

Metropolitan Area Foreign Student Advisors
May 14, 2010
Meeting hosted by Arlington County Public Schools
Minutes submitted by Silvia Hoke

10:00 – 11:00 Transcript questions and sharing:

- Silvia Hoke (Prince George's) shared information that she received from Connie Cochran (new member from PA) regarding Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus. These countries are expecting to become members of the European Union, and one of the requirements is that they have a 12-year school system. They will be adding a grade 12 to the current grade structure in 2012. The implication is that in 2012 there will be no graduating students (and also no college freshmen).
- Beverly Pariser-Foster (Prince George's) indicated that Hong Kong will also undergo changes in 2012. The GCSE will be replaced by a single set of evaluations, and universities will transition from a 3-year program to 4-years.
- Lori Miller (Howard) had a question about students arriving now (at the end of the year) into high schools and what districts do for awarding credits. Most indicated that if students have partial records, then those grades are used as continuing grades for this year in the subjects that can be matched to their current schedule.
- Candice Hindmarch (Baltimore County) discussed the member list. She reminded us that in order to remain on the member list, representatives have to attend at least one MAFSA meeting each academic year. It is important to keep updated. There was a discussion on the manageability of the list, since we're now up over 35 members. Some members had asked about what constitutes a 'larger' district in order to have 3 members instead of 2. After some suggestions were made, it was decided that Candice could keep 2 members per district, and that if a third member was requested, he/she could be added. However, if the management of the list becomes too cumbersome, Candice will advise for possible changes in the future. Also, if an email address bounces back, that person's information would be deleted from the list. It is the members' responsibility to keep the contact information updated. The member list was passed around for confirmation.

11:00 – 1:30 General Meeting

- Minutes and website: Silvia Hoke distributed the minutes, and the only change suggested was from Lori Miller, indicating that the GED in Maryland will waive the three month requirement beginning July 1, 2010. This means that students do not have to wait three months after withdrawing from school before taking the GED. Silvia also reminded everyone that the minutes are posted on the website: www.WorkNotes.com/MD/MAFSA/member. The website has been updated and looks much better than in the past. Silvia paid for the year's subscription in April (\$35) and collected donations to cover the cost.
- Best Practices: Tema Encarnación (Anne Arundel) had begun collecting information for a 'Best Practices' document for MAFSA members, including

recommendations for grade placement and retention of students. Fairfax County distributed their school board policy on promotion and retention for consideration. Tema will continue to work on a draft document, but each district generally has policies and procedures that they must follow.

- Updates on Charts:
 - Mozambique – Howie Stein (Frederick County) found some information on the grading scale, and the scales confirmed by the NAFSA guide investigated by Le Hang Phan (Fairfax) will be updated on the charts:
 - A = 19-20 90-100
 - B = 17-18 70-89
 - C = 14-16 60-69
 - D = 10-13 50-59
 - E = 0-9 0-49

 - Bolivia – Candice Hindmarch (Baltimore County) found a scale on WES
 - A = 90-100
 - A = 77-89
 - B = 64-76
 - C = 51-63
 - E = 0-50

Donna Kelly (Loudoun County) had a report card with the following scale:

- A = 56-70 Optimo
- C = 36-55 Satisfactorio
- E = 1-35 No satisfactorio

Nivea Berrios (Montgomery) will do more research before we change anything for Bolivia.

- Korea – Lori Miller (Howard) researched the grading scale and shared that GA = D and students can graduate with ‘Ga’. No changes to Charts.
- Montreal, Canada – Beverly Pariser-Foster (PG) – no changes to Charts.
- British Virgin Islands and Jamaica – Silvia Hoke (PG) – changes need to be made to the BVI school system to reflect the British system, and the Forms system added to Jamaica. There was a difference in opinion on how to view Jamaica’s Lower 6 and Upper 6. Most districts consider Form 5 and 5 passes on the GCSE as graduation, but Fairfax County will sometimes consider Form 6 as grades 12/13.
- There was a discussion on ages of graduation. Silvia Koch (Arlington County) explained that in VA the age of eligibility is 21, regardless of whether a student has graduated from another school or not. This applies to LEP students who arrived in the U.S. after age 12. According to their VA Code, education is a fundamental right. Students don’t have to go to school after age 16, but if they ask, they cannot be denied. In Maryland, this is not the case. Students who have already graduated (even in another

country) cannot re-enroll in high school. Each district must follow the policies that are in place for them.

- We had a brief presentation by Laura Gardner of BRYCS (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services). The organization provides consultation and training on working with refugee youth all over the U.S. They have become involved in schools lately due to the federal Refugee Impact Grants. They also provide a clearinghouse of resources, which is on their website (www.brycs.org), and they maintain a list serve and discussions on any refugee or immigrant issues can be posted. Recently our area has received refugees from Iraq, Nepal, Burundi and Somalia. Laura showed some of the resources available through BRYCS:

Understanding your International Students, Jeffra Flaitz, Editor

Understanding your Refugee and Immigrant Students, Jeffra Flaitz, Editor

Cultural Portraits, Palls (?)

Pamphlet: 'Raising Children in a new Country' on BRYCS website

A list of resources was distributed and will be posted as a link on the MAFSA website.

- Howard County shared their 'Welcome' video
- Report on ECDC Conference on African Refugees and Immigrants: Silvia Hoke attended the conference on May 4th, and found it to be very informational and well run. She attended two sessions:
 - IRC Refugee Youth Leaders in Training program in NYC, which is a grant-funded program that helps newly arrived refugees become leaders in their communities and schools. Students attend a summer program that is half academic, half arts their first year, and in their second year they can be paid peer counselors helping newly arrived families.
 - African Refugee and Immigrant Family Mediation in Portland, Oregon. This program joins the city's mediation/conflict resolution service and Africa House, which works with refugees, to help resolve conflicts. Most of the conflicts are school-based, and occur due to acculturation and family stress issues.

Information about these programs and a link to ECDC will be posted to the MAFSA website.

- Next meeting will be hosted by Prince William County, VA.

Date: October 8

Agenda items: Transcript evaluation samples

Mongolia structure

Bolivia

Best practices

Please email Candice with additional topics: chindmarch@bcps.org