

ASFS-KEY BUILDING SWAP INFORMATION

Posted November 16, 2018

Introduction

In response to the APS decision to swap the buildings for Arlington Science Focus Elementary School and Key Immersion Elementary School (www.apsva.us/asf-key-school-building-swap), the Key PTA submitted the following questions to staff for use at a Key PTA meeting on October 16. At this meeting, School Board members Monique O'Grady and Tannia Talento joined staff in fielding questions from parents in attendance, and most of the previously submitted questions were not discussed. This document is to provide answers to those questions.

Questions Provided by Key Immersion School PTA about the ASFS-Key Building Swap

TRANSPARENCY

1. What measures is APS taking to ensure that there is transparency in this process?

APS is committed to providing information to stakeholders about decisions and major projects as information becomes available. For this process, staff will begin working in January to develop a community engagement timeline that will be posted online and distributed in English and Spanish via School Talk to Key-ASFS families. This timeline will include opportunities for community members to share their input on the timing of this building swap. The questions and community input gathered during this process will be posted online. In addition, staff has already been working with the PTA leaders from both the Key and ASFS communities, and has participated with School Board members in meetings with both school communities.

2. On the issue of transparency, when and how will the School Board, our elected officials who are accountable for APS' decisions, be clear whether a School Board vote will or will not be taken?

A School Board vote is not required for this plan to be implemented. Policy states that the Superintendent is responsible for making program moves. School Board members will be kept informed throughout this process.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Has APS determined the following costs for transportation?

Transportation costs for students will be reduced when the building swap takes effect.

- **ASFS:** the number of buses would be reduced—there are 116 students currently attending ASFS who are eligible for transportation at ASFS but would not require buses when attending school in the Key building.

- **Key:** the approximately 12 countywide buses required today would essentially remain the same, as only 40 Key students are currently not eligible for transportation to Key and they would become bus riders to the ASFS building.

2. What are the number of kids in AM and PM Extended Day at ASFS? And Key? What are these numbers?

This question relates to the logistics of the building swap that will be part of the community engagement process to be developed in January 2019.

3. Key School students are having major bus problems this fall, with at least four buses arriving half an hour late for school every day, and many families on other bus routes upset about stops that were moved or completely eliminated. Has APS decided to make bus service for Key School worse in the hopes that families would choose to stop sending their children there, so that the Key student body would shrink and thus fit better into the too-small ASFS building?

No. APS always strives to provide the best transportation services possible to all students who are eligible for transportation. We recognize that bus service has likely been affected by our continued shortage of bus drivers in Arlington, for example:

- At the Oct. 8 FAC meeting, Facilities & Operations reported that 15 bus drivers are calling out sick per day, which is straining transportation resources.
- Over the past several years, many of the families who did not get into Claremont due to the capacity at that site were accepted into Key, resulting in the largest student body to date at Key. These numbers create challenges within the existing buildings and APS needs to provide capacity relief as we open new seats in neighborhood schools.

Once the current elementary school boundary process wraps up, APS will work with Immersion leaders and transportation staff to develop a new immersion feeder structure for 2019-20.

CAPACITY

1. The capacity of the Arlington Science Focus building is less than that of Key. How will the ASFS building accommodate our student population? Will the size of the incoming Kindergarten and VPI classes be decreased? When will the class sizes start decreasing - with the incoming 2019 class?

- Policy J-5.3.31 Options and Transfers ([https://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/AZQ3ZY095CE3/\\$file/J-5.3.31%20Options%20and%20Transfers.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/AZQ3ZY095CE3/$file/J-5.3.31%20Options%20and%20Transfers.pdf)) states that each option school will offer PreK, and the two VPI classes will move with the Key Immersion program to the ASFS building.

