

Response to Questions on the FY 2010 County's Line of Business & Schools Program Review Processes Fall 2008

Request By: Supervisor McKay

Question: Are other community options/alternatives available for language immersion for Police Department personnel, including FCPS?

Response: The current language immersion training program is an intensive, six month program that provides training for nine police officers and one supervisor at a time. These officers are transferred from their regular assignment and immersed in this program for five days a week, eight hours a day, during the entire six months. This type of training provides all officers with the necessary instruction and tools to speak fluent Spanish upon completion of the training. This ability allows officers to respond to a variety of complaints (domestic, traffic accidents and crimes in progress) and use their language skills to assist the public, investigate crimes and converse with all parties. This type of program is much more beneficial than sending officers to traditional Spanish language classes that meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. These shortened classes serve as an adequate refresher, but do not provide the desired outcome that the immersion program provides.

The Police Department has assessed a number of alternative options in an effort to meet operational demands while limiting costs. Recently, the Police Department sponsored a class for the Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) that was provided by the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) at a cost of \$3,950. Although a few police officers attended, the focus was primarily on emergency dispatching. The class was helpful to DPSC personnel, but not as beneficial for police officers. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) only offers language immersion at the elementary school level. Northern Virginia Community College is willing to develop a six month immersion class at a cost of \$126,000 per session, compared to the \$90,000 per year spent on the current language immersion program. George Mason University does not currently offer a language immersion program.