

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Robert Smith, Superintendent
FROM: Anne Steen and David Hunn, Co-Chairs
DATE: May 29, 2007
SUBJECT: Exploring and Mapping Academics and Careers (EMAC)

We are pleased to forward the final recommendations resulting from the APS Career/Interest Pathways Planning Process for your review and consideration. As noted in the subject title of this memorandum, the Committee felt a new identity for the school district's process was necessary to encompass and convey individual student interests and exploring opportunities. *Exploring and Mapping Academics and Careers* better reflects the fact that this process is driven by individual interests and the opportunities available through an academic and career exploration process.

The Committee

The EMAC Committee is comprised of 3 APS staff members, 3 APS staff liaisons, a representative from ACI, 3 representatives from the County Council of PTAs, and a representative from Northern Virginia Community College, George Mason University, George Washington University and DeVry University as well as the two citizen co-chairs. The individual members of the committee are to be commended for their openness and honesty during this process. Each member brought valuable contributions to the process and the final recommendations. We appreciate the opportunity to work with such a dedicated group of citizens.

The Process

The EMAC Committee met monthly from May 2006 through May 2007. Given the significant staff work done on the Career Pathways model, the committee was able to focus its work on identifying the necessary steps to implementing such a process specifically tailored to the needs of the students and parents in the Arlington Public Schools (APS). The committee first drafted and agreed to the guiding principles presented below. Once the guiding principles were in place, the committee began to explore and learn about the following:

- Current career related resources in APS
- Definitions of Career Pathways – local and national norms
- The role of career pathways, career clusters, interest exploration and counseling

The exposure to these resources and information, gave a solid foundation for meaningful discussions around the needs of the entire APS community. The committee worked diligently to provide a frame work that provides for academic options and flexibility while encouraging career exploration. These discussions were often lively with diverse opinions. The Committee's consensus recommendations are on the next page.

Guiding Principles

Develop a comprehensive academic and career planning process accessible to all Arlington Public School (APS) students beginning in Grade 6 that will:

- Enable all students of all interests and backgrounds to be fully informed of all scheduling, course, and school options and requirements in the Arlington Public Schools.
- Provide students, and their parents, with a clear process for planning and making informed decisions concerning their post-secondary endeavors.
- Be accessible on-line through the new APS Student Information System, eSchoolPlus and through other non-web-based alternatives.

Overall Purpose of Exploring and Mapping Academics and Careers

To provide APS students and their families with an integrated approach to education and interest exploration for academic/career development and personal enrichment through:

- Facilitating planning and informing teachers, staff, and families on how early choices can impact later opportunities
- Enabling informed decisions at important junctures during a student's time within APS by establishing clear connections between a student's core areas of study and individual interests through continuous academic/career exploration and development
- Empowering post-secondary connections

Committee Recommendations

1. Define, organize, and implement in APS the "career pathways" concepts to expand student knowledge about and access to options and choices.
2. Require professional development for teaching and administrative staff on career education and connections beginning with a professional development module through ongoing professional development.
3. Provide education and engagement opportunities for students' families with a clearly defined communication plan as well as option for feedback from stakeholders.
4. Change the name of the Career Center to more accurately highlight skill development opportunities in the context of the Building Level Planning Committee's work.
5. Create an online four and six year individual student planner with links to eight and ten year post-secondary planning processes.
6. Create an online Program of Studies with user-friendly links targeted to middle school and high school students and their families.

7. Consult and solicit feedback and reaction from local business leaders on the relevance of APS offerings to employment opportunities and trends currently and in the future.
8. Consult and solicit feedback and reaction from higher education representatives on the relevance of APS offerings to academic opportunities and trends currently and in the future.
9. Report annually to the School Board and the Arlington Community on the status of these recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Arlington Public School staff on this initiative that will have an impact on many, if not all, Arlington students. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the Committee's recommendations with you or answer any questions you may have.