

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

July 17, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Bilingual Front Office Staff in Elementary Schools

Question

Ms. Silvestre requested information regarding bilingual front office staffing in 9 elementary schools (with over 40% Latino population).

Response

Staff in the offices of the Chief Operating Officer and School Support and Improvement contacted staff at the nine elementary schools to determine the number of Spanish-speaking front office employees. They also inquired about supports for Spanish-speaking families; challenges, and requests.

The nine elementary schools include Cannon Road, Crethaven, Flower Hill, Glenallan, JoAnn Leleck Elementary School at Broad Acres, Sequoyah, Twinbrook, Wheaton Woods, and Whetstone elementary schools. Three of these schools have a front office secretary who is bilingual or who has conversational speaking abilities in Spanish. Each of the schools has at least one staff member, ranging from classroom teachers to parent community coordinators, who is bilingual in Spanish. Supports that are in place for Spanish-speaking families include accessing the Language Line, scheduling bilingual Spanish staff members to be present near the school entryway in the mornings, and requesting additional bilingual Spanish staff as available. The attached table contains school-specific information regarding Spanish-speaking staff members, supports for Spanish-speaking families, and challenges the schools may have in providing these supports (Attachment).

Many of the responses from staff at the schools indicated difficulty in identifying qualified bilingual front office staff when vacancies arise, despite support from the Office of Human Resources and Development in their efforts. Another challenge is Spanish-speaking staff members who are reassigned to other locations without hiring a replacement with comparable language skills.

Several administrators at schools impacted by the lack of adequate Spanish-speaking staff suggested offering Spanish language classes as professional development to help address this need. These courses may be included as part of staff professional development for front office staff and other staff members as applicable.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kimberly A. Statham, chief of school support and improvement, at 240-740-3100.

Attachment

JRS:KAS:kde

Copy to:

Executive Staff

Ms. Webb

Front Office Staff in Elementary Schools with a Latino Population Greater than 40 Percent

School	Principal/ Administrator	Bilingual Spanish Speaking Front Office Staff	Supports for Spanish Speaking Families	Challenges	Wish/Ask
Cannon Road	Ms. Kristine Donohue, Principal	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Services Manager, and Assistant Manager, and one paraeducator are bilingual and assist front office staff. • The Office of Human Resources and Development has been very supportive in providing names of bilingual candidates. • Parent volunteers will coordinate a Spanish language program for students and kindergarten teachers. 	It is definitely a priority to have Spanish language support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Spanish-speakers within the building. • Require basic Spanish language classes for staff in schools with high Spanish speaking populations. • Professional development to develop Spanish language skills.
Cresthaven	Ms. Sherri Gorden, Principal	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two classroom teachers and two instructional support staff are bilingual and offer support when needed. • Language Line is used in non-emergency situations. • Emergency situations include use of bilingual staff members. • Engaging in great parent relationships. 	Parents with language skills may be reluctant to use them, but with encouragement they make attempts to speak English. Bilingual Spanish staff members who support the translation needs have been reassigned without replacement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more strategic with placements. • In areas of high Spanish-speaking populations, offer language classes.

School	Principal/ Administrator	Bilingual Spanish Speaking Front Office Staff	Supports for Spanish Speaking Families	Challenges	Wish/Ask
Flower Hill	Mr. Lamar Whitmore, Principal; Mrs. Jessica Dancer, Assistant Principal	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One bilingual Spanish paraeducator supports the front office for 45 minutes daily. • A second bilingual Spanish paraeducator offers support as needed. • Parent Community Coordinator (PCC) is bilingual in Mandarin; however, a request was made for a bilingual Spanish PCC. • The Language Line is used as a resource. 	Bilingual Spanish staff members who support the translation needs have been reassigned without hiring a replacement with comparable language skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A request was made for a bilingual Spanish PCC.
Glenallan	Ms. Ann Hefflin, Principal	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC is bilingual and is present in the building two days per week. • Art teacher is bilingual and is positioned near the main office each morning. • Health technician assists with Spanish language. • Full-time ESOL teacher is bilingual. • Staff is learning to use the Language Line. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have dedicated bilingual Spanish staff based on the percentage of Spanish-speaking students.
JoAnn Leleck ES at Broad Acres	Dr. Harold Barber, Principal	1 secretary (recent hire)		Difficulty finding qualified staff	

School	Principal/ Administrator	Bilingual Spanish Speaking Front Office Staff	Supports for Spanish Speaking Families	Challenges	Wish/Ask
Sequoyah	Dr. Barbara Jasper, Principal	Attendance secretary has conversational speaking ability in Spanish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC is fluent in Spanish and is present at the school three days per week; PCC also follows up with parents on days she is not at Sequoyah. • Three building services staff members are bilingual and assist when needed and as available. • One Grade 1 teacher is bilingual and helps with calls and communications to community. • One Grade 3 teacher has conversational speaking ability. • Language Line is used when no Spanish-speakers are available. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign cluster PCC to the school five days per week.
Twinbrook	Mr. Matthew Devan, Principal	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very strong bilingual staff including the PCC. 		
Wheaton Woods	Dr. Daman Harris, Principal	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three bilingual Spanish paraeducators assist with support. 	Difficulty finding qualified bilingual staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer introductory Spanish language class specifically for front office staff.
Whetstone	Mrs. Loretta Woods, Principal	1 secretary (recent hire)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish-speaking staff members support whenever possible. • Language Line. 	Difficulty finding qualified staff	