

# **FOREIGN LANGUAGE PARTIAL IMMERSION ACADEMY**

## **Year-One Evaluation**

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

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# FOREIGN LANGUAGE PARTIAL IMMERSION ACADEMY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**AUTHOR:** Timothy J. Weis, Assessment Specialist  
Department of Accountability

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

This evaluation presents the School Board and superintendent with first-year implementation information on the new Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy housed at Christopher Farms Elementary School. The purpose of the academy is to prepare students to become proficient in a foreign language, Spanish, while meeting their academic needs in their normal subject disciplines. This is accomplished by teaching students math, science, and health totally in Spanish. The other half of the day is taught in English. A cohort composed of two classes will continue learning in Spanish through fifth grade. The goal established 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

- Sight delays occurred in some implementation tasks due to the program's approval date, but delays did not hinder the academy opening in September 2002.
- The later than planned hiring date for the Spanish teacher shifted some plans for summer curriculum work and staff development into the school year.
- Administrators followed the student selection process as proposed.
- The academy opened at **88** percent of program capacity. Attrition during the year combined with documented attrition between first and second grade left 76.2 percent of the original cohort continuing in the academy.
- The most common reasons for choosing FLPIA enrollment were the opportunity to learn another language and to develop an appreciation for other cultures.
- Academy demographics paralleled the Christopher Farms non-academy demographics in most ways, except that females, Caucasians, and Hispanics were represented in slightly higher percentages than the school average.
- Hiring a teacher fluent in Spanish and endorsed in elementary education proved difficult. The teacher hired met the requirements but had no experience in elementary education, which made the assignment more challenging.

- As proposed, the curricula mirrored the non-academy curricula with the exception of three subjects taught in Spanish: math, science, and health.
- Curriculum translation was time-consuming for the Spanish teacher and particularly difficult in science. Spanish matches for some English-based materials were difficult to find.
- Academy teachers expressed concern over the effectiveness of the staff development and indicated a need for more practical staff development with greater attention to teaming needs and communication.
- The FLPIA students' final grade averages were higher than non-academy students in all subjects, but year-end assessment scores were lower in math and science.
- Training and education about the academy for parents and the entire CFES faculty occurred throughout the year.
- Overall, parent and student perceptions of the academy's first year were positive. Parents were pleased with the academy and student progress in learning Spanish. The most frequent feedback noted the desire for more communication and assistance with home assignments in Spanish. Concerns tended to address uncertainty about future achievement in science and math.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Explore ways to increase enrollment and retention in the academy, including consideration of School Board approval to permit students in one additional elementary school to enroll in the academy.
- Hire new academy teachers as early as possible and develop a plan to find teachers who have elementary experience and are also fluent in Spanish.
- Plan and implement staff development based on teacher input, the initiative's needs, and teacher classroom experience and familiarization with **VBCE** curriculum.
- Make provisions for substantial work annually during the summer on curriculum translation, mapping power standards, and ordering materials for the next grade level progression of the academy.
- Closely monitor pacing and teaching of power standards to ensure students have the requisite skills in math and science to achieve at least at a commensurate level of their peers by the end of grade 3.
- Continue communication with parents and explore means to increase the frequency of addressing progress in Spanish, math, science, and health, and to provide assistance to parents when student homework is assigned in Spanish.
- Conduct a longitudinal study of student academic achievement and continuation of Spanish studies for the first three cohort groups of the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose

This evaluation provides the School Board and superintendent with information on first-year implementation of the school division's Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy housed at Christopher Farms Elementary School. School Board Policy 6-24 mandates the evaluation of new programs by the Department of Accountability. School Board Regulation 6-24.2 stipulates, in part, that "During the first year of the program, the focus of the interim evaluation will be on the implementation of the program. At regularly scheduled intervals, the program evaluator from the Department of Accountability will meet with the program staff to determine if the program is being implemented as designed. An interim program evaluation will be presented to the School Board after the first year." This report seeks to satisfy the evaluation requirements as stipulated by School Board policy and regulation.

## Overview

On February 19, 2002, the School Board approved the proposal for implementation of a Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy (FLPIA). Patterned after highly successful programs in operation in other divisions, this program was designed to prepare students to become functionally proficient in a foreign language by immersing them in the Spanish language for half of the school day. The FLPIA, housed at Christopher Farms Elementary School (CFES), is designed to accept up to 48 students, all from within the Christopher Farms school boundaries. The two first-grade classes within the academy are taught math, science, and health entirely in Spanish. All other subjects are taught in English. These academy students form a cohort that remains together throughout the elementary years.

## Academy Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy is to "provide elementary students with a program in which they develop cultural awareness, communicative and academic proficiency in a foreign language, and maintain their English proficiency while succeeding academically in all subject areas at levels comparable to those in a general education program." (Proposal, November 2001)

Specific academy objectives are:

1. Students will successfully complete a sequential-grades one through five program of study in which the academic areas of mathematics, science, and health are taught in Spanish.
2. Students will develop proficiency as indicated on a nationally recognized test of language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing the foreign language.
3. Students will develop positive attitudes toward those who speak the foreign language and toward their cultures.
4. Students will develop English language arts and reading skills commensurate with expectations for the students' age and abilities.

5. Students will meet or exceed divisionwide objectives on the *Stanford 9* Tests and Virginia Standards of Learning Tests.

### **Program of Study**

For students in the FLPIA, the elementary school experience is essentially the same as other students with two major differences: mathematics, science, and health are taught in Spanish; and students switch classrooms during their core instructional time. The content taught by the Spanish teacher is the same as that taught by other elementary teachers in that grade level. Classroom assessments are given in Spanish. Other assessments, such as the Virginia Beach ~~pre post-tests~~ and the Virginia Standards of Learning tests are given in English with no accommodations.

## **EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Evaluation Design**

This first-year report assesses the implementation of the Christopher Farms Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy during the 2002 – 2003 school year and progress toward goal attainment. The second-year evaluation will examine the attainment of program goals and objectives. Evaluation questions found in this report were derived from a review of School Board policy related to first-year evaluations, the academy proposal, and various academy documents. In addition, the Department of Accountability evaluator sought input from representatives of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Christopher Farms Elementary School.

First-year evaluation questions follow:

1. Did the implementation time line mirror the School Board approved time line?
  - Did the implementation of the marketing plan mirror the approved time line?
  - Did the selection and development of the staff mirror the approved time line?
  - Did the student selection process mirror the approved time line?
  - Did curriculum correlation and development mirror the approved time line?
  - Were all appropriate materials procured as planned?
2. Did the student application and selection process mirror the School Board approved plan? What were the characteristics of the student population?
  - What was the application process?
  - Who served on the selection committee?
  - How were students selected?
  - What were the demographics of the academy students?
  - How did the demographics of the academy students compare to the non-academy student?

3. Did the academy plan for staff selection and training mirror the School Board approved plan?
  - What qualifications were required for teachers?
  - What role did the Department of Curriculum and Instruction perform in staff selection and supervision?
  - What training occurred?
  - Was the training effective?
4. Did the academy program mirror the School Board approved plan?
  - What subjects were taught in Spanish?
  - Were the students immersed in Spanish for these subjects?
  - Was the curriculum taught in Spanish compatible with the standard Virginia Beach curriculum in content and methodological practices?
4. What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation process?
5. What progress was made toward program goals?
  - What were students' quarterly and yearly grade averages?
  - What were students' Directed Reading Assessments (DRA) and language arts quarterly scores?
  - What were the students' test scores in math, science, and social studies?

### **Data Collection Process**

The Department of Accountability employed these data collection methods:

- Examined the Christopher Farms Foreign Language Academy Proposal, academy program documentation, and academy literature.
- Conducted informational meetings with the principal, assistant principal, and faculty.
- Maintained ongoing communication and periodic correspondence with the assistant principal.
- Collected data of student progress from the assistant principal.
- Queried SASI for student demographic data.
- Obtained Free/Reduced Lunch data from Food Services.
- Administered perception surveys to academy students, parents, and teachers.

The Department of Accountability invited academy students, parents, and teachers to complete a school division perception survey. The academy teachers administered the survey to 36 students in May 2003. Student respondents represented 92 percent of the 39 students enrolled in the academy at that time. Parents received a mail survey delivered by the United States Postal Service with directions to return completed surveys to the Department of Accountability no later than May 16. On May 16, 2003, those parents who had failed to respond to the initial mailing received a second opportunity to provide feedback on the academy program. A total of 21 parents responded to the survey, representing 53.8 percent of the academy population. Both academy teachers completed a survey, which was followed up with a more in-depth interview.

## **Instruments**

The evaluator used the following data collection instruments for this program evaluation:

- Student Survey – gauged students’ perceptions of the program’s implementation.
- Parent Survey – assessed parents’ perceptions of the program’s implementation and gathered parents’ reasons for enrolling their children in the academy program.
- Teacher Survey – measured academy teachers’ perceptions of the program’s implementation.

