

## **Input on the Superintendent's FY22 Proposed Budget**

### **Budget Advisory Council**

**March 2021**

#### **Executive Summary**

- We are concerned that proposed cuts offered in the FY22 budget are largely small and short-term, and do not address the magnitude of our challenges in FY22 and beyond.
- We collectively believe that, given projected deficits, we need to make more structural changes, and we encourage the School Board and Superintendent to begin to study the areas with the greatest potential as soon as possible so they can be included in future budgets.
- We welcome the Superintendent's focus on equity and recognize the increasing challenge we face to balance the budget in the years ahead while closing our opportunity gaps.
- We believe that we should have a plan to meet existing staff compensation expectations before we increase the size of our staff, and we propose a larger reevaluation of existing staff's roles and responsibilities and perceived gaps for realignment given the magnitude of our future deficits.
- We think enrollment expectations need to be further evaluated and likely adjusted downward, to avoid overcutting elsewhere.
- We do not support using all of our reserves on operating expenses, especially after learning in 2020 that we do not know what additional challenges future years will bring.
- We should not automatically reinstate all FY21 budget reductions (or create that assumption going forward), or we will trap ourselves in an even more challenging cycle of annual additions and reductions.
- We encourage the School Board to continue to partner with the County to increase projected revenue, but we can not count on it closing the whole gap.
- While increases in revenue are unlikely to close the gap, we think all suggestions should be pursued in order to reduce the number of cuts needed elsewhere in the budget.
- While difficult, we understand the need for the magnitude of cuts proposed in this budget, and have suggested additional ideas.
- However, we have also highlighted a handful of cuts for potential reconsideration, for which the additional ideas can be used as offsets.
- We have also included a few additional areas at the end of document for further study and consideration.

#### **Overall Observations**

- **Proposed cuts offered in the FY22 budget are too short-term.** BAC members are concerned that most of the budget cuts offered in the proposed FY22 budget are short term cuts, deferring spending rather than offering longer term, structural cuts, while deficits continue to grow. According to projections included in the proposed budget, the deficit is expected to exceed \$100M by FY2025.

The disconnect may come from the statement on page 24 which states “As budget development accelerated in the fall, APS faced a budget deficit between \$66 to \$74 million, a significant funding challenge. This deficit was primary due to the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic, resulting in a significant decrease in projected revenue from the County.” However, in the FY21 original proposed budget, the interim Superintendent projected a budget shortfall for FY22 of over \$53M. While \$66-74M is more than \$53M, we did foresee having a sizable budget gap in FY22.

- **We need to make more structural changes, given projected deficits.** Future budget guidance to the Superintendent should ask him to analyze and propose structural changes to address this growing gap. While we understand that the last year was a difficult one, with a new superintendent largely focused on guiding us through a pandemic, we do feel like we have missed another year of longer-term thinking. The equity orientation in this budget is much needed and very welcome, and we agree with the Superintendent's focus on closing opportunity gaps. We also have to acknowledge that our costs outpace our revenue projections significantly and that we need to rethink every position we have on staff before we look to add anyone new. Structural changes can include the following:
  - Better managing our teacher pyramid - hiring more early career teachers, with lower salaries, to balance the more tenured teachers on staff, whose salaries are higher. Consider a one-time payout to entice more tenured teachers to retire, if needed to rebalance the staff. We should also consider hiring more BA level staff, rather than MA level staff, evaluating people for the qualities that enable them to develop into great teachers, regardless of their starting credential.
  - Study the costs of the option school programs, which may increase the cost of transporting students to school in Arlington. There are legitimate questions being asked about whether our option school programs lead to other increased costs, who benefits from them, how evenly these benefits are spread, and whether the costs outweigh the benefits. We should tackle these questions so that we can have this conversation based on the numbers - as a school system and with the County, which also benefits from the options school program as it makes Arlington a more attractive place to live for many. If we all understand the costs and the benefits, then we could potentially ask the County for more funding, based on this information.
  - Evaluate our administrative v. school costs - We note that administrative costs have grown out of step with revenue in the last couple of years. While revenue has grown by 1% and 5%, administrative costs or non-school costs have grown by 13% and 7.5%, respectively, bringing their total from 22% to 26% of the total budget. (p. 330) Are we comfortable with these increases, especially if we are considering class size increases to close gaps?