- Before the 2018-19 school year began, APS leadership discussed reducing the number of Kindergarten classes at both Key and Claremont because both buildings were over capacity. We recognized that the principals of both schools were concerned about the new changes under the options and transfer policy that would take effect this year, so the decision was made that both schools continue to offer six Kindergarten classes, despite exceeding the recommended enrollment levels.
- It was with great effort that Key has been able to accommodate six Kindergarten classes again this year. In the spring, staff from several APS departments toured the Key site with school administrators to see what adjustments could be made to allow for six Kindergarten classes in the 2018-19 school year.
- APS plans to decrease the number of kindergarten classes at Key and Claremont from six to four classes for the 2019-20 school year.

2. Key has a large percentage of students who participate in the Extended Day program. Will the smaller ASFS building result in fewer students being able to participate in the Extended Day program?

This question relates to the logistics of the building swap. We'll work with Extended Day to ensure that the program serves as many kids as possible. This will be one of our points to address in the community engagement process to be developed in January 2019.

3. What will the preferred size of a Spanish Immersion Program located on Lincoln Street be? Has APS identified a target number of students (population size) at the primary levels (Claremont and Key) to ensure a robust secondary program (at Gunston and Wakefield)?

- It would be ideal for all schools to fit within the defined building capacity. As APS opens new schools, we hope to ensure that we can bring enrollment levels down across all our schools.
- The site may need to use relocatables as it transitions to a smaller building.
- APS is working to identify one or more additional elementary school(s) that could host Immersion kindergarten classes in 2019-20.
- If those classes are successful, we'll continue to offer additional grades for those students and additional students that follow.
- At some point in the future, we'll set time to reevaluate the demand for a third immersion school.

4. If APS intends to shrink the Key Immersion program, what is the justification other than, this is the easiest way to solve a boundary issue?

APS has always intended to return enrollment levels at the immersion school closer to the capacity of the building. Since the program is an option, this needs to be done by

reducing the number of Kindergarten classes. The student enrollment at option programs/ schools can be increased and decreased according to overall APS enrollment needs and building capacity.

- 5. In the 'Elementary Location Recommendations' Initial Analysis - Phase 1 of the Elementary Planning Initiative' put out on April 11, 2018 APS states that: "The underlying assumption of this analysis is that parents are more willing to have option schools grow with relocatable classrooms" and that "expansion could be accommodated in large part, using relocatable classrooms." Is it APS' current approach to house option programs at sites where a larger percentage of students are served in relocatables and neighborhood programs at sites where a smaller percentage of students are housed in relocatables? APS notes on the engage section of its website that the neighborhood program will gain 100 permanent seats but does not address the fact that the Spanish Immersion program will lose 100 permanent seats. Please explain.**
- We expect there will be continued growth in the Ballston/Rosslyn corridor and additional neighborhood seats are necessary to meet this continued growth. It is helpful to use larger buildings for neighborhood schools because enrollment for option schools can be controlled annually through the admissions process, while neighborhood schools must accommodate all students within their boundaries.
 - The decision to reduce the number of Kindergarten classes from six classes to four at the two elementary Immersion schools means that the student body at these schools will be smaller. Relocatables will be used at both option and neighborhood schools if any additional classroom space is needed.

OUTREACH

- 1. What does APS do exactly to advocate and educate communities about immersion vs mainstream and ESL programs in neighborhoods with high student population of Spanish speaking students like Carlin Springs, and Columbia Pike?**
- At the time that Key was opened by Dr. Kathie Panfil, the area around Key had a higher number of Spanish speakers than it does today. Currently, Early Childhood and Welcome Center staff work with community organizations, including APAH and AHC, to offer information about the Immersion programs in Spanish to constituents and residents throughout the county. Information about the program is available online in both languages and the application process is promoted through APS communication channels.
 - Last spring, P&E staff met with Spanish-speaking mothers' groups from Campbell and Carlin Springs to discuss immersion. They were very interested and asked about the instructional model and requested a meeting with current high school immersion students. They are already invested in their current school communities, but they

were excited about the possibility that parents of future students might have access to this program for their children.

