

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Legislative Program Issues Evaluation Form

Issue ID: 17E02-ESOL and FRM

Date Submitted to Legislative Committee: October 18, 2016

Issue: Providing educational funding from the Commonwealth that takes into account two indicators of higher educational costs: (1) the number of students who require instruction in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and (2) the number of students who receive Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FRM).

Background: Students who require instruction in ESOL and/or who receive FRM are among the populations most at risk of educational failure. Both student groups require additional time, attention, and resources. FCPS estimates that the cost of providing ESOL services adds 30 percent to the cost of educating a student. Low-income students often require additional instruction and remediation, and their lack of at-home resources and support place them at a well-documented disadvantage when they enter the classroom. Meanwhile, the achievement gap between various groups of students has proven difficult to narrow, let alone close.

Existing Conditions/Impacts: Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) serve a diverse student population, in which approximately 52,000 (or 28% of the total student population) are eligible for FRM and approximately 32,000 (or 17% of the total population) receive ESOL services. The percentage of students in these two categories have grown significantly since the major recession, while overall state aid levels for education have declined. Title I federal funds (for children in poverty) and Title III federal funds (for children receiving ESOL services) make up little of the difference between children's needs and the funding required to meet those needs.

Preferred Position: We support legislation to create educational funding that addresses the needs of ESOL and FRM students. We propose focusing on per-student funding for students in these two categories in order to provide these students with the resources they need to be successful, throughout the Commonwealth.

Benefits: Targeting educational funding for students in the categories of ESOL and FRM will help address the achievement gap that has long existed among students whose demographic characteristics vary. In addition, by basing funding on a per-student basis, we ensure that these funds are properly reaching at risk children in all communities.

Potential Supporters (Community leaders, Public/Private Partnership Opportunities, Organizations):
Educational organizations and county governments, particularly in areas with greater numbers of ESOL and FRM-eligible students.

Lead Federation Committee: Education

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