

Remarks by Ed Saperstein to the Fairfax County School Board January 30, 2012

RE: Proposed FY 2013 FCPS School Budget on behalf of the Executive Board of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations

I am Ed Saperstein. Tonight, as Co-Chair of the Education Committee, I am speaking on behalf of the Board of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations. *

I'll focus on 5 points: 1) Salaries, 2) Pensions, 3) Class size experiment, 4) Largest class sizes, and 5) Honors classes.

As to #1, salaries, for FY 2013 to the extent funds are available, we support a market scale adjustment and step increase.

As to #2, pensions, there is a concern about the relationship of pensions to salaries. On the part of the pension which is controlled by Fairfax County Public Schools, we recommend that FCPS assess whether to modify the pension plan in light of employee wages and benefits using objective criteria that includes comparisons with private sector compensation.

As to #3, because of various class size pressures, as in our comments last year, we recommend considering expanded use of on-line learning technology, and also that the following experiment be tried in some high schools which might require a waiver or discussion with state authorities.

The experiment is to ask each high school principal to choose 1 or 2 courses to have much larger class sizes than normal in order to use the related cost savings to reduce class sizes in some other courses or to add an elective in the same school. These larger classes could be, for example, in rooms with portable dividers or an auditorium. Teachers teaching the larger classes could perhaps get a bonus or reduced number of teaching periods, but this should be done in a way to lower the overall cost for teaching that course.

As to #4, largest class sizes, we support allocating funds for additional teacher positions to address the largest class sizes.

As to #5, honors classes, as the School Board makes more honors classes available, we recommend that decisions on whether to actually have these honors classes and offsetting cuts, if any, be made by each school after having discussions with the local community.

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Also, attached are written comments on the following additional areas: preventive maintenance, expanding FLES, fee for parenting classes, publishing a program budget, and staffing ratios for some psychologists, social workers and guidance counselors.

Thanks for your patience in these public sessions and for your collective service to the children in our communities.

* The 3 Co-Chairs of the Education Committee are: Leonard Bumbaca, Tim Thompson and Ed Saperstein.

Attachment with additional comments:

1. We are pleased to see an amount allocated for preventive maintenance as this type of maintenance can be useful and in the longer term cost effective.
2. We are wary of expanding Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES) to additional schools unless the cost effectiveness of the teaching models are examined, including use of on-line learning technology.
3. We recommend that FCPS remove the fee for parenting classes that help with parental involvement and encouragement in their children's education including early learning. The fee inhibits lower income parents from taking these courses. We understand that the money to be raised from this fee by the Office of Families and School Partnerships is only about \$150,000.
4. We recommend that FCPS look into publishing some form of a program budget. It could be useful to have the FCPS RICE group (reports, interfaces, conversions and extensions) help in deciding how to practically accomplish this.
5. In the last couple of years, staffing ratios for psychologists, special education social workers and middle and high school guidance counselors have increased. We understand the ratios might increase again in FY 2013, since the number of students needing these services is expected to increase, unless additional positions are added. We recommend increasing the budget for these positions.