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Fairfax County School Board Public Hearing, Tuesday, February 13, 2024

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Place	Fairfax County School Board, Virginia
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- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H94KRUbXhQk
- Official School Board page (FCPS): https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-02. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:34] Good evening. The February 13th, 2024 public hearing on the fiscal year 2025 budget is now called to order. Ms. Dixit has submitted a written request to attend virtually, I'm sorry, to attend virtually this evening's public hearing due to personal reasons.

[00:00:59] All those in favor of granting this request, please raise your hand. Those opposed? And non-abstaining, that passes. Mr. Dunn has submitted a written request to attend virtually this evening's public hearing due to personal reasons.

[00:01:16] All those in favor in granting this request? Thank you, I see no abstentions and no oppositions, so that carries. Miss Lady has submitted a written request to attend virtually this evening's public, to attend this evening's public hearing due to personal reasons.

[00:01:33] All those in favor of granting this request, please raise your hand. Thank you, that is unanimous. No, none opposed, none abstained. Mr. McDaniel has submitted a written request attend virtually this evening's public hearing due to personal reasons all those in favor of granting this request that is unanimous thank you with the people that are here um good evening and welcome to the public hearing on the fiscal year 2025 budget on behalf of the entire school board i'd like to thank you for sharing your comments with us this hearing is being broadcast on channel

[00:02:07] 99 and live streamed at fcps.edu/tv/ch99. We have 11 registered speakers who will address the board at this public hearing. Speakers are allowed three minutes and we ask that you stay within that time limit. The timer will start when you begin speaking and the timer will sound after after three minutes. Please ensure that your remarks are limited to the FY 2025 budget. If you have not registered to speak but would like to address the board, please see the deputy clerk for one of the five extra reserved for the for one of the five

[00:02:43] reserved speaker slots madam deputy clerk please call off our speaker Robin Olson hi thank you for your time today my name is Robin Olson and I'm the team lead for the Faith Alliance climate solutions Fairfax County Public Schools team I also have two children two children in an FCPS elementary school in Drainsville district today I wanted to thank the superintendent for included continued for including continued funding for the joint environmental task force jet requirements this multi-year initiative is critical to

[00:03:20] continuing to make progress on essential responses to climate change important activities that are included are supporting carbon neutrality get to green initiatives and electric school buses in my children's elementary school and elsewhere I've seen the impact that these programs have had on our kids learning and health it is critically important that our schools provide a way for students in our school system to be part of the climate change solution I urge the school board to ensure that the jet funding commitments are maintained. I know this is a difficult budget year and it is vitally important that we at least maintain our trajectory on addressing climate change problems.

[00:03:54] It is essential that the school system lead the way on these solutions for the health and future of our kids and our schools. Thank you very much for the opportunity to address you on FCPS's efforts to address climate change and to provide climate solutions that will benefit current and future FCPS students and their families. David Walrod. Good evening Chair Frisch, Dr. Reed, members of board thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak today first of all i want to thank dr

[00:04:33] reed for her proposed budget one thing that i really appreciate is the fact that we are not trying to bring in a bunch of new initiatives right now every time that new initiatives come in that involves a lot of work for teachers and frankly our teachers are already at the point of feeling burnt out and so i want to just thank you for emphasizing let's perfect what we've already done let's finish what we've already started and let's not necessarily worry about starting new things right now with all of that set I do appreciate the fact that I see that there's that the budget includes 6% for compensation

[00:05:09] and I like the fact that that is going to be right among all staff so all staff according to this budget are going to be projected yes 6% raise I think that there does need to be a little bit of communication about MSA versus step but But I feel like a lot of that is probably communication and marketing and making sure that folks understand exactly what the difference is and what it is that they're getting.

[00:05:38] But I think the big thing that folks are going to have to understand is that based on this budget, they would see 6% more in their paycheck. I see that the budget also includes a request for the special education extended day contract be introduced with year-end funding.

