

Metropolitan Area Foreign Student Advisors  
October 24, 2008  
Minutes submitted by Silvia Hoke

10:00 am – Transcript evaluation session

Samples of evaluations were shared by attendees

11:00 am – General meeting

- Meeting was hosted by Prince George's County Public Schools
- Welcome and Introductions
- Minutes from last meeting were distributed

1. Silvia Hoke (PGCPS) and Candice Hindmarch (BCPS) announced that their proposal to present at TESOL in Denver this year was not accepted, although it was very well received by the committee. They will investigate other possible venues to present about MAFSA and welcome any suggestions or recommendations.

2. Website update – Silvia reminded everyone that the website is up and running. Anyone who needs a password to access the charts should email her with a request. Only members can have access. Her email address is [shoke@pgcps.org](mailto:shoke@pgcps.org). We agreed that the website was useful and that we should maintain it.

3. Religion credit – most districts do not grant credit for religion, unless the course taken was Comparative Religions. The only exception was Fairfax County, where an elective credit is sometimes given for religion courses.

4. Rosalba Suarez (Howard County) shared her research on Colombia, having just returned from a trip to the country. See evaluation scale on updated chart.

5. Apostille – there had been a lot of discussion on the Yahoo group about the Apostille, a document required by some countries from students who have studied in the United States. The Apostille is an official certification of records. Descriptions of how Prince George's County, MD and Fairfax County, VA handle requests for Apostilles were shared. Some helpful websites:

<http://www.soc.state.va.us/OfficialDocuments/Authentications/authentications>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostille>

6. The British School System: GCSE/IGCSE was discussed by Montgomery County, although Namita Sharma was not present. The grading scale for IGCSE was obtained from the University of Cambridge International Examinations site. The changes do not affect the GCE (O Levels). We will keep the information for future reference.

7. Frederick County had a question about non-graded schools. We discussed how some British schools do not have grades, but we can use the comments from each teacher to assign grades (i.e. Excellent work =A, Average = C, Poor or Weak = E,

etc). The levels that are assigned to these courses are usually not interpreted as grades, so it's better to use the teacher comments.

8. BRYCS – Lori Miller (Howard County) shared a great resource for helping get services to refugee and immigrant families. BRYCS (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services) has an online discussion group that connects service providers across the country. Registration is free, and the form was distributed. More information is available online, and a link has been added to the MAFSA website.

9. Chart Updates:

- Lisa Thompson brought information on grading scale of African Francophone systems.
- Silvia Hoke shared a new school system format for Haiti.

10. Next meeting will be held on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Hosted by Fairfax County, VA Rick Castaneda of Harrisonburg City, VA will share a video and Newcomer counseling sessions at the next meeting.