

Running head: FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACADEMY

PBL: Public Finance of a Magnet School Foreign Language Academy

in Richmond Public Schools

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PEDU 625

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Abstract

Richmond (City) Public Schools rolled out the Newcomer Academy to address the growing need for a bilingual English Language Learners program in Richmond, Virginia. The current program cannot meet the needs of our ELL population in Richmond Public Schools because it does not fully consider the cultural and economic conditions of the students and their families. We present a budget and plan to leverage funds to extend the current Newcomer Academy to include both primary and secondary schools to create an inclusive language program to affect the student outcomes by assimilation or acculturation, taking into consideration student voice.

Public Finance of a Magnet School Foreign Language Academy in Richmond Public Schools

Objectives

The objective is to create a budget to fund the proposed foreign language academy. Although RPS has vacated buildings, they require rehabilitation or razing due to substandard conditions and are uninhabitable. The possibilities to obtain a new building for the Foreign Language Academy are cost-prohibitive. In place of a stand-alone Foreign Language Academy, we propose an extension of the current Newcomer Academy to be hosted in three established schools. Currently, George Wythe High School and River City Middle School are used as Newcomer Academies. The objective is to compare the viability of two southside elementary schools to establish the primary Newcomer Academy. The English Language Learner enrollment at Cardinal Elementary School in the Fall of 2020 is 23.7%, and Broad Rock Elementary School has 38%. Both schools are viable candidates as they are located on the Southside of Richmond, VA (Virginia Department of Education, 2020).

Needs Assessment

Based on the Dreams4RPS Goals and Targets Summary, the established goals that pertain to our objective are to increase the graduation rate and decrease chronic absenteeism (Richmond City Public Schools, 2019). Although RPS has identified ten areas of high need for improvement, we understand that establishing a Newcomer Academy at every level will alleviate two of the identified needs. According to the VDOE School Quality Profile, 12.6% of RPS students are English Language Learners, which indicates a steady increase over the past three years (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). In 2020 the VDOE also published the *English Learner Students in Virginia*, indicating “the graduation rate for ELs has been declining for the past three years and was nearly 20 points lower in 2019, at 71 percent for 2018-2019 school year data” (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). According to the Dreams4RPS Goal 2: Graduation Report issued in November of 2020, the dropout rate for Hispanic/Latino and English Language Learners increased over the last two years (Richmond Public Schools & Epp, 2021).

Dreams4RPS Goal 2: Graduation

Dropout Rate by Subgroup

Subgroup	2018-19 Dropout Rate	2019-20 Dropout Rate	Change
Black/African-American	17.3%	12.5%	-4.8%
Hispanic/Latino	57.3%	64.6%	+7.3%
White	15.0%	11.6%	-3.4%
Multi-Racial	0%	0%	0%
Economically Disadvantaged	20.0%	12.5%	-7.5%
Students with Disabilities	32.1%	24.6%	-7.5%
English Learners	48.2%	61.5%	+13.3%

Table 1

By establishing a Newcomer Academy at each level, there will be an impact at different levels. We expect to see the dropout rate decrease, the graduation rate increase, increase the ADM due to accreditation, and the need for local funds to be distributed efficiently.

Current Newcomer Academy Budget

The FY21 RPS received \$384,492.80 in Title III grant funds (*Title III: Language Instruction for English Language & Immigrant Students*, 2020). RPS proposed FY21 budget included \$1.64 million to support the ESL program (Richmond Public Schools, 2018). The \$1.6 million was to cover the hiring of staff members to conduct a comprehensive review of services and support needed during the next two years. It was also to launch the English Language Learner Council, develop training, implement training for families, school leaders, and staff, design “Newcomer” (recent immigrant) High School Academy, and expand school-based ELL services in addition to 5 positions. Currently, the RPS budget has proposed in the FY22 1.2 million dollars for ESL supports that includes thirteen new positions and \$800,000 for Summer 2021 Support for PK/K/ESL/ and Exceptional Education (Richmond Public Schools, 2021). As we compare the amounts, we can see the decrease in funding; however, as other RPS projects were pushed back by the School Board, there is a possibility of leveraging the funds that were to be used for some of those projects.