- Benchmark our teacher/student ratio across all grade levels to bring ourselves in line with other neighboring districts like Fairfax - a well-respected, diverse, neighboring district with higher student/teacher ratios. To close gaps we may need to be at or above neighboring districts if we can not find other savings. Data from this year suggests that we are lower than our own planning factor formulas, given the decline in student enrollment.
    - We should do serious studies on every one of the long-term budget savings ideas that show up in the Long-Term Savings Section of the FY22 Proposed Budget Executive Summary to determine whether there are real savings to be captured. If there are, then we should make a plan to capture them. If there are not, then we should create a new list.
      - Energy savings
      - Transportation efficiencies
      - Planning factors study
      - Collaboration with the County
      - Efficiencies identified in the new IPP process
  - Superintendent should be asked to prepare balanced budget scenarios, and we should also understand what those look like for the next 3-5 years. Finding \$100M of additional revenue is unrealistic.
  - We understand that closing budget gaps of the size presented in this year's budget will be painful for everyone, and together we will need to maintain our focus on equity as we evaluate the impact of our decisions this year and in the future.
- **We should pay the staff we have before hiring more.** Our people are our greatest asset, but we need to make sure we are taking care of the staff we have, both in terms of pay and ensuring they are set up for success, before we bring on more. It can be tempting to think that the answer to closing every gap is to hire a new person, but with deficits like those we are facing over the next few years, it can not be.
  - In order to attract and retain the best talent, we need to be able to offer competitive salaries with some sort of salary increase over time. Over the past few years, we have not been able to meet expectations of the salary structure we have in place (step and COLA) for the people we have on staff now, and this is not going to get any easier with the projected deficits. Adding more people without solving this issue is only going to make the problem more acute. We should fund the salary increase in this year's budget and make a plan either to continue to do so or to change the structure and expectations, ahead of bringing on more staff.
  - We need to step back and rethink the staff we have. Do we have the right people, in the right roles, with the right responsibilities for the challenges ahead of us. This is an enormous project, but with budget deficits of the order of magnitude projected, we can't afford to continue to add new people for every new need. We will need to shift people and positions around, and rewrite job

descriptions, as we reorient around equity and our current and future goals, but without the budgets to add another layer of people.

- **Enrollment expectations need to be further evaluated and likely adjusted downward to avoid overcutting elsewhere.** BAC members are very concerned that enrollment projections are too high, given that they assume growth of 2,747 over the fall 2020 enrollment numbers (and 500 students above pre-pandemic FY21 projections).
  - In a normal year, conservative projections would be welcome, and we understand the risk of underprojecting. But overly conservative projections this year will result in our cutting other programs and potentially over-hiring teachers in a year that we can not afford to do so.
  - We support the effort to survey families who left the system to gage their intention to return. Even reducing the projections by half would save us around \$3M and prevent negative impact on dozens of other programs and positions.
  - Even many APS staff and board members believe the projections in this year's budget are far too conservative.
- **We do not support using all of our reserves, especially on operating expenses.** This budget would use up all of our reserves in FY22, leaving us without any reserves for future years. While we understand using some reserves for one-time expenses, and at the end when we get down to very hard choices, we don't understand using up all of our reserves for operating expenses to balance the budget. Reserves should be saved for extenuating circumstances.
  - While we don't yet know how much we will be allocated under the American Recovery Act, we recommend using those funds to replace the reserves in the current budget, so that they can largely be saved for the challenging years ahead of us.
- **We should not automatically reinstate all FY21 reductions (or create that assumption going forward).** Given the budget gaps, we should have been more deliberate about what reductions to reinstate from the FY21 budget and what reductions to make permanent, and we should learn our lesson going forward. Continuing to make one year cuts that are reinstated at the beginning of the next year's budget process will create a yo-yo budget cycle that will be hard to get out of. Going forward, budget cuts should be presumed to be permanent unless they are specified to be one-year cost deferments.
- **We need to continue to negotiate with the County, but we can't count on the County closing the whole gap.** Per comments above, APS should be working closely with the County to negotiate for additional funds given the importance of our school system to the attractiveness of Arlington County, and our continued growth. The sooner and more serious those conversations are, the better. However, we can not count on them funding our entire budget gap - our gap is far larger than a tax increase can solve, and an increase in our allocation would require cutting County services elsewhere, which would require difficult tradeoffs. We need to make hard choices to show the County that we are doing everything that we can to bring them to the table.