## **Data Analysis**

Department of Accountability staff recorded data gathered from student and parent surveys into a database in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer application software for frequency analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was not used for the faculty survey. With only two teachers involved, it was more appropriate to perform a qualitative analysis of their perceptions. This evaluator performed statistical analysis measures and presented the results in Microsoft Word tables in the Results and Discussion section of this report. Staff members typed stakeholders’ open-ended survey responses directly into Microsoft Word for inclusion in this report. Student demographic data were extracted from SASI using query statements and exported into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet files. Pivot table functions were used to summarize the demographics and present them in table and bar graph formats. Testing data were entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets then exported into SPSS for analysis of means. Testing data, which is submitted in Microsoft Access, was imported into SPSS for analysis. Grades were assigned numerical equivalents and entered into SPSS for analysis. The Evaluation Findings section summarizes data collected and the appendices contain respondents’ survey responses.

# **EVALUATION RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## **Introduction**

This first-year evaluation assesses implementation of the new Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy and progress toward goal attainment. The second-year evaluation will assess attainment of program goals and objectives. Through use of discussions, table formatted data, and bar chart figures, these evaluation findings provide insight into the results of the pilot program. These findings, coupled with a description of the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy program derived from school division documents, answer six evaluation questions:

First-year evaluation questions follow:

1. Did the implementation time line mirror the School Board approved time line?
2. Did the student application and selection process mirror the School Board approved plan? What were the characteristics of the student population?
3. Did the academy plan for staff selection and training mirror the School Board approved plan?
4. Did the academy program mirror the School Board approved plan?

5. What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation process?
6. What progress was made toward program goals?

**Evaluation Question Number One:  
Did the implementation time line mirror the School Board approved time line?**

Introduction

Research into the establishment of a partial immersion academy began in February 2001. In the fall of 2001, program planners submitted an academy proposal to the appropriate school administration departments for the required review process prior to gaining final approval by the School Board. The proposal went to the School Board a month later than proposed. On February 19, 2002, the School Board approved the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy proposal authorizing program planners to begin implementation. The proposal incorporated an implementation time line (Appendix A). The implementation time line contained a list of major tasks and events, including those related to program marketing, staff selection, student selection, curriculum development, materials selection, staff development, and scheduling of students.

Marketing Plan

The proposal called for most of the marketing to commence in January 2002, including developing the marketing plan and advertising the academy to the staff and the kindergarten parents. The marketing plan was to include a direct mailing to the families of CFES kindergarten students. The academy was to be advertised to the community in February 2002, with advertisements on radio, television, and the local newspaper.

Initial marketing was delayed until February because the pilot was approved one month later than planned. Brochures and applications produced by the Department of Media and Communications Development were sent to the families of CFES kindergarten students on February 20, 2002. A decision was made not to use newspapers, television, or radio to advertise the academy in the community since students outside of the CFES boundaries were ineligible for admission.

Staff Selection and Staff Development

Staff interviews were to take place in January and February 2002, with final staff selection completed before March 2002. The proposal called for staff development to commence in March and continue through August. The English teacher for the academy was chosen from the existing CFES first-grade staff. The advertisement for the Spanish teacher position was posted on April 15, 2002. The interview of applicants started in May. The actual hiring of the Spanish teacher did not take place until July, which necessarily delayed staff development. Formal staff development commenced in August 2002, and continued throughout the year.

### Student Selection and Scheduling

The proposed time line called for the student selection process to be completed in March 2002, to facilitate class scheduling in April. Applications were sent to families of CFES kindergarten students on February 20, 2002, with a March 29, 2002, deadline for submission. Forty-six students applied for the program, which was designed to accept 48 students. Student selection occurred in April, one month later than planned. All 46 applicants were selected. Scheduling was possible in April and simplified because the students switched core classes only once per day with two teachers.

### Curriculum Correlation and Development

Curriculum correlation and/or development appeared in the time line each month from January to June 2002. The decision was made to have the Spanish teacher translate the existing curriculum rather than write new curriculum, since the immersion program was to mirror the divisionwide instructional program, both in content and methods. Thus, the task of curriculum development was primarily one of translating the existing curriculum from English to Spanish.

Since the Spanish teacher was not hired until July, translating the curriculum was delayed. The Everyday Math™ program used throughout the division's elementary grades was available in Spanish, and materials were obtained decreasing the time needed for translation. For science and health, the task of ~~writing~~ translating the curriculum did not begin until late summer and continued, unit-by-unit, lesson-by-lesson, throughout the year to complete the task. The Spanish teacher reported feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the task, especially as a first year first-grade teacher.

### Materials Procurement

The initial orders for materials were to be placed in January and February, according to the proposal. The first order for materials was placed in June. Additional materials were ordered as needed. Despite the delay in ordering, materials arrived on time for academy implementation. No new materials were necessary for health.

#### **Evaluation Question Number Two:**

**Did the student application and selection process mirror the School Board approved plan? What were the characteristics of the student population?**

### Student Selection and Retention Plans

The proposal approved by the School Board called for 48 students to be selected by lottery from a pool of applicants. Students not chosen would be put on a waiting list to address attrition issues. On February 20, 2002, CFES sent a letter to each of their kindergarten students, informing them of the particulars of the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy and invited them to apply. A one-page application was enclosed. A parent information night was held to answer any questions or concerns prospective applicants might have. The academy was open to all CFES rising first-grade students whose parents expressed a long-term commitment to

the program. Only 46 students applied, nullifying the need for a committee to conduct a lottery. Forty-two (87.5% of capacity) of the applicants eventually enrolled in the academy. During the year, three students left the academy, one because of a family move, the other two from disenchantment with the academy. Of the 39 students (92.9% of original enrollment; 81.3% of capacity) who continued in the academy throughout the year, 32 students (82.1% of students finishing the year; 76.2% of the original cohort, 66.7% of capacity) have decided to continue in the program next year. Two of the seven students not returning to the academy have accepted admission to the Old Donation Center.

The academy was intended to operate as a five-year cohort. The School Board approved proposal allowed a waiting list of students who would be considered for entrance after first grade if they demonstrate the ability to “work within the language.” Nine CFES first-grade students have applied to join the academy in second grade. A selection committee will judge each of these new applicants’ ability to succeed in the academy.

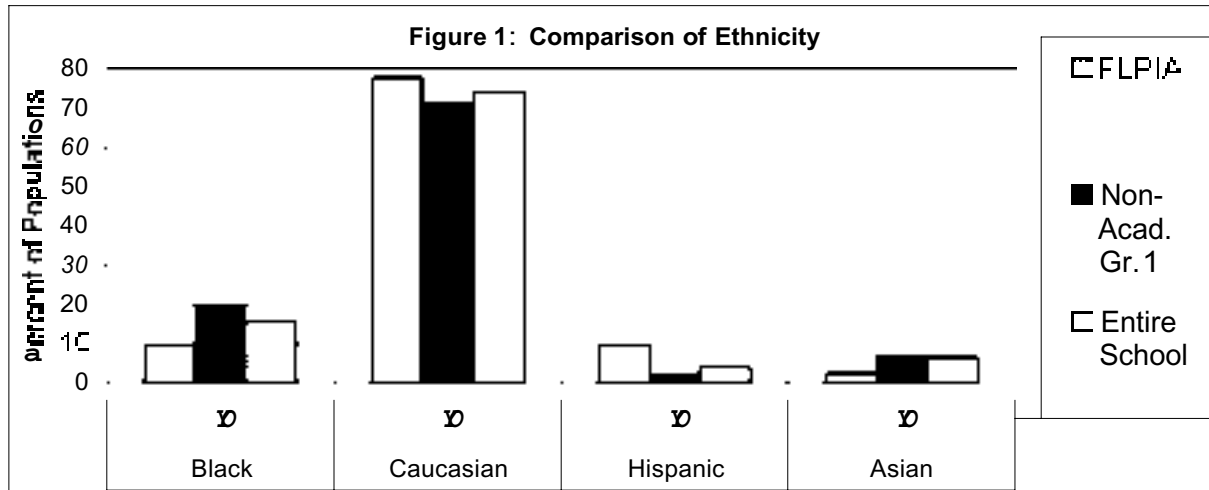
Demographics

The Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy enrolled 42 first-grade students in September 2002. Table 1 and Figure 1 compare the ethnicity of the academy students with the remainder of the first grade and all of Christopher Farms Elementary School. A comparison with the rest of the division had little meaning since there were no students bused into the academy from outside the school boundaries. Data indicated that African-American and Asian students were less likely to enroll while Caucasians and Hispanics were more likely to enter the academy. Females represented 61 percent of the academy population. (Figure 2)

