



**FOREST LAKE AREA SCHOOLS
FOREST LAKE, MN 55025**

May 5, 2011

AGENDA ITEM: 9.3

TOPIC: SECOND READING OF “BIOLOGY AT THE EXTREMES”

BACKGROUND: Historically, a variety of elective options, some different from those available at Forest Lake Area High School, are made available to students at the Area Learning Center. With recent changes in the science standards, and with staffing changes that have occurred over the past few years at the ALC, the science curriculum review team discussed offering a biology elective at the ALC for the 2011-12 school year.

PROCESS: Through the Curriculum Review process, the secondary science department has worked to provide a different opportunity for elective credit at the Area Learning Center. The department is proposing to offer a new course, “Biology at the Extremes” for the 2011-12 school year. This course will allow students to study the habitability of different environments in our universe and beyond. This course would take a life science design approach and will integrate engineering and astronomy topics. The course will introduce students to (a) the physical necessities of living organisms; (b) NASA advances with rovers conducting experiments on Mars; (c) biological research conducted in microgravity conditions through the International Space Station; (d) biologists around the world and their research involving organisms existing in conditions that were once thought to be inhospitable to life. Livability of planets within our solar system, as well as extra-solar planets will be studied. This course is proposed for inclusion in ALC course offerings for the 2011-12 school year, but could be offered at FLAHS in the future if the department thought there was interest in another elective or the need for another elective at the high school level.

The School Board has the first review of this course proposal at the March 31, 2011, School Board meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval to offer a new 10-12 Science elective during the 2011-12 school year. The course, “Biology at the Extremes”, would be offered as an elective option at the Area Learning Center.