## Input on Revenue

Given the size of the revenue/expense growth mismatch projected in the draft FY22 budget, we recognize that our ideas below will not be sufficient to close the gap. That said, we do believe that they are worth pursuing given the size and magnitude of the cuts proposed in this budget and those that will be required in the future. There is no easy path to get to a balanced budget and all additional revenue will be needed to preserve as many of the programs for our students as possible in the years ahead.

- **School Board should continue its conversation with the County** - Per our comments above, we strongly encourage the School Board to continue to actively pursue options with the County to allocate additional revenue or revenue sources to the schools long term, but also encourage the Board not to count on such funds until they are allocated.
  - For example, one big idea is if the County is considering a flat tax, APS should negotiate for an additional set aside.
  - On the smaller side, could we negotiate additional or better revenue/cost sharing arrangements with the County for shared assets like the Community Centers, sports fields, playground, pools, Planetarium, etc.
- **Budget should make better use of fee revenue** - School Board guidance encouraged the Superintendent to explore increases in revenue, including a review of all APS fees, but there are few fee increases in this budget. We strongly encourage the School Board to look at what other districts like Fairfax are doing and explore adopting a broader set of income-based fees, charged on a sliding scale for equity.
  - Specific areas to explore include fees to participate in all non-academic activities like sports, music, arts, and clubs. We encourage the Superintendent to evaluate fees to offset many of the proposed cuts to athletics, and to the Middle School athletics and academic extracurricular programs in particular, in the current budget. But we also believe that fees should be appropriate to the sport or activity (e.g., fees should be higher for sports like football and crew, lower for ultimate freebee) and we should be careful to look at overall fee levels.
  - We also propose APS consider the addition of a fee for transportation to options schools for those families who choose to attend an option school in lieu of going to a neighborhood school, if the analysis around options schools we propose above reveals that transporting students to options schools is more expensive than transporting students to neighborhood schools.
  - APS should have a standard fee structure for programs for which there is a fee, to maximize revenue - e.g., the fee structure for the Montessori program is capped at family income of \$200K+ while that for the Extended Day program is capped at \$86K. Thus, we are leaving money on the table for the Extended Day program.
  - We should consider adding back fees for AP tests, SAT/PSAT.
  - We should consider increasing rental fees as identified on pages 502-505 20-40%.
  - We should evaluate Aquatics fees to ensure that the pools make, rather than lose, money - enough to cover both operating and capital expenses.