- As we've talked with all parents across the system, it is clear that proximity is a primary concern for families. It becomes particularly important for families that rely on public transportation. Some families in the Carlin Springs-Columbia Pike area have expressed their hope for Immersion one day at a school closer to them than Claremont or Key.
- We also need help from our existing immersion families, connecting to their networks so that we families know about this program.

2. Why does a native English-speaking family's interest in immersion education count for less than a native Spanish-speaking family's interest? There are plenty of people on the Key/Claremont waitlists -- while a 50/50 native-language split is ideal for two-way immersion, not meeting the split exactly SHOULD NOT be used against the immersion community!

- APS is thrilled to see such strong interest in our thriving Immersion program from both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking families. The immersion program typically has a waitlist for English-speaking families because far more of these families apply to the Immersion programs than do Spanish-speaking families.
- The design of APS's dual language Spanish Immersion Program offered at Claremont and Key are built upon a balance of Spanish and non-Spanish speakers, and 50% of the instructional time is spent learning in each language. The curriculum is structured to support this mode and the schools are staffed accordingly.
- The 50/50 student population balance is designed to provide students with optimal language development by having balanced opportunities with native language peers. The 50/50 model allows both Spanish and non-Spanish teachers to learn from their peers, and students to serve as language models to each other. Switching to a 90/10 language immersion model, will probably limit the accessibility to the program for some of our Spanish speakers. The 90/10 model does not build upon the language assets of both groups of students, and gives preferences to families that come with strong PreK experiences. New immersion programs in other additional languages could benefit from a 90/10 model, especially when the peer language models are not in our community.
- At times, the schools do not always enroll a true 50/50 split. Administrators have often had to be flexible and find ways to group multilingual students in the language group that is underrepresented; the goal is to stay as true as possible to the 50/50 model, which is the foundation of the APS immersion program.
- This model is highly effective in providing language acquisition for APS Spanish speakers. Other schools with large populations of Spanish speakers provide First

Language Support (FLS) which provides content instruction in Spanish for Spanish speakers.

- Later in this school year, APS will share the PreK Instruction Program Pathways. This will provide a vision for all the neighborhood and option schools across APS.
 - Our current Immersion schools are working on how their programs articulate.
 - This process may identify the need for additional immersion programs in additional languages.
 - There are other models for immersion instruction that may be considered, often with 80% of the time in one language.
 - This model requires a change in staffing and the resources required.
- If the program expands, it will follow the design of the current instructional model.

3. What efforts has APS ever made to reach out to Spanish-speaking families not already involved in Key or Claremont? I have asked several native Spanish-speaking friends/acquaintances who grew up here in Arlington (or have had their own children) over the last 20 years and many have never heard of the immersion education programs.

- Historically, this has been done by the immersion schools themselves. When Key opened thirty years ago, this area of Arlington was predominately Spanish-speaking and outreach focused on the school's surrounding neighborhoods.
- The rest of this question was addressed under "outreach" above.

4. Given APS's previous assertion (April 2018) that students are more likely to attend option schools located in close geographic proximity to their homes, has APS reached out to sizable ASFS neighborhood population currently choosing Spanish Immersion at Key to gather information about what will inform each family's individual decision regarding moving with the Spanish Immersion program to Lincoln Street or joining the new neighborhood program on Key Blvd? Please note that 42% of the students enrolled in the immersion program at Key reside in the ASFS neighborhood. This issue will greatly affect the size of the student body of both the neighborhood and immersion program.

This question relates to the logistics of the building swap that will be part of the community engagement process to be developed in January 2019.

5. Both Dr. Murphy and the School Board have requested that concerned members of the Key and ASFS communities direct our questions and concerns to engage via email. APS staff has replied to these requests indicating that they do not want to communicate with us at this time. What is the preferred avenue for our community to express our concerns?

