

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 7

QUESTION:

How do we accommodate individual school needs for translation services? Do we have positions dedicated to providing this service?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: 3-77

ANSWER:

Individual schools may obtain written translation and oral interpretation services through the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Parent Center and the AT&T Language Line.

For written translations, schools submit MCPS Form 311-1: *Request for Written Translation*, along with the text to translations@mcpsmd.org. Requests are to be made at least 10 working days before they are needed. A school account is charged when the turn-around time is less than 10 working days or if jobs are greater than two pages in length. Translations are limited to legally required correspondence related to student achievement, health, or security. The person requesting the translation must submit the document to avoid problems with copyright, for commercial products, or multiple translations for central office documents. An instructional specialist responsible for translation technology, assisted by an administrative secretary, manages translations. MCPS has four full-time translators for Spanish, Chinese, French, and Vietnamese. All other languages are handled by outside contractors.

When making arrangements for oral interpretation services meetings with parents, individuals, or large groups, schools electronically submit MCPS Form 311-10: *Request for Interpreters*, to interpretations@mcpsmd.org. Requests should be made 10 working days before the date of the requested service. Parent assistants from the ESOL Parent Center obtain an interpreter from a bank of contracted employees. At times, MCPS employees provide interpretation services, but there are no dedicated positions for oral interpretation. Simultaneous interpretation equipment can be reserved for school use. Schools must pick up and deliver the equipment from the Translation Unit in the Division of ESOL/Bilingual Programs.

When an immediate need arises, MCPS employees can access an appropriate oral interpreter by calling the AT&T language line. Interpretation is made via a three-way conversation. The fee for this service is \$1.30 per minute for any language, regardless of the time of day the service is accessed. There is a central account to pay for the service. The MCPS Translation Unit monitors monthly statements and ensures the proper use of this service.

A 1.0 systems programmer position is recommended in the FY 2008 budget. This position is required to develop and support the translation hardware and software needs. This initiative will enhance the Translations Unit's professional translation services in multiple media throughout MCPS.

Schools have been developing local capacity for oral interpretations and written translations in their own major languages. With new provisions in the SEIU-Local 500 contract, supporting

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services employees can be tested to qualify to serve as interpreters or translators at the local level. Individuals who qualify receive a pay differential for time actually spent in translating or interpreting. To date, 40 people have been tested for doing translations, with 14 passing the test. One SEIU person has passed the oral interpretation test. Two of these individuals have provided services to the schools. Routine translations such as flyers, parent letters, or general information are usually addressed at the school or by consultation with the Translation Unit.