- What other fees can be re-examined? What other fees can be added? We should go line by line and look at what is reasonable for every fee line item in the budget.
- **School Board should seek local commercial partnerships** for grants and sponsorships of specific activities of value to the community - e.g.,
  - Approach Amazon for a multi-year STEM grant to fund things like TJHSST tuition, the Planetarium, the Outdoor Lab, investments in the Science Curriculum, support for our Technology initiatives (especially recent equity focused expansions), etc. Our first reaction is to save items on the cut list, but we should think creatively and expansively here.
  - Cultivate local commercial sponsorships for middle school events, thus saving Middle School Athletic and Academic Stipends on the Tier 1 cut list, and removing Middle School Athletic Admission Fees from Tier 3.
  - Identify local businesses large and small who may want to give back to the community and match their interests with our needs.
  - A great example of what we could accomplish is the funding the County has secured from the business community for the Long Branch Aquatics Center, which will defray public cost.
  - Local sponsorships may also be available for sports teams, academic competitions, etc.
- **Support Families with Free and Reduced Lunch Applications** - It sounds like we may be leaving a non-trivial amount of Title I funding on the table, which would also really help local families. Many older children do not submit their F&RL applications due to the stigma of receiving F&RL, even when their younger siblings are receiving it. These older teens can run up a sizable lunch debt, which they are unable to cover. If we helped them and their families with the applications, by identifying them and more proactively helping them complete the application for all children in the family, we would be both helping the families and helping APS.

### **Input on Expenses**

The group is conscious of the need for significant reductions to the budget, given the funding gap, even with the money allocated to APS in the American Recovery Act. However, the group does believe there are some items in Tiers I and II that should be reconsidered, in favor of other items, which we have proposed below.

Overall, as stated earlier in this report, the group feels that we are using too many reserves to close the budget gap. The group does not support using up all available reserves with even larger budget deficits expected in years ahead. Plus, using one-time funds to fund on-going expenses just kicks the can down the road a year and simply delays our longer-term issues.

While we all wish there were a couple of big, easy answers, we recognize that there are unlikely to be any. Cutting all options programs could be a big answer (we don't have the data, it is simply an example), but it would not be easy, nor would simply saying that we have to change the staff/student ratio (although we do propose making some change to that below).

Unfortunately, this budget didn't study the larger cost levers. Therefore, we weigh in on what the budget did offer, which is a series of smaller expenses.

Note that we are not asking to save everything on our list below. In some we are asking if the costs can be offset by fees, preserved but at a lower cost, phased-in over time, or potentially traded off with another expense in the budget. The amounts included are totals from the budget, not the total amount we propose to save.

### **Tier 1 Cut Considerations**

- *Eliminate Funding for Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology Tuition (\$290K)* – While some of the committee support this reduction, others do not, and there has been strong public commentary from a segment of our community against this change. Committee members, and the community who oppose this cut feel that there is not an equivalent pathway for these students in Arlington and that we should fund this option either until APS has created one, or indefinitely as the current option is less expensive than creating a whole new program.
- *Eliminate the Summer School Coordinator and Assistant and Reductions in Summer School Accounts. And Summer School Staffing. (\$430K)* - There were mixed feelings on summer school reductions. On one hand, the committee recognizes the importance of summer school given the potential learning loss/stagnation experienced over the last year by some of our students for whom online learning was not an adequate substitute. On the other hand, we understand that current DT&L staff are stepping in to fill this gap given the importance of summer school this year. We recognize that summer school is very important for summer 2021 but that program will be planned and underway before these three staff members are funded. Therefore, we may have a mismatch between an immediate need this year, and a long-term budget expense beginning after the period of critical need. Three new positions seems like a lot of additional staffing. Looking ahead to next year (FY23 and beyond), could we fund the mandatory summer school program through fees charged on students electing and taking enrichment programs? Should the responsibilities of the DT&L staff leading the summer school work this year be more permanently reevaluated? We ask the Board to think creatively here to ensure we have a plan to serve the students who need summer school to make up for learning loss after a difficult year without adding multiple positions to the budget indefinitely.
- *Middle School Academic Stipend (\$200K)* - There were mixed feelings on this cut, with some concerned that it would deny Middle School students the opportunity to participate in certain activities like MathCounts or Science Fairs. Could we add fees here to cover these programs? Could we find local sponsors?
- *Middle School Athletic Stipend (\$300K)* - Can this be saved with additional fees for sports participation? See below for the importance of physical activity and sports to student well being. Could we find local sponsors?
- *DEI Office Professional Services (\$45K)* - These costs were not well broken down in the section introducing them, but an equity audit may be a valuable place to start, and was estimated to cost \$45K. This is a one-time cost and is the type of expense appropriate for reserve funding.