- APS staff has replied to every email message received and continues to answer questions using all of the information currently at our disposal, and will continue doing so. Community members have been advised that the planning team has been working on the Fall 2018 Elementary School Boundary Process and will not be able to devote the amount of time required for community engagement on the ASFS-Key building swap until January 2019. Until then, there may be some questions that we simply do not have answers for, and we ask for your patience.
- Please continue to share your questions and comments via engage@apsva.us. Staff has received your comments and questions, and will keep reviewing these as they come in. These have informed the initial FAQs posted on the Engage webpage.
- Staff will begin to develop the community engagement process in January 2019, which will provide stakeholders with a timeline and more details.

6. The Key community does not want to move and our discussion with some APS is that a 1/3 wants to move, a 1/3 does not want to move, and a 1/3 does not really care. Has APS reached out the most impacted communities -- people who attend Key and ASFS now -- to see what their positions are on this swap and where is that raw data to support a move that only 1/3 of one school actually supports?

- We are not familiar with the discussion you reference. This decision was made by the Superintendent and is not the result of a community engagement process. APS staff will develop a plan for community outreach on this initiative beginning in January 2019, after completing the fall 2018 elementary school boundary process.

IMMERSION OUTCOMES

1. What is the cost and long-term outcomes of ESOL/HILT in non-immersion programs through high school? Has this been compared to the long-term outcomes and costs of immersion through high school?

As mentioned above, APS conducts program evaluations on a cycle. This year, data is being collected for three different programs including:

- World Languages
- The ESOL/HILT program
- Services for Students with Special Needs

The program evaluation will assess program implementation and outcomes, and the results are used to plan for the next six or seven years. The multi-year evaluation process includes quantitative and qualitative data collection, as well as opportunities for stakeholder input. Key findings from the program evaluation will be presented to the School Board during the 2019-20 school year. A staff response will lay out a plan for program improvements.

Previous evaluations of the immersion program showed strong outcomes for APS immersion students:

- Last evaluation (completed April 2013) - www.apsva.us/planning-and-evaluation/evaluation/evaluation-reports/
- Direct Link - www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/World-Languages-Evaluation-Report-Revised.pdf

Ms. Perdomo was the Supervisor of World Languages in 2013, and was the World Languages teacher specialist for the prior evaluation. The first World Language evaluation found the cost for the program was on par with the cost for APS elementary schools. The only additional cost is countywide transportation. The 2013 evaluation identified programs strengths including

- Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment results for elementary immersion students indicate that native English-speaking students generally outperform their peers who are not enrolled in immersion programs. This is true for all content areas.
- SOL Reading, Writing, Math, and Science assessment results for 8th grade immersion students indicate that these students consistently outperform their non-immersion peers in these subjects, regardless of students' native or dominant language.

ESOL/HILT provides FLS First Language Support Program at selected schools for students in Kindergarten through grade 3. The FLS program was conducted in Spanish, and is similar to the Spanish component of the Immersion Program. During the Middle School Boundary process, there was a suggestion to consolidate the Spanish Immersion programs with the ESOL/HILT program, and the evaluation will explore this issue.

2. Do you believe a two-way immersion neighborhood school would benefit those communities more than a mainstream ESL neighborhood and how do you see the future of Immersion growth there and in other parts of the county happening?

The Immersion program has the stated goals of developing high levels of proficiency in the native language and in a second language through content instruction; developing high levels of literacy in Spanish and English; promoting academic achievement in the content areas in both languages; and developing cross-cultural competence. It is good for most students, however, the model depends on the balance of speakers.

3. Key School has been Immersion since 1986. At the time, there was only one other school, Oyster ADAMs, in the DC metro area, attempting two-way immersion. That is 32

years of an additive positive forward movement in Dual Language Education programs that began a resurgence in the 80's. Would you agree that Key school is possibly a landmark school for dual language education history as well as a source of pride for the Hispanic and immersion communities?

Yes, APS immersion programs are valued programs for our community.

