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Instructional Policy & Student Achievement Committee

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Summary

- Loi Dang-Nguyen addressed the Board of Education's Instructional Policy and Student Achievement Committee about Akron Public School's [English as a Second Language](#) (ESL) program. Total funding for APS FY 2025 is \$5 million, serving 2,388 English Learner (EL) students in 46 APS buildings with 32 translators.
- The APS ESL program works with both students and parents. Parents of EL students generally face challenges. They tend to work multiple jobs, have financial difficulties and language barriers themselves, and need to be contacted directly since they rarely contact the school on their own.
- Dang-Nguyen said the program is successful yet faces continual funding challenges. Polling conducted on existing students shows they are generally doing well. She and her staff write requests for proposals and present to third parties, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Follow-Up Questions

- What type of additional funding, if any, may be obtained apart from state funding?
- How will the EL program expand to service more students in light of budget shortfalls?

Notes

The Instructional Policy and Student Achievement Committee met at 4:30 p.m. at 10 N.

Main St., in Room 102 of the Sylvester Small Administration Building.

The video can be seen on the [APS YouTube channel](#).

These items were on the [agenda](#) but were not discussed at length at the meeting:

27.4 Hatch - Service Agreement - A service agreement for Year 3 of a three-year agreement for 500 annual subscription licenses for the [Hatch Partnership Program, Ignite](#), including tablet replacement and online professional development services for the Early Learning Program district-wide for the 2024-2025 school year, total cost not to exceed \$56,900, to be charged to Fund 439-2533 (Early Childhood Education). This supports Cornerstone - #2. Academic Achievement; Objective - #1. Increase the percentage of scholars from APS Early Learning Program (ELP) entering kindergarten on track as measured by the Language and Literacy portion of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA); Initiative - #2. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to improve each scholar's academic performance and behavioral skills.

27.6 GCL Education Services - A tuition agreement for court-placed special education student placements in the LEAP Program, with [GLC Education Services, LLC.](#), effective for the 2024-2025 school year, with total cost not to exceed \$50,000, to be charged to Fund 001-0000 (General Fund). This supports Cornerstone - #1. Culture of Safety and Belonging; Objective - #1. Increase the percentage of scholars experiencing a positive and affirming culture; Initiative - #5. The Path to High School Success.

27.8 TomTod Ideas - Service Agreement - Entering into a service agreement for Changemaker Challenge to provide instructional preparation and community partner support and to provide curricular development, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation, for district-wide eighth-grade scholars, with [TomTod Ideas](#), effective Oct. 22, 2024, through June 30, 2025, total cost not to exceed \$39,700, to be charged to Fund 001-0000 (General Fund). This supports Cornerstone - #1. Culture of Safety and Belonging; Objective - #1. Increase the percentage of scholars experiencing a positive and affirming culture; Initiative - #5. The Path to High School Success.

Public comment: ESL presentation - Loi Dang-Nguyen

Teaching and Learning: Instructional Policy Updates

These items were on the [agenda](#) but were not discussed at the meeting:

Digital Marketing

On Sept. 27, the staff at [Voris](#) were trained on the new [Promethean boards](#) they received this school year. Everyone is very excited about their new tools. They are developing and delivering 6-hour options on topics centered around innovative ways to use technology with instruction to boost academic achievement as well as advance basic skills and streamline workflow.

ELA

The administration of [mCLASS](#) and iReady assessments have been completed and are used to identify at-risk students for intervention. The K-2 tutors were trained and are implementing [SPIRE](#), the curriculum replacing West Virginia Phonics for at-risk scholars. K-3 teachers are completing their Reading Improvement Monitoring Plans (RIMPS) and will meet with parents to go over their child's RIMPS results.

Math

The Math team has worked with teachers and leaders to focus on math instruction in each grade level. They have finalized the Math Instructional Plan and shared it with leaders across the district. The team has created a Math Toolkit site for teachers and a Math website for administrators. The APS Math Toolkit for teachers includes all instructional resources and professional learning supports for teachers. The Math Leader website for principals includes all the important information and resources to support them in leading the work. They've continued to build these tools to give teachers and principals one place to find all math resources.

Science/Health

Science and Health Adoption: They have successfully provided K-12 professional development to over 600 educators. In particular, on Sept. 27, they provided a deeper divide into the science kits in grades 3-5.

Notes: The SPIRE. and mCLASS are programs for screening students for dyslexia.

Body of the Meeting

4:30 p.m. The meeting started. There is no approval of meeting minutes. Present at the meeting are Board Members Summer Hall, Carla Jackson and Diana Autry. Assistant Superintendent Tamea Caver was also present. In attendance as guest presenters are Loi Dang-Nguyen, director of the APS ESL program, and Katey Yinger, refugee program manager.

4:34 p.m. The ESL presentation began. It lasted until 5:19 p.m. Dang-Nguyen said that the intention of the presentation was that “we want you to have a better understanding of how we are implementing our program across the district.” The objectives of the presentation were to provide an overview of the ESL program and how APS implements the program.

Some statistics on EL students in the program:

- 2,388 EL students, with 2,162 students actively in APS, representing around 10.8% of all students. The district still provides ESL services to some students who aren't in the district.
- 32 interpreters in the district
- 46 APS buildings
- 87 different countries represented, including the United States
- 48 different languages represented, including English

Instructors are taught to assess students on content instead of language skills.

There were 10 points from the presentation:

1. Identify and assess all potential EL students
2. Provide language assistance to EL students
3. Staff and support an ESL program
4. Provide meaningful access to all curricular and extracurricular programs.
5. Avoid unnecessary segregation of EL students
6. Evaluate EL students for special education and providing dual services
7. Meet the needs of students who opt out of EL programs or particular services
8. Monitor exiting EL students from programs and services
9. Evaluate the effectiveness of a district's ESL program
10. Ensure meaningful communication with limited English proficient parents

Dang-Nguyen said “EL students are given the same opportunities as non-EL. ... Just

because you do not know the language does not mean you are going to be excluded from the IEP program. A lot of support needs to be in place, but we can't exclude you for language because that is a civil right."

She followed up with examples of how APS supports EL student learning and participation through teachers, support staff and translators. Special care is taken to not screen out students who may be gifted.

Dang-Nguyen then led the board in a discussion based on a thought experiment about a refugee attending school and the issues EL students have to navigate. Board Member Carla Jackson asked probing questions on how academics are assessed despite language barriers.

Funding for ESL comes from the general fund. EL enrollment is based on the directive of the state and federal departments of education. Whatever is federally required has to be paid out of the general fund.

Total funding for EL students for the 2025 fiscal year is \$5,001,829. Of this amount, \$2 million is state funding. The difference has to be made up out of the APS general fund budget. Grant funding provides supplemental money to pay for central office support, technology and non-personnel costs according to Dang-Nguyen.

Parents face challenges as well as students. The parents generally have to be contacted by the EL program because they generally do not reach out themselves. Interpreters are provided for parents. Close association with the International Institute of Akron is observed.

Evaluation of the program

The program exceeded state expectations. They are rated a 5/5 in GAP funding. Polling of existing students is provided, and they are generally doing well. Graduation rates for APS EL students are higher than the state graduation average for EL students.

The presentation ended at 5:19 p.m. with continued discussion and commentary by all board members.

"It was one of the best presentations I have ever seen," Jackson said.

Notes to reader: Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at documenters@signalakron.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line.