- *Athletic Coach Stipends (\$10k)* - These funds pay stipends that support student participation in no-cut sports thus providing more structured activities to more students. Without them the sports will need to implement cuts thereby reducing the number of students who can participate. Physical health of our students is vital. We need to find more ways to get them active, not cut opportunities. There is tons of scientific research that correlates athletics to education performance, social and psychological health and ultimately to active & successful citizenship. It also reduces youth behavior risks. Can this be saved with an increase in fees or local sponsorship?
- *Reduce Instructional Software Adobe Creative Suite in Information Services Budget (\$90K)* - Our student representative on BAC flagged this cut as a concern because students use this software for projects. But we should be able to identify a more cost effective alternative given all of today's online technology offerings. At least, we could negotiate a more limited license for the small set of students who use it, at a much lower cost.

## **Tier 2 Cut Considerations**

- *Elimination of Activity and Late Busses (\$80K)* – Many on the committee flagged this as an equity issue and suggested that we instead evaluate the program for efficiencies rather than eliminate it entirely.
- *No Additional Coaches: No-Cut Sports (\$20k)* - This reduction would limit student participation and/or could impact safety if there are not enough coaches to monitor rosters that exceed the coach to student ratio. Physical health of our students is vital. We need to find more ways to get them active, not cut opportunities. There is gobs of scientific research that correlates athletics to education performance, social and psychological health and ultimately to active & successful citizenship. It also reduces youth behavior risks. Can this be funded through additional fees?
- *Outdoor Lab (\$650K)*– This program has strong local support and committee support. This is a unique asset that supports STEM and environmental education, and increases equity as we have many children in Arlington who don't have as much access to this type of learning environment without the Outdoor Lab. But we should also find a longer-term funding solution so that it does not end up on the list of cuts every year. (See suggestion in revenue section to find a local sponsor). Could we negotiate to share the fees/time with another County to reduce the cost?
- *Planetarium Director - Delay Funding for One Year (\$200K)* – There are mixed feelings about this one. If we receive the \$20M from Congress, then it is easier to fund this position. We have a unique educational asset in Arlington which supports STEM education for all students and we are letting it sit idle. However, there are some that think the currently staffed teaching position is sufficient for next year, especially since we do not yet know if people will feel safe to be packed into a small confined space beginning in September. Or, could it be run by a combined Director/Teacher? Either way, we should look for a multi-year local sponsorship so this does not end up on the cut list annually, with the help of the Friends of the Planetarium. (See sponsorship idea in the Revenue section.) There is also a suggestion that we should sell it off to a private entity that will be able to run it more efficiently (although the danger there exists that it



will be closed), or ask the County to take it on. If it is not re-opened in the FY22 school year, then the funds allocated for the projector (\$56,600) should be evaluated as well.

### **Tier 3 Cut Considerations**

This tier should include actual cuts, not just the use of reserves. As per comments above, we are overusing reserves to balance the budget, which will leave us without any cushion for another emergency. And if 2020 taught us anything, it was to expect the unexpected.

### **Tier 4 Cut Considerations**

The committee thinks that these Tier 4 cuts should be considered. In addition, any positions that were deferred last year, which we have been operating without, should be seriously considered for continued deferral.

- *Reduce Aquatics Part Time Hourly* (\$80K+) - The committee had mixed feelings on this one as it is unclear if the pools are planned to operate at a loss next year. There are some strong feelings that the pools should not operate at a loss since that loss will need to be offset by a reduction elsewhere in the APS budget which will impact students. (Feedback from the Aquatics Committee: Aquatics management has plans to achieve this, has implemented new revenue and utilization plans during covid, and has solid plans to do more when capacity constraints of covid are removed. So the Aquatics Committee would agree with the recommendation on p. 164 to evaluate operational innovations from the pandemic period and apply them going forward.)
- *Eliminate Canvas and Transition to Other Systems* (\$200K) - While we completely understand sunk costs and investment, Canvas is an expensive system and many students are adamant that Google Classroom is far superior to Canvas. We recommend a small group of teachers and students be tasked to study this decision. We should not stick with a large expensive LMS system just because “we already bought it”. After that study, this may likely move up the list next year.

