

School Board's FY 2021 Budget Direction

Arlington Public Schools is an excellent school system and the School Board is committed to continuing to provide a high-quality education to our students. We are grateful for Arlington County's commitment to public education and anticipate this support will continue as Arlington Public Schools faces continuing cost pressures due to ongoing student enrollment growth, increasing debt service, and staff compensation requirements.

The School Board directs the Interim Superintendent to prepare an FY 2021 budget that maintains our almost 28,000-student school system, focuses on supporting our staff, and emphasizes the School Board's three top priorities:

- increased achievement for all reporting groups that shows progress toward eliminating the opportunity gap,
- improved mental health measures and access to mental health resources, and
- all students can identify at least one school-based adult who supports and encourages their academic and personal growth.

The School Board is also focused on the need to ensure long-term efficiency and sustainability. The School Board therefore also directs the Interim Superintendent to:

- Present a budget that is consistent with APS's Mission, Vision, Core Values and Strategic Plan
- Include a step increase for eligible employees that is consistent with School Board policy and the Strategic Plan goal to have an engaged workforce. Proceed with the compensation study with the understanding that:
 - The School Board's goal is to provide a compensation increase to all employees; and
 - The findings and recommendations of the compensation study would likely not be available in time to be incorporated in the Interim Superintendent's Proposed budget but may be available in time to be incorporated into the School Board's Adopted budget
- Include funding to support the growth of our almost 28,000-student system.
- Align funding for new initiatives and expenditures to the School Board's 2018-2024 Strategic Plan.
- If possible, continue the implementation of the initiatives for Arlington Tech and bus drivers and bus attendants begun in the FY 2017 and FY 2018 budgets.
- Consider steps to implement recommendations from the evaluations of Services for Students with Special Needs and English Learners, and the English Learners (DOJ) Settlement Agreement, including but not limited to phasing in over three to five years those recommendations with budget implications.
- Present a needs-based budget with options for reductions that take into account the results of the budget study/studies and are focused on strategic changes in service delivery across the school division.

The Interim Superintendent is further directed to:

- Review all budget categories to identify potential efficiencies and cost savings.
- Explore longer-term strategies for efficiencies, such as collaboration with the County on services and service fees.
- Present a transparent budget that provides details for significant changes in a major expenditure category (salaries, benefits, purchased services, etc.).
- Consider recommendations from the 2018-19 citizen advisory council reports, program evaluations, internal audits, and other relevant reports.
- Explore increases in revenue, including a review of all APS fees.
- Consider reserve funds for one-time costs in FY21 in accordance with School Board practice.
- Provide three-year forecasts of revenues and expenditures to gauge long-term financial sustainability.
- Ensure that APS complies with all federal, state and local laws.

Approved: October 3, 2019