[00:05:57] I think the big thing is that our folks really have to know by June 15th if that is going to be in there or not and the reason why I emphasize that folks need to know by June 15th is that is the you know date for resignation even better would be if folks knew that date by June 1st because June 1st is the

deadline for transferring so that would be the time where teachers could transfer could try to find a new position within Fairfax County so if folks know that by June 1st they can they make educated decisions.

[00:06:30] but again I want to just thank you for the work that has been done so far thank you for the work that is going to be ongoing and I look forward to speaking not only with you but also with our Board of Supervisors members because as we know ultimately the school board only has the money that the county the state federal government gives them to spend so I'm looking forward to

[00:06:53] engaging more with that process thank you Emily Vanderhoff good evening Budget Chair Anderson Dr. Reed and members of the board. My name is Emily Vanderhoef. I'm an FCPS teacher and a proud member of my union, FCFT. I appreciate this budget's focus on compensation and that all employees will benefit equally with the 6% salary increase across the board. I'm sure it doesn't

[00:07:29] come as a surprise that many employees are upset at the lack of a proposed step. I know that 6% is 6% whether it's split across a step in MSA or all in the MSA, but at some point the district will need to reconcile with a step scale that implies annual progress that doesn't come to fruition. Hopefully by this time next year we'll be putting our heads together on the issue at the bargaining table. I'm glad to see the DROP program funded. In the midst of staffing shortages we need to remove any barriers to retain our most experienced staff. I want to share my and many of my colleagues' concern about the placement of the SPED extended day contract in year-end versus in the annual budget. I plan to watch today's work session afterwards and which will

[00:08:07] hopefully eliminate the reasoning behind the decision. It's concerning to see this important item tacked on to the end of the year only if funds are available. Assurance seemed to be given by Dr. Reed when she presented the budget that it would be done, but when it's not included in the annual budget it feels uncertain. FCPS has a legal obligation to provide the services and accommodations outlined in each student's IEP. With a third of our special education teaching staff either provisionally licensed, a teacher trainee, or a long-term sub, we're already treading thin ice. We cannot stand to lose any more of our special education teachers by leaving 7% of their pay up to the uncertainty of the availability of end-of-year funds. The resignation deadline, as David pointed out, is in mid-June,

[00:08:46] while the year-end adjustments aren't finalized until August. What can be done to provide more certainty to special education teachers looking at their next year? And it wouldn't be me if I didn't talk about elementary planning time. Last year, the previous board and leadership team indicated fixing elementary planning time would be a priority. Ms. Klemenko has been open about how challenging this next year will be for elementary teachers with a new language arts curriculum it seems that we also won't be able to rely on the position of classroom monitors to provide extra planning through recess coverage in the next year and so that so many will end up with less planning time than they have now if we can't address this issue with staffing a possible solution could be a

[00:09:24] monthly or quarterly early release days this would provide extended planning blocks at regular intervals to give teachers time to plan with a new curriculum while reducing the staffing impact thank you for your consideration

[00:09:34] Nahid Ijaz. Good evening everyone. My name is Nahid Ijaz and I am an instructional assistant at Riverside Elementary School. Thank you for the opportunity. I speak with you all about the proposed budget. As an instructional assistant I take on several demanding roles for the price of one.

[00:10:09] I have been in this profession for a long time since 2001 November 2001 and I care for my student and I take effort to provide my kids with more than adequate resources and attention.

[00:10:27] Over the years however the pay difference between my role and as an IEA and the classroom teacher has become drastic. As the pay gap increase my commitment to our community has remained the same.

[00:10:44] I find myself having to train incoming teachers covering for classroom teachers when no one is available and evenly split the instructional load we are a team and we rely each other and we rely each other to get through every day.

[00:11:08] It is necessary that our duties as IA, given consideration and value that reflect day-to-day reality. Without instruction assistant, classroom teacher will shouldn't have additional burdens in my class.

[00:11:27] Working with a teacher that is entirely new to the profession, I am her greatest support. Her words, not mine. No one is able to be in two places at once. Help to manage students' behavior, assist the attendants, data collection, covering the bus duties, class management, and et cetera, and et cetera.

