

2006-2009 FLAP Grant

Fairfax County Public Schools

Fairfax County Public Schools prepares students with the necessary skills that are desperately needed in the federal workforce, national security, and on the economic front by providing a variety of language offerings to students in Kindergarten – 12th grade. Funding provided by the federal government allowed Fairfax to implement Chinese and Arabic programs that would not have been implemented otherwise. Policy makers simply felt the languages were too challenging for all students to learn. Federal “start-up” funding made it possible to implement Chinese and Arabic when district funds were not available. Once policy makers could see the success of the programs, they gladly provided funding to ensure students could continue the language through high school.

The Foreign Language Assistance Program grant or FLAP grant addressed the need of studying the critical needs languages. The funding provided a firm foundation for language study that ultimately increased the number of students learning Chinese and Arabic and provides them the opportunity to become proficient in these critical needs languages. Prior to the grant, we had only 125 high school students studying Chinese – today we have close to 5,000 elementary, middle and high school students learning Chinese. In 2005, there were only 162 high school students studying Arabic and today we have over 1,000.

The FLAP grant awarded in 2006 actually funded projects at every level. With the funding we...

- developed a virtual (or online) Chinese language course for the Virginia Department of Education which allows more students the opportunity to learn Chinese, not just in Fairfax County but throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- developed an electronic classroom that broadcasts synchronous Arabic courses to Fairfax County high school students attending schools that do not have sufficient enrollment to offer Arabic.
- developed a Chinese program in the Fairfax HS pyramid which gives students in grades 1-12 an articulated program of study.
- supported Chinese and Arabic programs at eight additional elementary schools and four high schools by providing professional development and materials.
- partnered with Georgetown University and George Mason University for student mentoring, seminars, guest speakers, and summer language camps and workshops

- provided teachers of Arabic and Chinese the opportunity to study abroad to enhance instruction.

We now have ample research that proves what all other countries have known for a long time – we must start language learning at an early age when the brain is most receptive to language acquisition. Mastering a foreign language takes time, sequential study and practice. When language supervisors propose starting a language program, they are often denied due to already stretched district and state budgets. Policy maker view them as a “want” and not a “need” for students. Federal funding is the only way we can initiate programs that will prove to the tax payers that the money is well spent once people see what these children CAN do with a second language. We don’t know what the world will be like in 2025 – we cannot say we are educating our students for the 21st Century if we are not giving them the tools they will need to protect this country and keep America the super power that it is today. In closing, I’d like to say that Fairfax County Public Schools is thankful for the FLAP funding that we received and 6,000 FCPS students studying Chinese and Arabic are thankful, too.