

FY 2009 QUESTION NUMBER: 5

QUESTION:

Provide a brief description of the impact on classroom teaching and learning resulting from the reduction of immersion and magnet positions. How will the reduction be implemented?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: 1-7

ANSWER:

There are language immersion programs, including Spanish, French, and Chinese at 12 schools (7 elementary and 5 middle). During the budget review, all positions that provide support to special programs including language immersion and magnet programs were examined. After the review of programs and resources it was decided to reduce a small number of teacher-level positions. These are not grade-level classroom instructional positions and will not impact the program the students receive. The immersion classroom teachers will not be impacted and class size for immersion classes will remain the same and continue to remain within the Board of Education class size guidelines. Program coordinators will continue to be allocated based on the size of the program with larger programs receiving a 1.0 coordinator and smaller or partial immersion programs receiving a .5 coordinator position. However, now that the programs are well established, the same level of support that was needed to start programs is no longer needed to continue the program. There are some schools that have additional positions beyond classroom teachers and coordinators. It is these positions that will be examined for possible reductions. Reductions would only be made when it is determined that program effectiveness will not be impacted. Because central resources perform some of the tasks originally assigned to the schools, work including some of the translations, can now be assumed at the central level. Programs will not be impacted by this decrease as it will not impact classroom instruction or program implementation.

Sixteen elementary schools in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Montgomery Blair, and Rockville clusters have special “mini-magnet” programs that were developed in the 1980’s to draw students into schools facing possible closure or to maintain a demographic balance representative of the system. These programs are different than the eight elementary Centers Program for the Highly Gifted, which receive no additional staffing allocation. Positions were allocated to the “mini-magnets” beyond the standard classroom positions to provide support to the unique programs developed by each school. Program themes include computer science, science, mathematics, media, and language immersion. Student population growth has eliminated the need for most of these schools to draw in additional students. Although system needs and priorities have shifted, the schools and communities have become accustomed to the unique programs and enhanced staffing. Consequently, only 2.7 of 30 positions are proposed for reduction.

The specific positions designated for reduction will be identified during the staffing allocation process in February. Decisions will be based on school and student needs with a focus on minimizing program impact. System academic initiatives will not be impacted by these reductions.