- 4. How can APS claim to support Spanish speaking and learning of all students, uphold the values behind cross cultural competence and identity building programs, and think that if they put the balancing of enrollment of neighborhood schools above all else that it will not impact the quality of education?**

APS quality of education is excellent. Balancing enrollment is crucial to future planning and to providing safe and academically- challenging learning environments in which all APS students can flourish. Regardless of the building swap, a reduction in the number of kindergarten classes for both Immersion programs at Key and Claremont is required as the buildings are unable to maintain the growth of the past few years. Both schools are currently over 750 students each, which exceeds each building's capacity. As mentioned earlier, APS is looking for opportunities to maintain the same number of Kindergarten classrooms by moving them at additional schools.

- 5. Please consider the following APS actions: the recent changes to FLES practices, a swap recommendation with little to no transparency, the shrinking of immersion when the swap occurs, no analysis of the shrink on 6-12 immersion, and a new lottery that allegedly granted more access, but will make fewer spots available by approximately 100 seats.**

APS is committed to maintaining a strong immersion option for our students. Regardless of where immersion education is housed, we value immersion and recognize the deep interest in our community for this option. There is a current program evaluation for World Languages underway—an evaluation that includes Immersion—and staff is exploring the possibility of locating Immersion Kindergarten classes in an additional school. We'll continue working with instructional leaders and the principals of the Immersion schools to continue to identify ways to support World Languages.

CHOICE STATUS

- 1. If Arlington "Science Focus" School is a "normal" neighborhood school, no longer a "special" option school, why does it still have a name that suggests a special focus? And why would APS pay to move resources like the ASFS science lab if ASFS moves?**

Arlington Science Focus was the school available to families in the Key/ASFS boundaries who chose not to enroll in the immersion program. If the ASFS community requests a name change for the school, it can be considered.

APS plans include moving resources in the community engagement process. We'll see what is requested by both schools and determine what we can afford to move. The Dept. of Facilities and Operations has suggested that when the building swap is completed, that APS conduct a "refresh" of both buildings, such as the process that will be undertaken at Henry and Drew in the summer of 2019. APS used to have a schedule to complete this work on a cycle, but the growth has shifted attention to adding new space, either through new schools or additions.

2. APS is arguing that this swap should take place because Science Focus is the only school outside of its boundary, but the only reason Science Focus is outside of its boundary is because 2 years ago, APS decided to make Science Focus a 100% neighborhood school and made Key 100% lottery at the same time. Given the tight financial budget, wouldn't it be easier to just change Key and Science Focus back to their prior designations instead of using taxpayer dollars to move the schools?

- The School Board adopted a new options and transfers policy that provides equity. Before the change, some communities had preference to multiple schools, while other neighborhoods had no access to the options.
- APS had lots of flexibility when enrollment was around 19,000 students. On Sept. 30, 2018, enrollment reached another all-time high of 27,436; our flexibility is more limited now.
- The ASFS/Key building swap will minimize the number of students currently being bused to ASFS who live in the Key/ASFS walk zone—currently 116 students who attend ASFS live within the Key existing walk zone.
- 83% of the students who attend ASFS live within the Key/ASFS boundaries.
- The building swap would be a one-time expense.

3. Since the projected Key population won't fit in the Science Focus building and the justification for changing the designation of Key from neighborhood to option/lottery 2 years ago was to open-up immersion to the rest of the county, how is swapping the buildings going to promote immersion if the building will not hold the current Key population let alone any expansion of immersion?

APS is committed to immersion and the ASFS/Key swap does not indicate a reduction in this commitment. There is interest from community members for APS add immersion at a third school. For the 2019-20 school year, we are working with our elementary principals to open four additional Kindergarten immersion classes to balance the classes that will not be offered at Key and Claremont. This information will be covered in P&E's annual update to the School Board in January 2019.

OTHER

1. Has APS staff making these decisions received implicit bias training?

Yes, members of our staff have received and led cultural competence trainings countywide for administrators, faculty, and staff. We have bilingual and bicultural staff who have lived in other countries and whose backgrounds include advocacy for Latino communities. Having been trained in this area, we recognize how important it is to seek out input directly from the families at both schools and will include Spanish-language community meetings as part of our engagement plan. It is vital that the stakeholders involved in this building swap speak to their own experiences and allow all families to speak for themselves in this process.