

# Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations

## Resolution

FY 2004 Fairfax County Public School Budget

(Approved by Federation Membership 1/16/03)

### **Background**

The development of the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) budget for fiscal year 2004 (FY 04 or July 2003 to July 2004) began in the late summer and fall of 2002 with each department and school assessing budget needs, and culminating with the submission of the budget to the School Board by the Superintendent in early January 2003. The FCPS Board has scheduled public hearings on January 27 and 28. The board will finalize the budget and submit their request for funds to the County's Board of Supervisors (BOS), who will hold hearing on the overall county budget on April 7-9. After the State has finalized its budget including State aid to the localities for education, and the BOS has decided upon the monies that will be transferred to FCPS, the School Board will hold public hearings on May 12 and 13, and finalize the FCPS budget, including making further program decisions if any program or activity reductions or fee increases are necessary to accommodate the State and county funds provided.

Last year, the State significantly reduced the monies provided to Fairfax County, and while the BOS transferred additional funds, the budget for the present school year had to be balanced through significant reductions in proposed new and existing programs, the delay in acquisitions and maintenance, and the reorganization/reduction of administration.

Nevertheless, the FCPS have been able to maintain their excellent quality in terms of academic achievement and diversity of programs, thus, serving as one reason for people and businesses to locate in Fairfax County.

However, residential property assessments have continued to increase, while the economy in Fairfax County, including commercial property assessments have remained stagnant, resulting in lower than desired county revenues. But, at the present time, the Governor has submitted a budget without further reductions to funding for K-12, and the use of 2000 census data has increased State aid to Fairfax County based on population.

The budget presented by the Superintendent for funding the FY04 School Operating Budget totals \$1.67 billion, including the addition of two additional days to the teachers' contract for expanded training and \$19 million for the restoration of projected but unrealized State cuts in the proposed program budget document. This represents an increase of \$114.5 million over the FY03 approved budget of \$1.55 billion. Of this, \$23.6 million is needed for projected growth in student enrollment.

That the requested increase exceeds that due to cost of inflation and enrollment increase is the result of costs associated with meeting State and federal mandated programs, e.g.,

the State's SOL requirements and the federal No Child Left Behind initiative, the changing demographics of the student population with increased need for specialized programs, medical benefits rising at a rate significantly faster than inflation, and higher teacher compensation necessary to remain competitive with surrounding jurisdictions in attracting and retaining outstanding teachers.

The detailed program budget anticipated a reduction in funds from the State. Therefore, the Superintendent's amended budget proposes to restore \$3.4 million in departmental reductions, \$6.5 million for school-based staffing, \$5.0 million for textbooks, \$3.3 million for maintenance and equipment, \$0.4 million providing for a return to present AP & IB fees, and \$0.4 million for summer school.

While the capital improvement program is separate from this budget, and while much still has to be done in renovation and construction of facilities, progress is being made and innovative approaches considered, and when cost effective, implemented.

In this presentation the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations' Board of Directors will set forth some general observations and recommendations, but as the budget process proceeds the Federation will have several specific questions and some specific recommendations for the FCPS School Board.

**Whereas:**

1. In FY04, this year's high school juniors will be the first students required to meet the Virginia SOL test requirements in order to graduate, and
2. Despite the fact that 89% of FCPS schools presently meet the accreditation standards, a significant number of students in the Class of 2004 are at risk of failing to meet the SOL test requirements and consequently will fail to graduate, and
3. By the end of the FY06 school year, all public schools will be required to receive and maintain full accreditation under the Virginia Standards of Accreditation, and
4. The Superintendent has set aside monies saved in FY02 and FY03 for use in the FY04 budget, and
5. The Superintendent has considered the current economic situation, and has not proposed any new academic programs, or the addition of some existing programs to additional schools, and
6. The FCPS School Board has established a citizen budget advisory committee to recommend program and budget efficiencies, and The Federation appreciates being able to have two outstanding individuals participate on this committee, and
7. The FCPS School Board continues to make progress in the hiring of a consultant to conduct an independent program and management audit, and

8. The Superintendent has again prepared the FCPS proposed budget in program format and has posted the Metropolitan Area Boards of Education (MABE) document with comparable data for surrounding school systems, and
9. Most of the proposed increase is for teacher compensation enhancement, including \$57.7 million for salary adjustments (an overall increase of 2% market rate adjustment plus 2.6% for step increases), \$12.1 million for health benefit rate increases, \$5.0 million for ERFC rate increase, \$8.4 million for an additional 2 days on teacher contracts for in-house training, \$4.9 million towards Virginia's employee's retirement account, and \$1.9 million for an additional step at the top of the unified pay scale.

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Federation's Board of Directors

1. Deeply appreciates the dedication and hard work of the principals, teachers, administrators, and other staff, and the leadership and support of Superintendent Domenech, and the School board, all of whom have helped make it possible for our students to improve their academic performance and for most of our schools to meet full State accreditation standards
2. Supports the Superintendent's decision not to propose expanding programs or start new programs in FY04 in view of limited county and state revenues.
3. Urges FCPS to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and to reallocate those resources to programs shown to be effective, with emphasis on ensuring that all students have the opportunity to meet State SOL requirements and receive a high school diploma.
4. Agrees with the recommendation to include two additional days to teacher contracts for training.
5. Supports the Superintendent's decision not to propose any increases in class size.
6. Supports a compensation package necessary to retain our high quality teachers, but recommends that a comparison of the teachers' total compensation with other local jurisdictions and county employees be fully examined before proceeding with all of the proposed increases, including the overall effect and strategy of beginning to pay the employee's contribution to the Virginia retirement fund.
7. Appreciates the preparation of the budget in program format, but suggests that understanding of the budget would be improved if the "explanation of costs" section of each program contained a more complete description of the changes from the proposed FY03 budget to the approved FY03 budget, and to the proposed FY04 budget.

8. Notes that the Federation supported a reduction in the bus lease/purchase line item in the FY03 budget as a temporary measure, but now raises a concern about the projected increase in the average bus age.
8. Supports the maintenance of funding for projects directed at meeting school and individual SOL standards, and supports steps to begin to address the new federal education act, and hopes that successful programs can be expanded to additional schools in FY05.
9. Supports review of staffing, cost, and implementation of special education programs, and requests some assurance that these services are required because the cost for a special education pupil can be more than double that of one without special needs.
11. Appreciates the business community's support of the FCPS.
12. Supports the Quality Programs Assurance System as a means of ensuring the cost effectiveness of school programs, but would like to see greater opportunity for public involvement in the process.
13. Supports the proposed hiring of a consultant to conduct an independent program and management audit.