoke) – Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth are normally considered postgraduate levels. No changes made to Charts
  - El Salvador (Juana Rivas) – information about PAES exams added to Charts
- New Business – Beverly Pariser-Foster asked about sending another letter to ICE about releasing immunization records to new immigrants at the port of entry. A similar letter was sent several years ago, resulting in most of our students being able to present shot records at registration, but over the years more families have reported that their documents were sealed and kept by immigration. MAFSA members agreed to have Bev send another letter.

- Next meeting:

Alexandria, VA

February 19, 2010

Agenda Items: Transcript evaluation workshop form 10 – 11 am

Viewing of AA County's video: We are All Immigrants

GED for undocumented students

El Salvador (PAES) exam updates

Refugee enrollment procedures