### **Other Reductions for Consideration**

While the committee encourages the Board to rethink a number of the proposed cuts above, and to use less of our reserves, we did find a number of other costs in the budget which we think are worthy of consideration.

- *Class Size Increases* – In elementary school, the budget only proposes an increase in Kindergarten. In High School, the budget proposes an increase of 0.5 students/class. The budget includes no increase in Middle School. Given the size of our deficit, we should be considering at least an increase of 1 student per class K-12 (including at HB Woodlawn). These savings add up, and they are structural. At least one committee member thinks that we should be adding 2-3 students per class, across the county, in an equitable manner.
  - We should be very transparent about our ratios compared to Fairfax and other neighboring districts. While our target class sizes and student/teacher ratios are

higher than some of our neighboring districts, they are lower than Fairfax across the board. Fairfax is a large, diverse, and well-respected neighboring district, and given budget gaps, we may need to follow their lead on these ratios to balance budgets. (For districts in which class sizes or student/teacher ratios are lower, we should benchmark our administrative, school, teacher, and other ratios/costs to understand our respective investment choices.)

- The 2019-20 Class Size Report also recently showed that in 2017-2019 actual class sizes were well below the recommended maximum class size, in aggregate, across the County, across all grade levels, K-5, in all years (see chart at end of report). 2020 is expected to follow the same pattern, in aggregate, given the drop in enrollment. This shows us that we have room to slow teacher hiring even before we increase class size, and presents us with a range of options.
  - Option 1: Freeze hiring until class size catches up with the recommended maximum. (Hiring for the Reed school only after class size has been adjusted across the County and “excess” teachers at other schools have been reassigned to Reed.)
  - Option 2: Freeze hiring, but allow schools with an achievement gap to selectively hire to ensure classes remain smaller in those schools.
  - Similarly, if we increase class sizes, we could also use this opportunity to adjust planning factors to take into consideration a school’s achievement gap with some schools increasing class size more than others, based on that formula (along the lines of Mr. Goldstein’s Equitable Funding Formula project).
- *Leadership reorganization* (\$110K) – While we largely support Dr. Duran putting together the leadership team he needs to run APS as a world class school system, we believe that he should plan for a leadership reorganization that is cost neutral. If he can not find another head to eliminate for his extra position, then two people on the executive leadership team should share an assistant. There are many people who run large private sector organizations of similar and greater size and complexity who do. (We did have at least one view on the committee that we should have saved the money from the DT&L positions eliminated and not proposed an expensive reorganization this year, especially when expenses like the ELA Resource Adoption are being spread over multiple years, and we are delaying even relatively small investment in math curricular resources for another year.)
- *Legal office* - (\$140K) - The original intent of creating in-house counsel was to save money. We should not now be staffing up a whole office which is projected to cost more than continuing to outsource. The additional cost needed to set up an in-house counsel office should be removed from the FY22 budget. It should be reconsidered only when it saves us money. We should also attempt to put a cap on legal fees. While we know this can be difficult due to unforeseen issues, putting a cap on the expenses will lead to everyone being more judicious about the use of outside counsel time.
- *Travel dollars across all budgets* (\$TBD) - Why are we adding travel to any budget right now? Any and all money allocated to travel throughout the budget in FY22 should be

removed. People in every sector all around the country have learned to do their jobs, gather for professional development, and do almost anything they used to travel to do, virtually. There's almost no reason for anyone to travel right now.