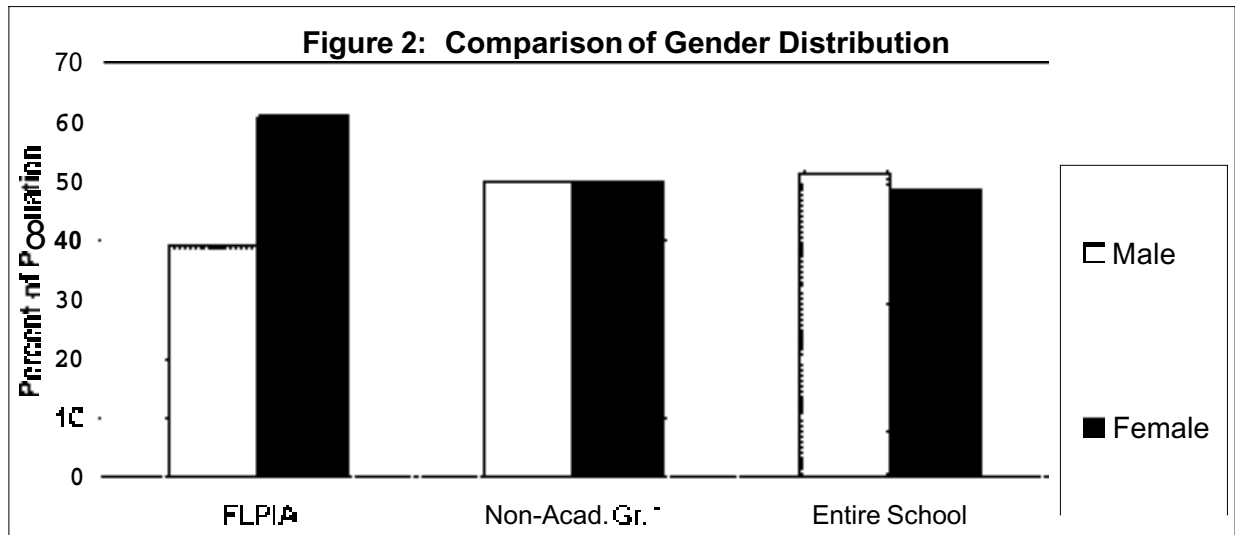
**Table 1  
Ethnic Composition of September 30,2002, Membership**

	<b>African American</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>
FLPIA	9.8%	78.0%	9.8%	0.0%	2.4%
Non-FLPIA 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	20.0%	71.1%	2.2%	0.0%	6.7%
All CFES	15.5%	74.1%	3.8%	0.1%	6.5%

**Figure 1**  
**Comparison of Ethnicity**

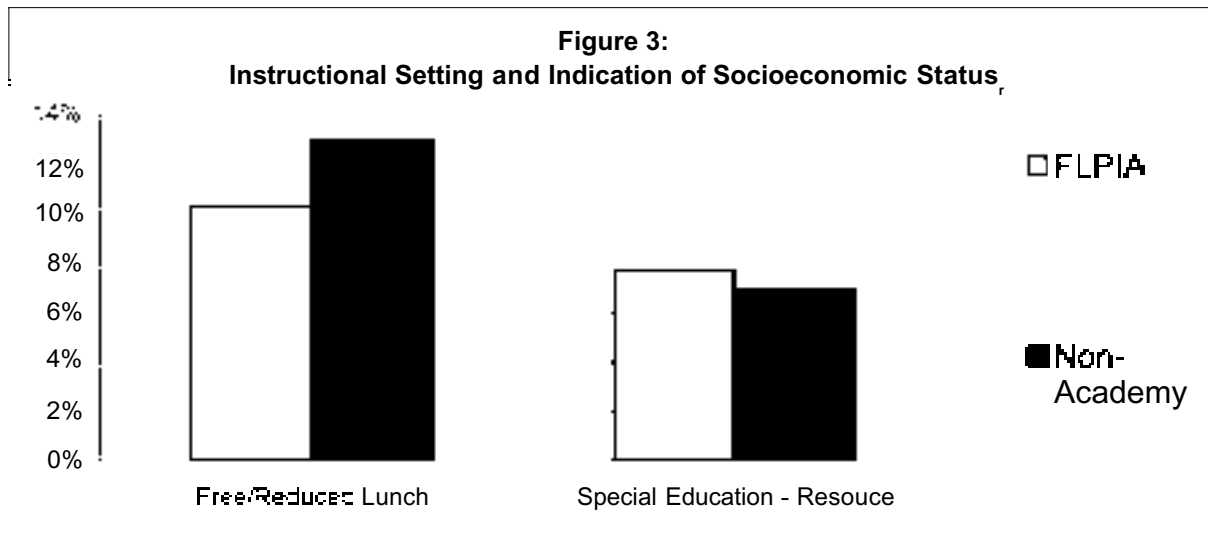


**Figure 2**  
**Comparison of Gender Distribution**



Academy students were a relatively representative cross section of the Christopher Farms Elementary student body for socioeconomic status (SES), as measured by participation in the subsidized lunch program, and for classroom instructional setting. Four academy students (10.3 percent) received free or reduced meals as compared to the 13 percent of Christopher Farms Elementary as a whole (Figure 3). Nine percent of CFES first-grade students received special education services as compared to 7.7 percent (three students) of the academy students. If the self-contained CFES students were not included in the grouping, the percent of CFES first graders in a resource setting was 6.9 percent (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**  
**Instructional Setting and Indication of Socioeconomic Status**



**Evaluation Question Number Three:**  
**Did the academy plan for staff selection and training mirror the School Board approved plan?**

Staff Selection

The proposal called for the hiring of one additional teacher each year for the first five years of the program to teach the core courses of math, science, and health in Spanish. The Office of Gifted Education and Academy Programs and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction were to assist the principal of Christopher Farms Elementary School in the selection of qualified staff. The required staff qualifications listed were:

- Excellence in teaching and the delivery of instruction,
- Fluency in Spanish,
- Endorsements in the fields of study (grades 1-5)
- Ability to collaborate with regular education teachers, parents, and other staff members, and
- Interest in training for the integration of Virginia Beach City Public School objectives in mathematics, science, and health with the Spanish language.

Qualified applicants were difficult to find. The foreign languages coordinator from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction assisted in identifying and recruiting applicants who met the specific requirements for the job of Spanish teacher. She assisted the CFES principal with all interviews. While not in attendance at the interviews, the director of the Office of Gifted Education and Academy Programs was consulted concerning the viability of each qualified applicant. The teacher selected met all the qualifications listed in the proposal. However, the teacher, while certified in elementary education, had spent the past seventeen years teaching high school Spanish and had no experience teaching elementary school.

## Staff Development and Parent Community Training

The proposal called for training based on the needs of the staff. A formal needs assessment was not performed, but staff development needs were identified as the year progressed. The proposal called for the FLPIA teachers to attend a two-day workshop (in Northern Virginia) to prepare the teachers for program implementation and Spanish lesson planning. Instead, both the Spanish and English teacher attended a five-day course, titled Immersion 101. Held at the University of Minnesota in August 2003, this workshop was a nationally recognized professional development opportunity for teachers in immersion programs. The CFES principal and the foreign languages coordinator attended the first two days of this course, as well.

The proposal called for the Spanish teacher to be proficient in the content and strategies necessary to address the Virginia SOL. Virginia Beach City Public Schools curriculum. The Spanish teacher attended a mandatory A.P.P.L.E. class, which introduced changes to the first-grade math curriculum. No additional formal math, science, or health training was provided prior to the start of the school year. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction provided additional one-on-one assistance throughout the school year, as needed.

The academy administrators conducted three fact-finding trips to Fairfax County Public Schools whose foreign language partial immersion programs served as a model for Christopher Farms. The Spanish teacher accompanied the group that went to Fairfax in January 2003 to observe another Spanish immersion teacher in the classroom.

The proposal also stated that the remaining CFES staff, parents, and community should be educated about the academy and its impact on the school and students. Details of the operation, goals, and progress of the academy were provided to the faculty during faculty meetings. Four informational meetings were held in the evenings for the parents during the year. These meetings served not just to educate the parents, but also to provide feedback to the staff.

### **Evaluation Question Number Four:**

#### **Did the academy program mirror the School Board approved plan?**

The FLPIA program mirrored the School Board approved plan. The subjects of mathematics, science, and health were taught through immersion in Spanish. The rest of the school day, other than the change of classes, which is unusual for first graders, was the same as non-academy classes.

The learning objectives and the scope and sequence for math, science, and health were the same for the academy classes as the rest of the school division. However, the pacing of the instruction fell behind that of the other classes taught in English. This was primarily because of the necessary background in the Spanish language that was required before the content instruction could commence. Research from other well-established programs revealed that immersion students typically did not catch up to non-immersion students in the core classes until third grade. Math and science coordinators and instructional specialists from the Department of

Curriculum and Instruction assisted in identifying power standards and planning a strategy to ensure all the essential first-grade objectives were addressed by the end of the year.

While the curricula mirrored the non-academy curricula, exact Spanish matches for the English-based materials were sometimes difficult to find. The mathematics curriculum was based on the standard **VBCE** curriculum with the exception that the Everyday Math™ materials were provided in the Spanish version. The science curriculum was the normal English version with supplementary trade materials purchased in Spanish. However, the Spanish teacher reported translating much of the material and she expressed difficulty in choosing Spanish vocabulary that was scientifically accurate while being age appropriate. The Spanish teacher also adapted health lessons into Spanish.

**Evaluation Question Number Five:  
What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation process?**

To facilitate assessment of the stakeholders' perceptions of the academy, the Department of Accountability designed surveys for the students, parents, and faculty and conducted interviews of the staff. The evaluator also gained further insight into stakeholder perceptions by attending meetings with academy parents, staff, and administrators, and by observing the students in class.