FY 22, FY23 REVISED PROPOSED BUDGET FEB. 2021		
PROPOSAL	FY22- FUNDS	FY23-FUNDS
8 New ESL Teachers	\$652K	\$326k
2 New ESL Specialists	\$192K	\$96K

3 New Teachers for Newcomer Academy (High School)	\$244,500	\$163K
Expand Con Ganas	\$75K	\$0
Interpretation Services	\$60K	\$30K
Total	\$1.2 M	\$615,000

Table 2

Virginia has seen a 13% increase in English Language Learners (American Immigration Council, 2020). According to the Washington Post, immigration across the southern border shows a predictable pattern (Wong et al., 2021). When looking at the data provided by the U.S. Border Patrol, we can see that in 2019 there was a more significant influx when compared to the numbers from 2018.

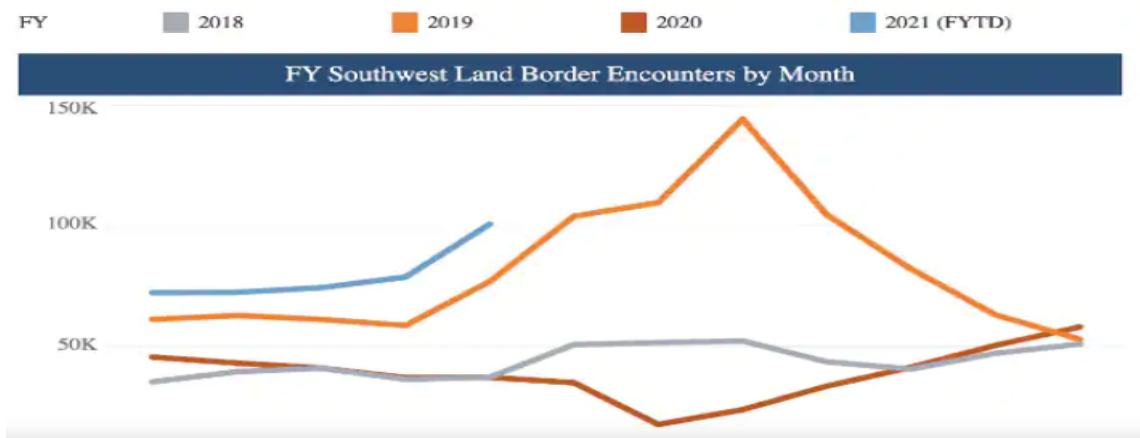


Table 3

U.S. immigration policies directly affect the number of students that we may encounter at the end of this school year and the beginning of the next school year. The leadership team in charge of implementing the new Newcomer Academy at the elementary level must pay close

attention to the number of unaccompanied minors that have crossed our borders this year.

According to the USBP, 18,663 unaccompanied minors crossed the border just in March. Of

course, we do not think that we will receive that amount into our schools. However, we must

understand that our numbers in RPS will increase and we must be prepared to serve those

students. Thus, funds are necessary to serve them well. Although Richmond is not a sanctuary

city, Governor Northam supports an inclusive policy that allows the Commonwealth to act as a

sanctuary state (Central Virginia Sanctuary Network, n.d.) (Arnold, 2019).

