

**CHRISTOPHER FARMS ELEMENTARY  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE PARTIAL  
IMMERSION ACADEMY**

**Year-Two Evaluation**

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Department of Accountability  
2512 George Mason Drive  
P. O. Box 6038  
Virginia Beach, VA 23456-0038

August 2004

**CHRISTOPHER FARMS ELEMENTARY  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE PARTIAL IMMERSION ACADEMY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AUTHOR:** Heidi L. Janicki, Assessment Specialist  
Department of Accountability

**OTHER CONTACT PERSON:** Diane N. Jones, Assistant Superintendent  
Department of Accountability

This evaluation provides the School Board and superintendent with second-year information on the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy (FLPIA) housed at Christopher Farms Elementary School (CFES). The purpose of the academy is to prepare students to become proficient in Spanish while meeting their academic needs in their normal subject disciplines. This is accomplished by teaching students mathematics, science, and health in Spanish. Language arts and social studies are taught in English during the other half of the day. A cohort composed of two classes will continue learning mathematics, science, and health in Spanish from first grade through fifth grade. The goal of the academy, approved by the School Board, was for the academy students to equal or exceed the achievement of non-academy students in all subject areas, while developing a working knowledge of Spanish.

**FINDINGS**

- The FLPIA staff responded positively to the recommendations from the year-one evaluation. Improvements were made in academy student retention during year two and in preliminary academy enrollment for year three. Staff development was planned based on teacher input, pacing was monitored throughout the year, and communication efforts between teachers and parents appeared to improve. A new Spanish teacher was hired earlier and teachers had access to instructional materials earlier allowing for more opportunity to prepare for the academy's upcoming third year.
- Administrators followed the academy proposal with regards to student selection in 2003-2004. No lottery was needed in year two because the academy was able to accommodate all applicants. Due to available seats in second grade, rising second-grade students were able to enter the academy without having been in the academy in first grade. For the upcoming 2004-2005 school year, 50 students are enrolled in the academy for first grade rather than a maximum of 48 students being selected by lottery as indicated in the School Board-approved proposal.
- There was a greater percentage of Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students and a smaller percentage of African-American students in the first-grade academy cohort compared to non-academy students. The ethnic background of the second-grade academy students was more similar to the non-academy students, although a slightly higher percentage

of academy students were Caucasian. Females were represented in higher percentages in both academy cohorts, and a smaller percentage of academy students were eligible for free or reduced lunch compared to non-academy students.

- Perceptions of the academy were more positive in year two compared to year one. Overall, students, parents, and teachers appeared to be happy with the program and felt that the students were learning math, science, health, language arts, social studies, and Spanish at the expected rate.
- Academy students developed positive attitudes toward those who speak Spanish and their culture. Students were excited about learning how to understand, speak, read, and write Spanish, as well as learning about Spanish crafts, games, songs, and stories.
- Although parents were satisfied overall, several parents noted the need for more teacher and parent communication regarding their individual child's academic progress and the need for more assistance with Spanish materials so they could help their child with the Spanish-taught subjects of math, science, and health at home.
- Academy first-grade students performed better than non-academy students on math, science, and social studies local assessment tests and also scored higher on the Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) in the fall and spring. Academy first-grade students had higher mean grades than non-academy students in math, reading, and writing. Mean grades for academy students were slightly lower in science and social studies, but the difference was very slight and not consistent with assessment test results.
- Academy second-grade students performed better than non-academy students on math, language arts, and social studies local assessment tests at the end of the year, but scored lower on three of four science assessments given throughout the year. Second-grade academy students also scored higher on the DRA at the end of the year, and they had higher mean grades than non-academy students in math, reading, and social studies. Writing grades were similar.
- Spanish proficiency levels for first-grade students were equivalent to proficiency levels for first-grade students in a similar partial immersion program based on a nationally-recognized assessment of Spanish listening and speaking proficiency. Second-grade CFES students' proficiency ratings were somewhat lower than proficiency ratings for second-grade students in a similar partial immersion program, although the comparison program had more native Spanish speakers enrolled. Overall, it was determined that students made solid progress toward gaining Spanish proficiency.
- The actual expenditures for academy preparation and two years of academy operation were approximately \$192,555 compared to the proposed budget of \$173,287. Overall, the actual expenditures for the academy were within \$19,300 of the proposed budget. If staff costs are excluded because the teachers in the academy would have been part of the school's regular allocation, the costs of the academy were \$30,146 or \$13,734 below the proposed budget of \$43,880.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Plan staff communication opportunities early in the year to learn what staff development the academy teachers prefer and to provide a support system for the academy teachers, especially the new third-grade academy team. Monitor all academy teams' experience to allow for early intervention if any difficulties develop.
- Consider a final attempt in late August to make parents of rising second graders aware that there are still seats available in the academy for new second-grade students if they are interested. Allow additional interested students to enroll at the beginning of the school year if they are academically prepared in order to increase the capacity of the second academy cohort.
- Monitor academy student demographics and broaden academy marketing efforts to populations that are representative of the CFES grade one and grade two populations to ensure that all students at CFES are aware of the academy opportunity and that they are represented in the applicant pool for the academy before employing the lottery system to select academy students.
- Review and use suggestions from the academy survey responses to continue efforts to increase communication with parents regarding their child's individual progress and to provide parents with resources that allow them to help their child with subjects taught in Spanish.
- Closely monitor the science achievement of the academy's first cohort during third grade to ensure that the students are prepared for Virginia's grade three science Standards of Learning (SOL) test. Consider investigating the areas in which academy students score lower on the assessment tests to determine if there is a pattern of errors on certain types of science questions because they learn science in Spanish.
- Ensure that achievement data is collected annually for all incoming and current academy cohorts to be sure that the academy continues to meet the students' learning needs, and provide the longitudinal data to administrators as requested.