Student Survey

The academy teachers administered a twelve-question survey to their homeroom students in May 2003. The first ten questions asked the students to circle YES or NO to indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement. The teachers read each statement to the students to ensure their understanding. Two open-ended items followed the objective items and invited students to explain what they liked and disliked about the academy. Thirty-six of the 39 students (92.3%) participated in the survey. The results of the objective responses are found in Appendix B. Responses to the open-ended items are printed in Appendix C.

Students generally were happy with the program and reported that they felt they were doing well with their academic subjects. They liked learning Spanish (86.1% agreed) more than learning about the Spanish-speaking people (66.7%). Although 83.3 percent said they liked the program, only 66.7 percent said they wanted to return to the academy next year. Another 19.4 percent were not sure about returning and 2.8 percent did not respond to this item. Among the things students liked about the academy, fun activities were mentioned most often. Students penned ten comments concerning such activities as singing, dancing, and getting candy rewards. Four positive comments were made about learning Spanish. Multiple positive comments were also made about math, science, and the teacher. Three students commented that they liked everything about the Spanish immersion program.

When asked about their own assessment of their academic progress, 94.4 percent felt they were doing well in Spanish, math, and language arts. Slightly fewer students felt confident about their progress in science (91.7%) health (88.9%) and social studies (83.3%). When asked what they disliked about the program, fourteen students replied, "Nothing," while ten students left that

item blank. Twelve students made negative comments. The negative comments were spread over a number of issues. Two of the negative comments concerned the exclusive use of Spanish in class. One student said, “I don’t like working so hard!”

The overall tenor of the student responses was overwhelmingly positive. With a few exceptions, they seemed excited about learning Spanish. Although a few students seemed to struggle with the academic challenges of the academy, self-efficacy appeared strong among these students.

### Parent Survey

The Department of Accountability solicited the academy parents’ perception of the academy’s first-year implementation. Parents returned twenty-one surveys, which represented a 53.8 percent return rate. The survey instrument consisted of seventeen closed-ended and five open-ended items. The results of the objective, closed-ended items are detailed in Appendix D. The open-ended responses can be found in Appendix E. To facilitate analysis, the responses “Completely Agree” and “Agree” were combined to give an expression of how positive the responses were. “Disagree” and “Completely Disagree” were added to quantify a negative response. To further quantify the responses, a point value<sup>1</sup> was given to each response and average responses calculated.

The parents were most positive (94 percent either agreed or completely agreed) about the application and acceptance process (Items 1 – 4). A total of 90.5 percent felt enough time was allotted to fulfill the application requirements. Only two responses in this section were negative, and those were parents who thought there was not enough time to complete the application.

A need for improved communication was reflected, both in the closed-ended and open-ended responses of several of the parent surveys. The least positive (85.7 percent) aspect of the application process was the amount of information provided before the application deadline (Item 4). Parents were even less positive when asked about their understanding of expectations and responsibilities. About two-thirds (66.6%) were positive about their understanding of their own responsibilities as an academy parent, while 71.4 percent were positive about their understanding of the student’s responsibilities in the academy. Some parents also wanted better communication about their child’s academic progress. (Only 61.9% of the responses to Item 17 were positive.) Two of the open-ended responses indicated a desire for more information that would enable the parents to help their child at home in Spanish.

Parents were relatively satisfied with the academy’s ability to provide instruction. The positive response rate was 74.4 percent in this area (Items 7 –13). The subject in which parents indicated the highest satisfaction was language arts, where 95.2 percent of those who responded were positive. The parents were also very positive about their child’s progress in social studies (90.5% positive), Spanish (85.7% positive) and health (85.8% positive). The least positive response rates on the whole survey came in the subjects of mathematics (52.4%) and science (52.4%) two of the subjects that were taught in Spanish. Comments in the open-ended

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<sup>1</sup> In order to quantify the responses, the following values were assigned: Completely Agree = 5; Agree = 4; Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3; Disagree = 2; Completely Disagree = 1; and No Response was treated as a missing value.

questions, as well as those expressed at parent meetings, revealed a concern among the parents that the time spent learning Spanish was detracting from the acquisition content in math and science. Some felt that their child was falling too far behind the other classes and might have trouble with high-stakes testing in the future.

During a parent meeting in September, many parents expressed concern that they would not be able to help their child at home in subjects that were taught in Spanish. When asked in May if they were able to assist their child at home in subjects taught in Spanish, about 62 percent replied positively, while only three parents (14.3%) disagreed.

The survey asked parents about their child's perception of the academy and 90.5 percent indicated their child liked the academy. When surveyed about their intention to remain with the academy, 80 percent of those who responded indicated that they would return. This compared well with the 82 percent who have in fact registered with the academy for the 2003-2004 school year. However, five of the six open-ended responses given for not returning involved concerns with the academic progress of their child.

One of the open-ended survey questions asked parents to cite reasons for enrolling their child in the program. The most common reasons given were recognition that this was an excellent opportunity, that it was good to learn a second language (Spanish), and that this would benefit their child in the future. One-fourth of the respondents expressed a belief that learning a new language was best accomplished at a young age. Half of the respondents said their child was gaining an appreciation for another culture; from being in the foreign language academy. Some level of proficiency in Spanish was the most mentioned (33.3% of the respondents) benefit from Spanish immersion.

Fifteen parents penned suggestions to improve the academy. A summary of their suggestions follows:

- Better communications with home were suggested by 39 percent of the respondents. Parents wanted more than just progress reports. They expressed a desire for homework directions in English to help them assist their children.
- Thirty-nine percent of the respondents felt that there should have been more emphasis on the mathematics and science. Some added that Spanish should have been of lesser priority than mathematics.
- Three parents (14.3 percent) felt that the academy teacher should have had experience teaching early elementary school students.
- Two (11 percent) of the parents expressed concern that English was normally not spoken during the Spanish immersion portion of the school day.
- Two parents suggested a full-time teacher's aide for the Spanish teacher.
- Two parents said that there should have been more collaboration between the teachers to make the classroom expectations more standardized.

The final open-end question asked parents to share additional comments or concerns about the academy. Thirteen parents made comments. Five of these comments included praise of the program. As one parent explained:

“I just want to thank everyone involved in making this program (FLPIA) such a tremendous success – especially the Spanish teacher, who made going to school and learning Spanish so exciting, fulfilling, and rewarding for my daughter. Learning a foreign language at a young age will be so beneficial to all the children. I’m so happy that Christopher Farms Elementary School decided to implement this program. I’m also grateful for the continued support and faith of everyone who put this program together and continued to put their time, effort, and sweat into making it so successful.”

### Teacher Perceptions

Both teachers completed a survey for the Department of Accountability. Since there were only two teachers involved, anonymity would be impossible to maintain; therefore, the surveys were accompanied by an interview with an assessment specialist. Statistical analysis of two surveys was not done.

The perception of the implementation process was much different for the two teachers. One teacher had experience in her present position and felt the move to the academy was relatively smooth, understood the responsibilities required, and felt well-equipped, both in training and materials for the job. The other teacher was new to the setting and felt differently. This new teacher felt she did not have the training to provide optimal instruction for the students, and she synthesized the expectations and responsibilities only as the program progressed throughout out the year.

Both teachers expressed concern about staff training. The English teacher felt the week-long course at the University of Minnesota was of little value. Although the nationally recognized workshop was promoted as appropriate for teaching teams, the content seemed aimed at primarily the foreign language teacher. She felt she could have benefited more from sessions that dealt with expectations of the teaching partner and problems that might be encountered. The Spanish teacher was disappointed in the Minnesota training because she felt there were too much theory and statistical data about immersion programs and not enough about the more practical topics of specific instructional methods and strategies. The more practical topics were important to the Spanish teacher who had not previous taught elementary school.

The Spanish teacher felt she did not have enough guidance for implementation of the curriculum. Since she had never taught the material in English, she did not know what level of proficiency or pace of progress to expect from the students. Additionally, had to write/translate much of the material.

Both teachers were positive about the success of the academy in providing a challenging, rewarding, and flexible learning experience for the students. The Spanish teacher appreciated the English teacher using reading and writing exercises that reinforced the science and health lessons that were taught in Spanish.

The staff perceived the students gained the following from the academy:

- An awareness of and familiarity with other languages;

- More patience and objectivity when dealing with people of other languages and cultures;
- More objective and less narrow-minded attitudes;
- Knowledge of learning a Romanic language which could help in learning other Romanic languages, including Latin which is very useful in medicine and law;
- Responsibility by switching classes, sharing desks, and keeping track of belongings, which other students do not experience until the upper grades of elementary school;
- Listening skills since students had to be able to focus on and process what was being said at a level much higher than other students; and
- Problem-solving skills since the instruction was in Spanish and the first problem they had to solve was “what is going on” before proceeding to the content question or learning.