[00:11:56] And cover for the absence during meetings and plannings, and to be blunt. Allow her to use the classroom restrooms for regularity. While this shared proposed budget is a step in the right direction, there is more than to be done.

[00:12:14] This proposal brings IAS closer to pay equally to that of other districts, but there are more factors to consider. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2021, the USA has experienced a 2% rate of inflation annually.

[00:12:37] This increase in pay, however appreciated, only began to meet the needs at least three years. IN MY MANY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, I HAVE SHOULDERED SHOULDN'T PAY FREEZE AND INCREASING CLASSROOM RESPONSIBILITY.

[00:13:04] Thank you. Danny Sear, Cindy Navarrete, Rachel Herndon, Sarah Robles.

[00:13:33] Good evening, school board members and Dr. Reed. My name is Sarah Robles, and I'm speaking to you tonight as a teacher and a resident of Fairfax County. I was shocked to see that the superintendent's proposed budget does not include a step increase for all eligible staff.

[00:13:49] In Dr. Reed's email to staff about the budget, it states that her goal for FCPS is to retain and attract world-class educators and staff. How are we going to retain staff when they are not being given step increases? While staff are scheduled to receive a 6% raise, it is somewhat of a slap in the face to educators who have chosen to remain in the county.

[00:14:12] With step increase, without a step increase, teachers who are currently in their first year of teaching will be making the same amount as those who start next year. increases are supposed to be the norm it's not supposed to be a will they won't they sort of thing that's why we have a salary scale so teachers can know what to expect to make in the upcoming years it should be reasonable to expect to be compensated for one's years of experience and loyalty to the county unfortunately fcps has a history of skipping step increases most recently in fiscal year 2021

[00:14:46] and 2022. meanwhile our neighboring counties such as loudon prince william and alexandria have all included step increases for staff in their budgets if fcps does not amend this glaring oversight do

you really think that staff are going to stay thank you arthur purvis superintendent reed chairman anderson members of the board i'm arthur purvis president of the fairfax county

[00:15:24] taxpayers alliance at church i get to ask students and parents around vienna about our schools the feedback is positive and we appreciate your dedicated teachers and administrators however as As FCPS spending goes up, achievement goes down.

[00:15:41] Over the past five years, per student cost is increasing from $16,000 to $21,000 a year, while SAT scores are falling from 1218 to 1181. Never in half a century has there been such a precipitous decline in FCPS SAT scores.

[00:16:03] Your crucial failure is in teaching minority students mastery of reading and arithmetic by third grade. of our crime is committed by individuals whom the public schools fail to teach reading the fault is the curriculum not the students not their race not their families your budget does not even mention equal access to literacy which was supposed to replace whole word reading instruction with phonics and fix this problem proposed county and school raises for the next year would cost 400 million dollars that's almost half a billion for six percent raises this would increase the real

[00:16:38] estate tax rate 13 cents and increase the average real estate tax bill by $900 this follows seven percent raises last year and again this year making 20 percent raises in three years my retirement income decreased over the last three years yes there is a recruitment problem due to increase decreasing birth rates but the budget provides no evidence that teachers are leaving en masse for more pay there should be a salary freeze until achievement especially in third grade minority reading and arithmetic increases the market scale adjustment plus a step increase

[00:17:17] incentivizes mediocrity because excellent teachers are paid the same as okay teachers you should adopt a single merit-based race your goal is to prepare students to become not good american citizens but global citizens american citizens believe that we get our rights from god and government gets its powers from we the people global government is government of the billionaires by the billionaires and for the billionaires another term for global citizen

[00:17:52] is slave rights global dictators will terminate our rights by ruling with digital currency we oppose spending 3.8 billion dollars to acclimate 180 000 students to global dictatorship thank you kevin hickerson all right uh good evening uh new faces that i haven't seen before uh old faces that

[00:18:28] i have and um some on screen i'm kevin oh and dr reed hello uh kevin hickerson i'm a teacher at chantilly high school i'm also a parent of a precocious fourth grader um on the budget um you know really the speeches for the board of supervisors ultimately right i think you all want want to do the right thing when it comes to making sure that our employees all of them have the necessary resources to live in where they where they want to live.