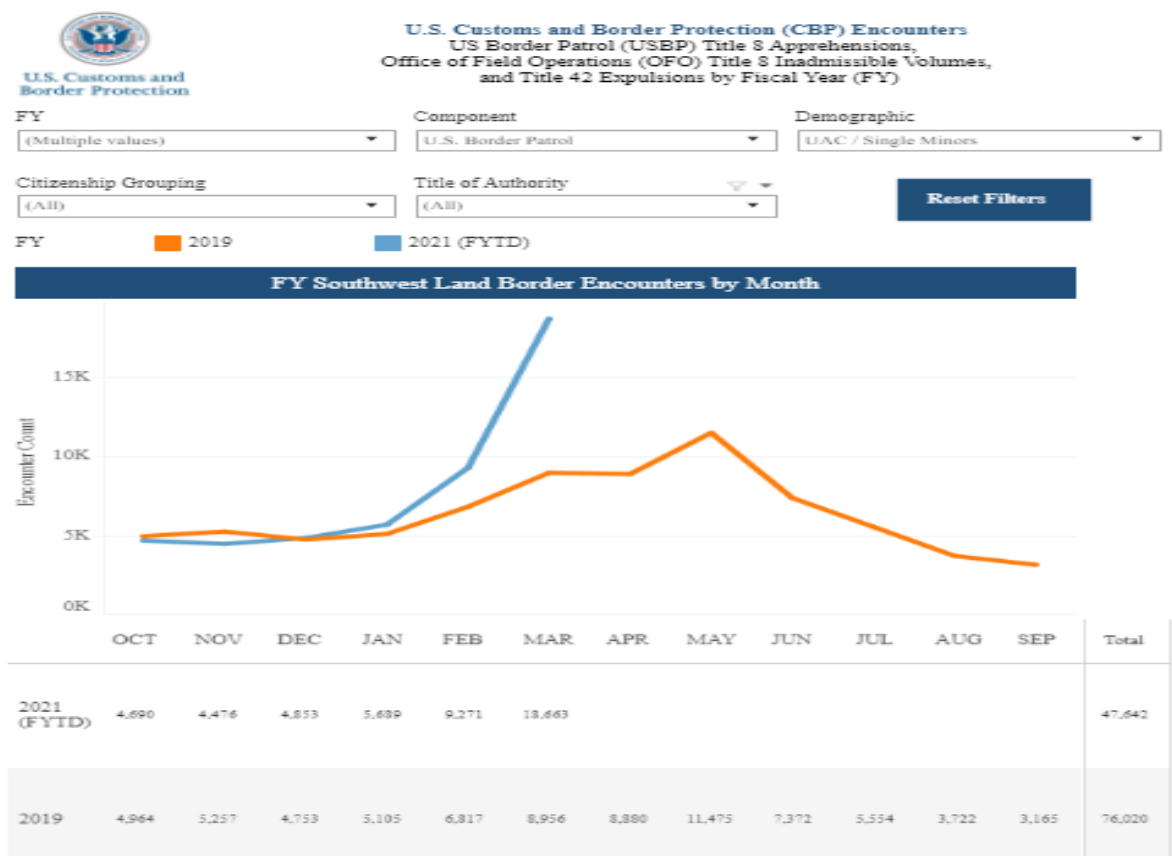


Table 4

Elementary Newcomer School Budget

To start the Elementary Newcomer School, we will need to provide virtual school technology, ESL certified educators, bilingual staff, professional development for culturally responsive training, and bilingual materials. As a response to the pandemic, RPS increased student and staff technology usage. Because the pandemic has not been eradicated, RPS will be reopening with an option for either face-to-face or virtual. At the elementary level, parents will have the ability to choose one method of instruction. The parent may choose to change the method at the end of each nine weeks. We must consider the availability of the vaccine and the possibility of further outbreaks in need of additional technology.

To effectively meet the educational needs of the EL population of our district, teachers must have ESL certification and training. RPS is currently recruiting bilingual teachers. We propose that every EL class has ESL certified and bilingual educators. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training provides guidelines to engage bilingual students that traditional teaching methods do not teach. Students use their native language. A monolingual teacher who does not speak the language does not understand the student's rhythm and process to decode; this is called comprehensible input.

Title I, Title III, per-pupil funding from state and federal funds, Dreams4RPS, and ESSER Funds would give the program sustainability through ensuring continued support from RPS administrators and the school board. The pandemic has provided RPS with the opportunity to restructure the learning experience for all students. With this opportunity in mind and allocating extra funds from the federal government, RPS can invest in the resources needed to support the ESL population. In terms of the program, evaluation is necessary to implement

accountability and valid evaluation methods. Student outcomes would be the first indicator of the program's success. To validate the efforts and investment required for the implementation and sustainability of the program, RPS would only need to look at the dropout and graduation rates in addition to the attendance records.

Comparison Chart

The chart below provides a visual representation of the evaluation of the viability of an elementary Newcomer Academy at either Cardinal Elementary School or Broad Rock Elementary School.