The staff gave insight into the academy with the following suggestions and recommendations:

- Academy classes should be at capacity (24 students) so that the other classes do not get overcrowded if students drop out of the academy.
- Parents need to be well-informed about the commitment they are making and how their child will be able to handle the rigors of the normal subjects while learning math and science in a foreign language. The pacing of the program does not allow much time to slow down for students who are struggling. Parents need to think about what is best for the learning needs of their child.
- Classrooms should change homeroom teacher every quarter. This way, variations in the schedule, such as going to PE, would affect each student’s language arts and math equally. Also, they should alternate first subjects when they are fresh in the morning.
- Students pulled out for PALS should be pulled out during language arts, not math.
- Someone other than the teachers should be responsible for data compilation for reports.
- A list of substitutes capable of teaching in Spanish is needed.
- A teacher coming from a different grade level should receive additional training in the new grade level he or she will be teaching. This includes what to expect from the students, how to meet their social and emotional needs, classroom management, etc.

When asked in the spring about their plans to return to the academy for the 2003-2004 school year, both teachers had personal reasons for not making a commitment at that point. As of June 13, 2003, the Spanish teacher had been assigned to return to the academy and teach Spanish for a new cohort of first-grade academy students. The first-grade teacher who taught the core subjects in English requested not to return to the academy and had been assigned to another first-grade class at CFES.

**Evaluation Question Number Six:  
What progress is being made toward program goals?**

The first objective of the academy was for the students to successfully complete a sequential program of study in grades one through five. First grade is a developmental period in the life of a child. Success is, therefore, difficult to quantify at this level of development. An

additional challenge in judging the students' progress toward the program goal is its longitudinal nature. By the end of fifth grade, the students are to be proficient in Spanish while keeping pace with other students in the core subjects. The academy started with 42 students, two dropped from the academy, one moved, and seven decided not to return to the program next year. This left 32 students, 76.2 percent of the original cohort, to start the second grade in the academy.

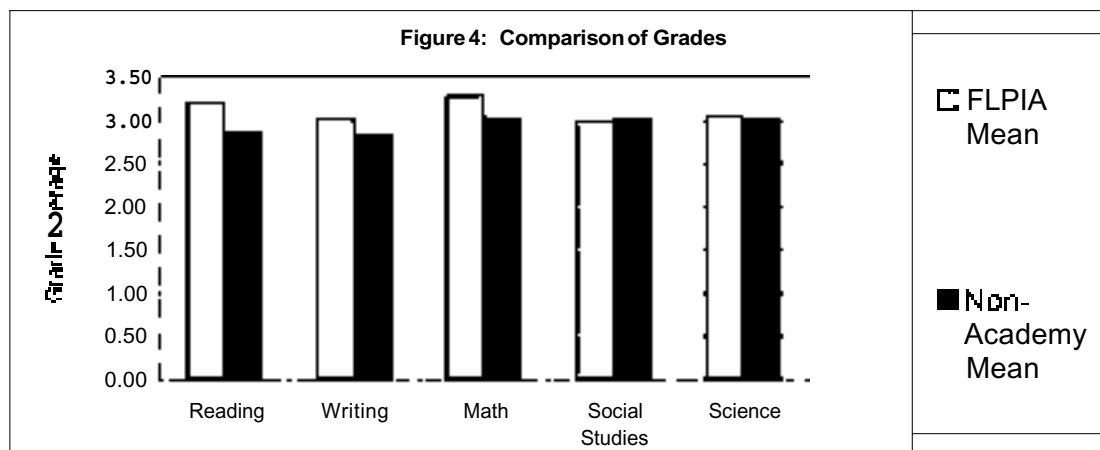
### Spanish Proficiency

No quantitative data was collected because there was no plan to test the students' progress in Spanish the first year. However, qualitative indicators suggested progress toward proficiency is on or ahead of schedule. Comments from those who had observed the classes in Spanish were very encouraging. The students seemed very excited about learning Spanish. They seemed to understand what the teacher was saying. The students even talked to each other in Spanish during class. Students' proficiency in Spanish will be assessed at the end of second grade.

### Grades

Grades represent one assessment tool and cannot be used in isolation as a basis to judge progress. However, an analysis of the students' grades at Christopher Farms Elementary School showed the grades of the academy students compared favorably with those of the non-academy students. Academy students received considerably higher grades than non-academy students in reading (average grade of 3.20 versus 2.87) writing (3.01 versus 2.84) and math (3.29 versus 3.02). The FLPIA students also received slightly higher grades in science (3.04 versus 3.01). Non-academy grades in social studies averaged 0.01 higher than academy students. Figure 4 depicts a comparison of the mean grades' for non-academy first-grade students and the FLPIA students at Christopher Farms Elementary School in each of the core subjects.

**Figure 4**  
**Comparison of Grades**

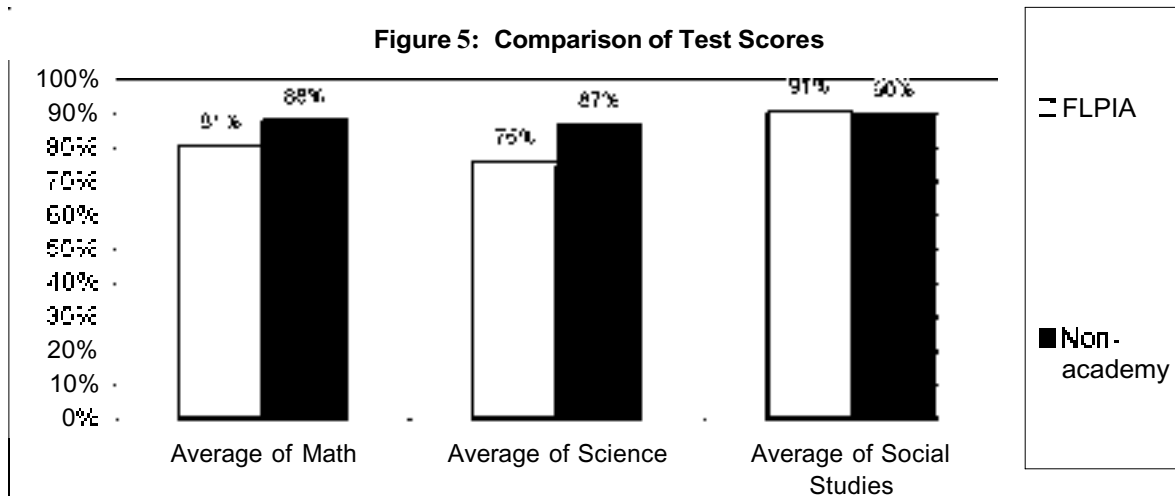


Grades given in first grade are numerical: 0 to 4 can be modified by a '+' or a '-.' In order to quantify the grades, the evaluator added a 0.3 if the grade was modified with a plus and subtracted 0.3 if the grade was modified with a minus. For example: 3+ = 3.3 and 3- = 2.7.

## Test Data

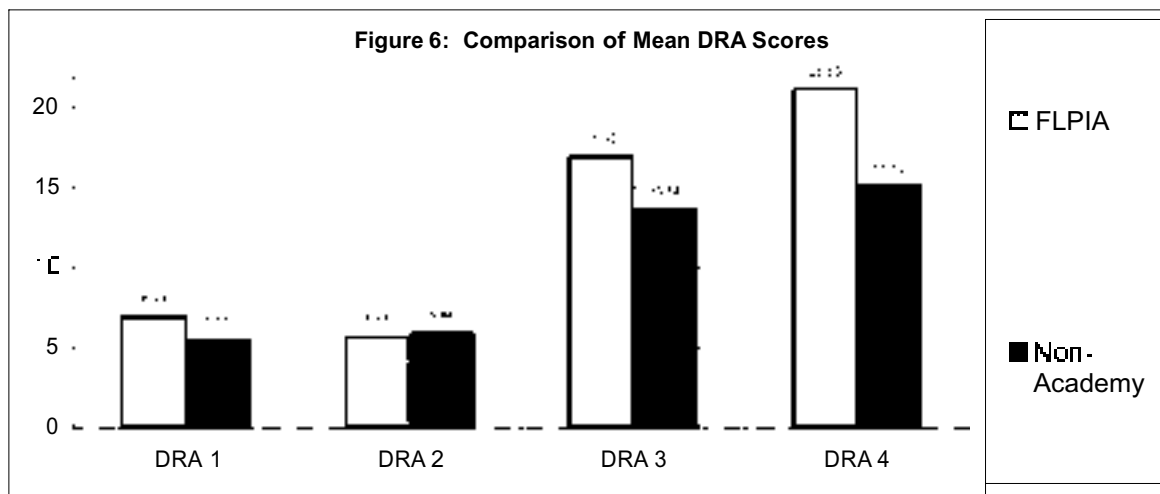
All first-grade students at Christopher Farms took the same tests of their progress in mathematics, science, and social studies during the last week of May. The results of those tests are displayed in Figure 5. The non-academy students scored higher in mathematics (by 7%) and in science (by 11%). The academy students scored slightly higher (1% higher) in social studies.

**Figure 5**  
**Comparison of Test Scores**



Quarterly Directed Reading Assessments (DRA) were used as a measure of progress in language arts. The results for the four quarterly tests are compared in Figure 6. The academy students scored higher (6.93 versus 5.51) on the first quarter DRA, but fell behind their non-academy counterparts (by 0.23) in the second quarter. The FLPIA students scored significantly higher in the second semester, opening the gap to 6.03 points in the final quarter.

