



NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FL Schools and LILA consider joining forces to promote language acquisition

FOREST LAKE, MINN. – Administrators from Forest Lake Area Schools District #831 (FLAS) and Lakes International Language Academy District #4116 (LILA) are in the early stages of examining the possibility of a partnership that they believe may be beneficial to both the district and the charter school.

No decision has been made by the Forest Lake Area School Board or the LILA School Board, but the administrators from both sides have begun talks that could possibly lead to a future site-governed school arrangement.

“A closer partnership between Forest Lake Schools and the Lakes Area Language Academy has the potential of strengthening both programs,” said FLAS Superintendent Linda Madsen. “We have a great working relationship with LILA and our current discussions are aimed at seeing if we can improve second-language opportunities for all of our students.”

A state law passed last year allows for the creation of new site-governed schools that could operate with the autonomy of a charter school but exist within the structure of a traditional school district. But the law does not provide for an existing charter school to become a site-governed school within a traditional public school district.

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So in order for FLAS and LILA to even begin to contemplate this action, a change in state law would be necessary, or possibly an exemption by the legislature to allow for a pilot program.

”We’re talking with State Representative Bob Dettmer to learn what statutes would need tweaking to allow this to happen, should the two districts decide to pursue it,” said LILA Director Cam Hedlund. “It’s all about what works best for preparing our learners for the global future they will face, and brainstorming how our school districts can meld our strengths, resources and experiences to effectively and efficiently deliver those educational opportunities.”

“LILA and FLAS are gathering information to see how we might build on our current collaboration to further benefit families and students here,” Hedlund explained. “We’re not at the point of making any decisions.”

A site-governed school arrangement, were it to occur, would be a continuation of a long-standing partnership between the two prominent educational entities. Forest Lake Area Schools and Lakes International Language Academy have joined in collaborative efforts that recently have gained the district and charter school national attention for educational innovation.

That collaboration currently provides a smooth transition from the Spanish Immersion program at LILA in grades K – 6 to the half-time Spanish immersion continuation program in grades 7 – 9 at Southwest Jr. High School and the 10 – 12 program at Forest Lake Senior High, which is in its first year.

“Forest Lake Area Schools and Lakes International are committed to creating relevant and productive learning opportunities for students,” said Madsen. “Knowing the success of our collaborative experience so far, we’re confident that this partnership will carefully and objectively assess what would be best for helping students here to thrive in a global society – even if our ideas break out of conventional molds.”

Madsen believes that a strengthened partnership could expand educational options for both FLAS and LILA.

“Research shows that more in-depth immersion experiences translate into lifelong language and cognitive skills,” she explained. “We’re working to build in language components K – 12 to allow students to internalize both the languages and cultures of other parts of the world.”

Hedlund agreed. “We envision adding languages and programs as community interest grows, and as projected by national studies of U.S. language needs. LILA wants to offer language learning that supports our country’s abilities to communicate with the world for social, economic and national security strengths,” he said.