Criteria	Cardinal Elementary School	Broad Rock Elementary School
Enrollment	807	706
English Language Learners	23.7% (191)	38% (268)
ESL Certified Teacher	12	4
Technology	1:1	1:1
Administration	Doctorate in Education and bilingual	Admin endorsement, a Counseling degree
Attendance (10-20% absentee)	9.6%	19.1%

Suppose RPS chooses to use only one school. In that case, Cardinal Elementary fits the requirements as it is a new school, can serve 1,000 students, has a more modern infrastructure, has a lower number of EL students, a higher number of ESL certified teachers, and the current principal is bilingual. The RPS Newcomer Academy is optional for students to attend, so the number of students transferring from Broad Rock to Cardinal cannot cause the enrollment to

exceed 1,000. However, suppose the population of EL students at either school increases so that Cardinal will exceed the enrollment limitation. In that case, the apparent option is to duplicate the academic structure in place at Cardinal and implement it at Broad Rock. Either option requires additional ESL certified staff, materials, and supports. The easiest route is to move students to Cardinal; however, the most impact on student outcomes as a district is to replicate the success of Cardinal at Broad Rock.

2021-2022 Proposed Budget Changes

Scenario 1: One Newcomer Academy - Cardinal

Allocations Per FY22	Proposed	Cardinal
ESL:8 teachers	\$652,000	12 - No additional staff required
ESL: 2 specialists	\$192,000	1 - No additional staff required
Bilingual Teachers	\$0	10 - \$815,000*
Total Budget	\$844,000	\$815,000

*Reallocated funds

By reallocating the funds from additional teachers, we have a surplus of \$29,000 that can be used for further professional development and instructional materials as needed for the additional teachers and students.

Scenario 2: Both schools become Newcomer Academies

Allocations Per FY22	Proposed	Cardinal	Broad Rock*
ESL: 8 teachers	\$652,000	No additional staff required	+3 - \$244,500
ESL: 2 specialist	\$192,000	No additional staff required	+1 - \$96,000

Bilingual teachers	\$0	0	+3 - \$244,500
Total Budget	\$844,000	\$0	\$585,000

By reallocating funds to Broad Rock Elementary School, we have created a surplus of \$256,000 to be allocated to professional development and instructional materials. Based on the attendance data found in the state quality profile, Cardinal Elementary exceeds the district level of attendance, including Broad Rock Elementary. We believe it results from the bilingual staff and ESL certified educators who can communicate with the students and families regarding all aspects of the learner experience.

As a result, we propose that Richmond Public Schools duplicate the student outcomes of Cardinal by placing additional ESL certified teachers, an instructional specialist, and bilingual staff at Broad Rock Elementary. We removed bilingual staff from Cardinal in Scenario 2 because we did not add bilingual students. We only added three bilingual staff to Broad Rock because the percentage of bilingual students attending Broad Rock, 44.8%, is much lower than Cardinal at 81.3%.

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PBL Log

Date	Time In	Time Out	Contact Hours	Setting	PSEL Standard (s)	Description of Activities
2/1/2021	9:45:00 AM	11:15:00 AM	1:30	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Met with PBL partner to discuss our PBL topic and create a plan of action.
2/24/2021	7:00:00 AM	8:30:00 AM	1:30	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Met with PBL partner to work on our PBL topic.
2/28/2021	8:00:00 AM	12:00 PM	4:00	Virtual	Standard 3 & 9	Research into the southside middle schools and their data on the school quality website, RPS website, and the respective schools' websites.
3/9/2021	10:00:00 AM	11:00:00 AM	1:00	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Created the PBL Powerpoint
4/11/2021	1:30:00 PM	6:00:00 PM	4:30	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Met with PBL partner to construct the research paper and budget presentation. In working through our data, we altered the original proposal to include a second primary school location based on the numbers.
4/13/2021	8:30:00 AM	11:30:00 AM	3:00	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Continued to work on the PBL paper.

4/16/2021	5:00:00 PM	7:00:00 PM	2:00	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Continued research and work with PBL partner to finish PBL projects.
4/23/2021	10:00:00 AM	5:30:00 PM	7:30	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Continued research and work with PBL partner to finish PBL projects.
4/25/2021	9:00:00 AM	12:00:00 PM	3:00	F2F	Standard 3 & 9	Finished research and compiled paper and presentation for submission.
			28:00			

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