**Figure 6**  
**Comparison of Mean DRA Scores**



Overall, the academic progress of the FLPIA students, as measured by **DRAS** and **POST**-test scores, showed progress that was equal or superior to the other first-grade students at Christopher Farms in language arts and social studies. The progress of academy students, as measured by these tests, was less than the other students in math and science, subjects that were taught in Spanish. The experience of other school divisions operating partial immersion programs was that the academy students often lagged behind at first, but caught up by third grade. One factor that could have negatively impacted these test scores was the fact that the students learned mathematics and science in Spanish but took the post-tests in English. The magnitude of this effect may have been lessened by the integration of the mathematics and science concepts and vocabulary into the English language arts and social studies throughout the year. Another factor that could have accounted for the lower math and science scores was the amount of instructional time used in those classes that was devoted to the understanding of the Spanish language, which was the medium for instruction.

## **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

The Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy at Christopher Farms Elementary opened as planned in September 2002, despite delays in some of the implementation milestones as laid out in the proposal's time line. Most notably was the delay in hiring a Spanish teacher, which did not occur until July 2003, several months after the projected date. The hiring delay impacted staff development that could not occur as planned beginning in March. Curriculum development scheduled to begin in January 2002 was also delayed. Although extensive curriculum development was not necessary since the immersion curriculum was intended to mirror the program of other first-grade classrooms, there was a need to translate some of the curriculum into Spanish. Most of the task was pushed into the school year increasing the demands on the Spanish teacher.

Student selection was conducted as planned with a marketing plan that included a brochure about the academy. Forty-six first-grade students residing within the CFES boundaries applied and were accepted; forty-two students actually enrolled. The planned lottery was not needed since the number of applicants did not meet the program's capacity of 48 students. The underlying philosophy that all students would benefit from learning another language drove the admission policy. The only criteria for academy acceptance were a long-term commitment to the philosophy and objectives of the academy and residence within the CFES boundaries. The academy demographics for student socioeconomic status and instructional setting closely resembled the non-academy CFES first-grade students, but a slightly smaller percentage of African-American and Asian students enrolled in the academy. Female students slightly overrepresented males.

Data suggest that student recruitment and retention may pose a challenge to the long-term success of the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy. The first-grade cohort that started in September 2002 was only at **88** percent of program capacity. A lower than planned enrollment can negatively increase class size in other classrooms on the grade level. Three academy students left the program during the year and seven more will not continue in grade two. At the close of school, 76.2 percent of the original student cohort planned to return. This is 66.7 percent of program capacity. The administration reported that nine non-academy first-grade

students had applied to join the academy in second grade. If accepted, the second-grade class enrollment would be at 85 percent of program capacity. The goal of developing proficiency in a foreign language is one that takes time. Students will need to remain in the academy in order to reach the FLPIA program goal of students completing a sequential program from grades one through five in which the academic areas of mathematics, science, and health are taught in Spanish.

The principal reported that hiring a Spanish teacher proved more difficult than expected with the dual selection criteria of an elementary school endorsement and fluency in Spanish. The Spanish teacher hired for the position met the qualifications and appeared very dedicated to the success of the children throughout the year, but the teacher had no previous teaching experience at the elementary school level. With four more Spanish teachers needed for the FLPI initiative as students progress through grades 2-5, recruitment efforts appear warranted.

The FLPIA proposal called for staff development based on the needs of the staff. The late hiring of the Spanish teacher compressed plans for staff development. Both teachers reported that the five-day summer immersion workshop had not met their expectations. Greater needs appeared related to the practical issues of program implementation, classroom instructional methods and strategies, and teaming expectations. The Spanish teacher was new to CFES and new to teaching elementary (first grade) students. The school's administration assessed staff needs as the year progressed and assistance was provided, including one-on-one guidance from instructional staff in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The Spanish teacher also accompanied administrators on a trip to Fairfax in January to observe another Spanish immersion teacher.

The training planned in the proposal was not limited to staff development for just the academy teachers. The CFES administrators, the director of Gifted Education and Academy Programs, and the foreign languages coordinator also attended training and conducted fact-finding trips. The math coordinator joined this academy leadership team in providing training for the parents at quarterly parent nights. A community task force helped in making the rest of the school aware of the operations and goals of the academy by designing a website for the academy and making signs in Spanish to accompany those posted in the school in English. Progress updates and program details were shared regularly at faculty meetings. Implementation of the broad-based educational component appeared successful and should have a positive long-term impact on the program at CFES.

The program of studies for FLPIA students was intended to mirror that of non-academy students with the exception that math, science, and health were to be taught in Spanish. The only operational change from a usual first-grade class was that academy students would have two first-grade teachers and switch classes. The program of studies appeared to mirror that approved by the School Board, but did have some deviations in practice, although nothing that was not anticipated for a first-grade partial immersion class. The amount of time spent learning background vocabulary and dialogue in Spanish put the academy students several units behind in math and science throughout most of the year. Instructional specialists from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction mapped a plan to ensure that first-grade power standards were addressed before the end of the year. Everyday Math™ materials were purchased in Spanish, but

some Spanish matches for English-based materials were difficult to find. Translating curriculum was more difficult and time consuming than expected, especially related to selecting Spanish science vocabulary.

Academy students completed first grade with grades that compared favorably with those of non-academy first-grade students for all subject areas. On division posttests, non-academy students scored higher in math and science, academy students scored higher on the fourth quarter Directed Reading Assessment. These assessment results were consistent with research that young children in immersion programs may lag behind their peers in achievement for subjects taught in Spanish until third grade. Assessments at the end of third grade will indicate if research data is validated in Virginia Beach and students achieve at least commensurate with their peers in math, science, and health. The first formal assessment of Spanish proficiency is planned for the end of second grade.

Overall, academy students and parents appeared pleased with the first year of the academy. Parent responses on the seventeen close-end survey items were 79.9 percent positive (completely agree or agree) while only 8.7% negative (disagree or completely disagree). Open-ended questions elicited positive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Strongest agreement related to the implementation process and the academic progress their children made in language arts, social studies, and Spanish. Parents were less enthusiastic about student progress in math and science, and some expressed concern about possible future negative impact on SOL testing. Parents who were positive about their child's progress in the subjects taught in Spanish appeared to believe their child would eventually catch up to non-academy students in those subjects. Several parents commented on the frustrations their child had in the Spanish. A few parents requested more communication with staff and assistance in helping their child at home with Spanish assignments. Students survey responses suggested excitement about learning a new language. This enthusiasm was also observed in class. Not all the students thrived in the immersion culture. Two students withdrew mid-year due to difficulties and a small number have elected not to continue in the academy for second grade.

The teachers were positive about the academy in general, but had concerns about certain aspects of the implementation. Neither teacher was very positive about the staff development that was provided. The Spanish teacher felt overwhelmed by the workload of translating new curriculum in addition to the teaching responsibilities. She also felt she needed more guidance in what to expect in the way of student behaviors and student achievement since she was inexperienced teaching first-grade students. The Spanish teacher was assigned for next year to continue teaching first-grade in the academy. The other first-grade teacher elected not to teach in the academy next year.

## **FINDINGS**

- Sight delays occurred in some implementation tasks due to the program's approval date, but delays did not hinder the academy opening in September 2002.
- The later than planned hiring date for the Spanish teacher shifted some plans for summer curriculum work and staff development into the school year.

- Administrators followed the student selection process as proposed.
- The academy opened at **88** percent of program capacity. Attrition during the year combined with documented attrition between first and second grade left 76.2 percent of the original cohort continuing in the academy.
- The most common reasons for choosing FLPIA enrollment were the opportunity to learn another language and to develop an appreciation for other cultures.
- Academy demographics paralleled the Christopher Farms non-academy demographics in most ways, except that females, Caucasians, and Hispanics were represented in slightly higher percentages than the school average.
- Hiring a teacher fluent in Spanish and endorsed in elementary education proved difficult. The teacher hired met the requirements but had no experience in elementary education, which made the assignment more challenging.
- As proposed, the curricula mirrored the non-academy curricula with the exception of three subjects taught in Spanish: math, science, and health.
- Curriculum translation was time-consuming for the Spanish teacher and particularly difficult in science. Spanish matches for some English-based materials were difficult to find.
- Academy teachers expressed concern over the effectiveness of the staff development and indicated a need for more practical staff development with greater attention to teaming needs and communication.
- The FLPIA students' final grade averages were higher than non-academy students in all subjects, but year-end assessment scores were lower in math and science.
- Training and education about the academy for parents and the entire CFES faculty occurred throughout the year.
- Overall, parent and student perceptions of the academy's first year were positive. Parents were pleased with the academy and student progress in learning Spanish. The most frequent feedback noted the desire for more communication and assistance with home assignments in Spanish. Concerns tended to address uncertainty about future achievement in science and math.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Explore ways to increase enrollment and retention in the academy, including consideration of School Board approval to permit students in one additional elementary school to enroll in the academy.