[00:19:00] And I want to thank you for the budget you know increases for the bus drivers custodians cafeteria workers and IA's there they make the least amongst us and they need to be able to make the most amongst us because they're the glue that really holds the school system

[00:19:17] together. I am happy for no new programs. You know, as a special education teacher, we get foisted on a lot of stuff. We just recently got the least restrictive environment paperwork that we have to do for every IEP. That segues later into the 7% and why we need to keep it. But 6% is good. I have questions on the average, though. Is it an average or is it going to be 6% straight onto the salary scale for everybody?

Because if you think about it, if I start off somebody with a $60,000 salary, they're getting $3,600 And if somebody has $100,000 salary, they're getting $6,000.

[00:19:52] That's a $2,400 inequity between folks. So it's something to think about, at least. Steps, as was mentioned before, and was lovely done, that steps are important.

[00:20:10] But if we're not going to do them with fidelity, then we need to think about what we need to do with them. I have an idea. I'm sure that we'll be talking about them when collective bargaining comes. we'll be we'll be negotiating that and looking at the salary scales and the steps but um if we're not going to have and this is going to be the third in five years that we've missed and the two years that we did it previously we added an additional step so i'm still seven years away after being president of the fairfax education association in 2019 i ended i'll still be seven years away from the top of the scale so we need to think about what we want to do there to correct

[00:20:44] that finally the seven percent for special ed echo the sentiments that were said earlier and it was well said that we need to tell folks what we're going to do i am one of those teachers that are in this precarious position where i can go across the aisle and be a social studies teacher no additional paperwork really you're not going to give me seven percent on top of that i i'm just going to go over to the other side and unfortunately that leaves my daughter who's a special ed student

[00:21:13] Without good quality teachers around the county. I wonder who's going to teach her if I leave and that makes me upset. I want to stay a special education teacher until I retire. Make that happen. Thank you. Misha sure enough. Good evening. School board members chair Frisch and Dr. Reed. Thank you for the budget. I came out tonight because I watched a little bit of the work session and I wanted to thank you Dr. Reed for considering and putting in this drop program.

[00:21:52] I know it might cause some heartburn as you look at this dollar sign, which is why I wanted to tell my story that last year I sat in this audience and I spoke here and I was sitting alongside a colleague who would have benefited from this program and he is no longer with FCPS.

[00:22:11] He moved over to another county so I know you're going to crunch all the numbers and see how we can benefit from losing staff I know I'm close to being one of those teachers who could benefit and we work so long and to consider losing some of that pension funding and to go OK if I can do this.

[00:22:35] I would give another five years and these are your most experienced educators and yes we are not required to mentor but we do and we take on these leadership roles in our schools and we help keep your novice teachers in the profession and we give them daily pep talks so they will stay here.

[00:22:58] And I know Ms. Size more Heiser you mentioned class size my untold story the the stories that don't get told told as a specialist is Our classes are larger because they Consolidate one of our six home rooms and put them into five groups So I and I wonder why I'm so tired but at the end of the day my 4th 5th and 6th grade classes are larger than your gen ed your other class sizes so that is happening and lastly our monitors I

[00:23:35] don't know what next year is going to look like without them they provide tremendous support and planning time for our classroom teachers so I thank you for doing the hard work and looking into everything so thanks for your time Dr. Anderson that was our last speaker Madam Deputy Clerk can you please call the names of anybody who did not come up when we call them the first time

[00:24:04] Danny Sear Cindy Navarrete Rachel Herndon thank you on behalf of the school board thank you so much for sharing your comments with us this evening the board is scheduled to vote on the FY 2025 advertised budget at our regular meeting on Thursday February 22nd 2024 if you wish to provide any

[00:24:40] additional feedback to the board before this vote please do so by sending your comments to communityparticipation@fcps.edu. Thank you for your participation and have a nice evening. We're adjourned.