- Hire new academy teachers as early as possible and develop a plan to find teachers who have elementary experience and are also fluent in Spanish.
- Plan and implement staff development based on teacher input, the initiative's needs, and teacher classroom experience and familiarization with ~~VBCPS~~ curriculum.
- Make provisions for substantial work annually during the summer on curriculum translation, mapping power standards, and ordering materials for the next grade level progression of the academy.
- Closely monitor pacing and teaching of power standards to ensure students have the requisite skills in math and science to achieve at least at a commensurate level of their peers by the end of grade 3.
- Continue communication with parents and explore means to increase the frequency of addressing progress in Spanish, math, science, and health, and to provide assistance to parents when student homework is assigned in Spanish.
- Conduct a longitudinal study of student academic achievement and continuation of Spanish studies for the first three cohort groups of the Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**  
**TIME LINE OF MAJOR TASKS AND EVENTS**

**Time Line of Major Tasks and Events**  
**(Excerpted from November 2001 proposal)**

February - June 2001	Research and observe partial immersion programs
<del>July - August</del> 2001	Develop proposal
October - December 2001	Submit proposal to Review Committee Submit proposal to Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Submit proposal to Assistant Superintendent for Accountability Submit proposal to Chief Financial Officer
January 2002	Submit proposal to School Board for approval Provide update of proposal status to PTA Board and faculty Advertise academy to community and kindergarten parents <del>teachers</del> Provide <del>orientation</del> <del>initial</del> meetings for parents and community Develop marketing plan
January - February 2002	Notify community of academy Interview for staff Begin curriculum correlation Order supplemental materials Finalize staff selection Continue curriculum <del>correlation</del> <del>development</del> Continue <del>material</del> <del>supply</del> curriculum resource orders
March 2002	Select students for the academy Create a waiting list Begin staff development with <del>Spanish</del> regular education team and CFES teachers Continue curriculum development
April 2002	Begin scheduling process Continue curriculum writing Continue <del>staff</del> <del>parent</del> workshops
May 2002	Finalize scheduling of classes for academy participants Finalize transportation <del>plan</del> <del>schedule</del> Continue curriculum development Continue staff development
June 2002	Finalize curriculum development Continue <del>staff</del> <del>parent</del> training

July - August 2002	Finalize curriculum/resource materials Continue staff/parent training
September 2002	Implement program
September 2002 - 2004	Evaluate program implementation

**APPENDIX B**  
**STUDENT CLOSED-ENDED SURVEY RESPONSES**

## Student Closed-Ended Survey Responses

Please circle YES or NO in response to each sentence.		Yes	No	No Response	Not Sure
1. I like the foreign language (Spanish) program.	# % y o	30 83.3	6 16.7	-	-
2. I am doing well at learning Spanish.	# % y o	34 94.4	1 2.8	1 2.8	-
3. I like learning Spanish.	# % y o	31 86.1	5 13.9		-
4. I like learning about Spanish speaking people	# % y o	24 66.7	12 33.3	-	-
5. I am doing well at learning math.	# % y o	34 94.4	2 5.6	-	-
6. I am doing well at learning science.	# % y o	33 91.7	3 8.3	-	-
7. I am doing well at learning language arts.	# % y o	34 94.4	2 5.6		-
8. I am doing well at learning social studies.	# % y o	30 83.3	6 16.7		-
9. I am doing well at learning health.	# % y o	32 88.9	4 11.1	-	-
10. I want to be in the Spanish program next year	# % y o	24 66.7	4 11.1	1 2.8	7 19.4

(N = 37 respondents)

## **APPENDIX C**

### **STUDENT OPEN-ENDED SURVEY RESPONSES**

## Student Open-Ended Survey Responses<sup>1</sup>

### *What do you like best about the Spanish Program at Christopher Farms?*

- I like learning Spanish.
- I like when we say the numbers.
- We play games.
- My Spanish teacher.
- I like it because I learn Spanish.
- I like to dance.
- I like animals, numbers, and spelling.
- Dresses.
- I like to go to class and dance.
- That we are learning Spanish.
- She gives us candy. We do fun stuff.
- I like everything.
- Da da da da da da. *(Singing— this response appeared three times.)*
- Everything.
- I like science.
- My Spanish teacher is funny.
- The fun things that she makes.
- Singing.
- Everything, and art.
- The clothes, the song, and the dance.
- It is fun. My Spanish teacher is ~~funny~~ smart, nice, and fun. I like learning math, science, and health, and I like learning Spanish.
- Art.
- A lot of things. I like the art.
- Learning Spanish.
- Science.
- The “du” song.
- Basing math.
- I like my teacher.
- Because we are doing ... *(The rest of the sentence is unintelligible.)*
- Nothing.
- *Four surveys had no response to this question.*

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<sup>1</sup> Comments edited to remove the names of individuals. Grammar and spelling corrected to improve readability.

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***What do you dislike about the Spanish Program at Christopher Farms?***

- Math.
- I do not like working so hard!
- The workbook.
- That the math is Spanish.
- When we get blue.
- I do not like books and Spanish colors.
- I do not like screaming.
- Moving our colors.
- I like my Spanish teacher.
- Everything.
- The songs in class.
- I hate to wear a dress for the program.
- Nothing. *(This response appearedfourteen times.)*
- *Ten surveys had no response to this question.*

**APPENDIX D**

**PARENT CLOSED-ENDED SURVEY RESPONSES**

## Parent Closed-Ended Survey Responses

Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the statement.		Completely Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Response	Average Response <sup>1</sup>
1. The Foreign Language Partial Immersion Academy application process was clear.	# Yo	8 38.1	13 61.9				-	4.33
2. The academy application forms were easy to complete.	# Yo	13 61.9	8 38.1	-	-	-	-	4.67
3. Enough time was given for me to fulfill the academy application requirements.	# Yo	13 61.9	6 28.6		1 4.8	1 4.8	-	4.52
4. I received enough information about the academy prior to making the decision to enroll my child in the academy.	# Yo	6 28.6	12 57.1	3 14.3			-	4.00
5. My responsibilities as a parent of an academy student are clear.	# Yo	2 9.5	12 57.1	5 23.8	2 9.5	-	-	3.57
6. I am aware of the academy's expectations for my child.	# Yo	2 9.5	13 61.9	5 23.8	1 4.8		-	3.62
7. The academy provides a flexible learning environment for students.	# Yo	3 14.3	12 57.1	3 14.3	3 14.3		-	3.67
8. Overall, the academy meets my child's learning needs.	# Yo	2 9.5	11 52.4	1 4.8	6 28.6	-	1 4.8	3.36
9. My child is learning math at the expected rate.	# Yo	1 4.8	10 47.6	4 19.0	3 14.3	3 14.3	-	3.17
10. My child is learning science at the expected rate.	# Yo	1 4.8	10 47.6	8 38.1	2 9.5	-	-	3.47
11. My child is learning language arts at the expected rate.	# Yo	5 23.8	15 71.4				1 4.8	4.13
12. My child is learning social studies at the expected rate.	# Yo	6 28.6	13 61.9	2 9.5			-	4.12
13. My child is learning health at the expected rate.	# Yo	1 4.8	17 81.0	3 14.3	-	-	-	3.88
14. My child is learning Spanish at the expected rate.	# Yo	7 33.3	11 52.4	3 14.3	-	-	-	4.16
15. I am able to provide extra help at home with subjects taught in Spanish, as needed.	# Yo	4 19.0	9 42.9	5 23.8	2 9.5	1 4.8	-	3.57
16. My child likes the academy.	# Yo	8 38.1	11 52.4	1 4.8	1 4.8	-	-	4.14
17. I feel well-informed about my child's academic progress.	# Yo	2 9.5	11 52.4	3 14.3	5 23.8		-	3.48

<sup>1</sup> In order to quantify the responses, the following values were assigned: Completely Agree = 5; Agree = 4; Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3; Disagree = 2; Completely Disagree = 1; and No Response was treated as a missing value.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **PARENT OPEN-ENDED SURVEY RESPONSES**

## Parent Open-Ended Survey Responses'

### *Do you plan to continue your child's enrollment in the FLPIA next year? If not, why?*

- He will be attending Old Donation Center.
  - At this time, my child is enrolled. There will be several factors that will determine if she remains enrolled. 1) The second-grade teacher needs to be an elementary teacher first and a Spanish teacher second. 2) There needs to be a plan presented to the parents on how our class will be caught up in math, and if they are not, how are we ensured our children will not be penalized. Also, if she is accepted into the gifted cluster, I am not sure I would want her to do both.
  - My daughter does not want to. I feel if she is not happy in her classroom then she will not do well or try her best.
  - Because my child is not where she should be academically in science and math.
  - No, my child will not be returning. The reason my child is not returning is due to conflict with the teacher. Having a teacher who spent the past seventeen years, teaching high school students come in and teach first graders just did not work for my child. There was too much lecturing and not enough work to keep them busy.
  - This has become a very difficult decision for our family. Though my child finds the Spanish work agreeable and challenging and finally feels the class has a comfortable environment for learning, we feel his progress in math has suffered. We are not sure next year will be any different with no clear assurance there will be a veteran teacher teaching ABCPS's unique math program.
  - My child wanted to continue in the program and I feel that, overall, it is an excellent opportunity. *(Answered YES to the first question but added this remark.)*
  - *There was no response to this item on fourteen surveys.*
- 
- 

### *Why did you enroll your child in the FLPIA?*

- We enrolled our child because she is very bright and we felt she ~~could~~<sup>would</sup> handle the challenge. She has embraced it well. She was excited about learning a different language.
- I think that it is a wonderful opportunity. I believe it is easier to learn a foreign language when exposed early.
- I think it is a great opportunity and I would continue to keep her in if she enjoyed it. But, for the children who do, it is wonderful.
- I feel it is important for children to learn another language at an early age.
- The program provides my child with an excellent opportunity to learn a second language.
- I believe the ideal time for children to be exposed to another language is elementary school.
- Because this is a great opportunity to further his education.

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Comments edited to remove the names of individuals. Grammar and spelling corrected to improve readability.

- We believe that students can speak a foreign language easier at an early age than when they are older (high school age). In pre-K and in kindergarten, at a private school, she learned her colors, numbers, and some words in Spanish. She enjoyed it, and we thought she should continue to learn about the Spanish language and culture.
- He took a Spanish class during kindergarten and enjoyed it. Taking the class and learning Spanish will be to his advantage, in the future. Also, the classes are a little smaller.
- We wanted her to be exposed to a foreign language.
- So she can learn a second language.
- I wanted my child to have the opportunity to learn Spanish in hopes of him continuing year after year.
- To expand her knowledge.
- I agree with the program; however, I believe the pressure from the parents for the students enrolled has put undue pressure on this teacher – which is showing in her teaching skills.
- So she could better speak Spanish.
- Youngest years are supposed to be the best for learning multiple languages. First grade is the right time for him to learn his school routine, including foreign language.
- To have an advantage to learn another language.
- To expose them to a foreign language. My child has always been fascinated by other languages and cultures. My child was proficient in math when he began; therefore, I felt he could handle the double responsibilities of learning both math and Spanish.
- He enjoys learning Spanish and the teachers are great. It is a great opportunity to introduce some of my heritage to my child.
- I felt learning a second language would be challenging and useful.
- *There **was** no response to this item on two surveys.*

***What do you think your child gains from enrollment in the FLPIA?***

- Exposure to a different language and culture.
- I feel she has learned about the different cultures in the world, and I feel as an adult that the language will come easier to her since she has been exposed at a young age.
- A new language and an understanding of another culture.
- Cultural exposure and language skills.
- The opportunity to be fluent in Spanish and be bilingual.
- The ability to have a second language and be exposed to new concepts.
- She has not only learned many words in Spanish but she understands and comprehends Spanish when someone else is speaking Spanish. For example, the teacher gives the children directions in Spanish for counting money, learning about days of the week, and learning about the calendar. Our daughter is completely aware of what is being taught.
- Diversity.
- Some knowledge of the language on a rote level.
- A second language.
- He was able to learn to speak, read, and write Spanish. He also had the opportunity to learn about a culture different from his own.

- She has learned a lot of Spanish understanding – more than speaking, which has given her self-confidence.
- The Latin languages and *made* friends.
- Appreciation for other cultures. Learning basic Spanish.
- She can learn first hand about the other cultures. Also, she learned a new language.
- Proficiency in Spanish! He is also learning to be more flexible as he switches teachers throughout the day. This is a tough skill to learn as a first grader. (Teacher expectations vary in the classrooms.)
- Ability to communicate in two languages and be able to complete tasks, whether in English or Spanish.
- My daughter's excitement about learning Spanish – she truly enjoys being in this program and learning about the Spanish language/culture
- *There was no response to this item on three surveys.*

***What improvement(s) would you suggest for the academy?***

- I would suggest an elementary teacher. I feel it was a difficult transition for all involved. I would suggest more support for the teacher – in planning – there needs to be more organization at this level from administration. The children are six and seven – of course, they are busy. There would also need to be more consistency – in discipline, in homework, and in information sent home. I would suggest a way parents could voice their personal opinions – and feel like we were being heard. The shows were nice – but there are other issues. At times, I felt our children were being sacrificed for the success of the program. I would suggest the name of the program be remembered. It is Partial Immersion. Never would I think my first grader would not be allowed to speak English.
- The Spanish teacher needs a full-time assistant. This teacher often stays very late. I think it is expected that certain kinks will occur in a program that is new. I am confident they will be worked out.
- More knowledge for parents who do not speak Spanish.
- While I believe that a new program has to be fine-tuned – I do think that a teacher with an elementary school teaching background is equipped with skills in dealing with elementary school-age children.
- We would like to see more of the Spanish material that he is learning.
- I think the “Immersion” concept is very effective for learning a language; but I also think the children need to know math and science terms in English as well.
- If a math worksheet was sent home with Spanish directions, it would be great if they were in English as well. (For the sake of parents checking for corrections.)
- I feel my son was not taught all of the math he should have. The basics need to be encouraged more, such as adding and subtracting. I think there should have been at least one math work sheet sent home for homework with English explanations.
- The emphasis should not be on learning the language, but on the academics of the child. After Christmas, my child says that her teacher only speaks Spanish and she does not always understand her. Many other parents and I have talked and all seem to agree with me.

- I think a teacher with an elementary background should teach the class. That way the teacher would have a better understanding of the needs of a first-grade student. The curriculum should include stations, more hands-on learning, and require less lecturing by the teacher. My child sat at his desk for 20-30 minutes at a time while the teacher lectured in front of the classroom.
- I am uncertain whether he is learning as quickly as needed or as fast as he is able. I would suggest more information be sent home in English and Spanish so we can better reinforce his school lessons.
- Not sure if I would change anything.
- Better communication between academy and parents throughout the year, not just in the beginning and the end. We never did get classroom's (*post*) tests results. More experienced teachers who understand the elementary school-age child, the spiral math program, home links, and partial Spanish immersion program. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY.
- I think the teacher could greatly benefit from an assistant. She is dedicated to the students and is taking on a great responsibility. It is hard for parents to volunteer when they work.
- More structure in the Spanish program and more communication (in English) with parents from the teacher would help.
- Find a teacher able to multi-task, handling parents, sensitive to children, able to be flexible if a child is slow in Spanish – remembering that the task of math is priority number one, and then go over again in Spanish. Falling behind a little in Spanish is better than falling behind in math.
- I have worried from time to time about the math. Sometimes I feel that the “homework” is being taught ~~seen~~ for the first time (*at home*) – that I am teaching rather than reviewing the concepts with her.
- None.
- N/A
- *There was no response to this item on three surveys.*

***What additional comments or concerns would you like to share?***

- As many complaints that I am sure you have heard, the children have learned a lot of Spanish, more than we ever thought at this age. My concerns are how they got there and what were the sacrifices? I think some innocence was lost and that saddens me. I am proud and excited how much she has learned. The Spanish teacher does deserve that credit. She also did a lot of that without many guidelines. For that she deserves recognition.
- All teachers participating in this program should be fluent in Spanish and have some experience with elementary school children.
- I would like to see more of a relationship with the parents of the students in the form of a weekly summary of what they are doing. That way we would be able to feel we know what is happening in the class.
- We are very optimistic about the program.
- The hardest thing about this experience is not feeling confident to help my child because I do not speak Spanish. I will learn eventually, but right now, it is hard.

- Our daughter has enjoyed the FLPIA and she wants to continue in it next year.
- I think the FLPIA is a WONDERFUL program, and if taught by the right teacher, could be fantastic. I will gladly recommend this program to others, because I think it is a worthwhile program that needs a few improvements and/or changes. I am saddened that I have chosen to remove my child from the program, but cannot take the chance that he will have another teacher like the one he had this year. My child speaks great Spanish and has done well academically in both classes, but has had a miserable time doing so during his time in Spanish class. On a positive note, my child is thriving in the language arts-social studies portion of the academy and has truly enjoyed that portion of the program.
- Parents of students need to be completely behind the program – work as a team – the program is not instant results in Spanish – but can work. My niece in New York has been in this program kindergarten, first, second, and now third grade and is now very fluent in Spanish and has caught up in math.
- Meetings or tutorials to supplement parents’ role need to be held late enough for us to get off work and get to the school.
- They originally said no one outside the program would join, unless they were *originally*, picked from the kindergarten class. They now have opened the program up to first graders, who were not in it this year, to be in it for second grade. Won’t that hold our kids back from moving on? Now the new kids have to play catch-up for the year they missed.
- The Spanish teacher is an awesome teacher. I hope she continues to teach at Christopher Farms Elementary School and I hope the second-grade teacher is as awesome as she is! She is truly a keeper!
- You are doing a great job! Kinks need to be worked out.
- I just want to thank everyone involved in making this program (FLPIA) such a tremendous success – especially the Spanish teacher, who made going to school and learning Spanish so exciting, fulfilling, and rewarding for my daughter. Learning a foreign language at a young age will be so beneficial to all the children. I am so happy that Christopher Farms Elementary School decided to implement this program. I’m also grateful for the continued support and faith of everyone who put this program together and continued to put their time, effort, and sweat into making it so successful.
- None.
- N/A
- *There was no response to this item on six surveys.*