- *Transportation* – This is a large expense and we need to start getting ahead of it. The committee recommends that the Board ask the Superintendent to develop plans to scale back or slow down growth in bus use, taking input from the ACTC which has put forward a number of suggestions this year. E.g.,
  - *Bus replacement* (\$1M) - Bus replacement planned for this year may be premature given that busses traveled a fraction of planned miles over the past year, so the replacement schedule may be able to be pushed a year. It should at least be considered. (p. 443)
  - *Make use of walk zones* - Students living in the walk zone neighborhood schools be assigned to that neighborhood school, as soon as possible, rather than being assigned to a school for which they are entitled to bus service. Boundary adjustments to implement these types of moves have been uneven, but assigning all walk zone families to the neighborhood school to which they can walk should be evenly implemented across the county. This should have happened in the boundary process this year given the looming budget issue. We should start this reassignment work as soon as possible.
- *Postpone school moves/openings* (\$3-4M) - With enrollment down, we should reconsider whether to go ahead with all of the planned school openings and moves given overall expense.
- *Rethink technology choices*
  - *Lease Payments for Technology Purchases* (\$1.89M) - Shift from more expensive Apple Macbooks to less expensive Dell Latitude (educational model used by Fairfax) for longer-term technology savings (p. 78)
  - *Instructional Application Analyst* (\$130K) - Someone is doing this job now. If we can not afford to pay everyone we have on staff today, we can not afford to hire more people. (p. 78)
  - *Additional Technicians* (\$370K) - Do we really need four new positions next year? These should be phased in, if they are not already. (p. 78)
  - *Additional cell phones for DT&L staff* (\$125K) - Most people should be using their own cell phones, and receiving a small reimbursement to defray a fraction of the cost. It is very expensive and unnecessary to supply a large number of people with separate high end smartphones for their job. Very few companies do this anymore and those who do have a very specific reason that people need a separate phone to do their jobs. It sounds like it is time to rethink our policy based on cost/benefit. How much is this whole program costing us?
- *Areas for renegotiation*
  - *County vehicle maintenance fees* - We pay a per vehicle fee for maintenance to the county which is going up by \$326K while the total increase in funding from the county is going up \$300K in the budget (although Leslie has said that is increasing to \$600K). This one sounds like it should be renegotiated so that we

- are not giving back all or even half of our increase to them in bus maintenance fees. (p. 443)
- The lease on the Syphax Center went up by another \$160K. With commercial real estate prices in flux given the pandemic, this is another one that sounds ready for renegotiation.
  - This is a good time to review and reevaluate all contractual obligations, if we have not done so already.
  - *Narrow curriculum offerings* - Rethink curriculum choices that are very expensive and impact only a smaller number of students - e.g.,
    - Given the overall expense of the program, we recommend reconsidering offering American Sign Language as a World Language. We could phase out the program, to enable existing students to finish their course of study, but this should reduce the ASL interpreter expense and save the overall expense. (\$790K) (p. 65)
    - Are there other expensive courses with small enrollment like this? Have we done an analysis of the cost per student?
  - *Compensation Study* (\$200K) - We are planning to spend another \$200K on a compensation study? What will we get in this part? Is it worth \$200K?
  - *Budget Study* (\$375K) - A budget study could be very valuable and much needed if it provides concrete benchmarks and specific ideas to help us close the budget gap in coming years, but we should make sure we are very clear about what we are studying and be sure that the unusual data of the last two years will not prevent us from reaching our goals in FY22 before we allocate and spend this money. (p. 29 and p. 418)
  - *Other new positions* - We should rethink all new positions through the lens of a \$42M budget gap in which we have not given our teachers the raises they are expecting in recent years and we do not know how we are going to fund our budget gaps.
    - *Pre-K assistants* (\$970K) (p. 237). These are increasing from 1 to 2 per class. Given the expense, we recommend re-evaluating this program. We would want to see well over \$1M of benefit given the expense of this decision. While this is a Tier 2 cut, we believe that this is not a necessary addition to the budget given the long-term deficits and should be avoided.
    - *Student behavior and climate coordinator* (\$130K) - Is there another position we can repurpose if this one is critical? We could not add it without a replacement position. (p. 86)
    - *Data coordinators* (\$130k + \$130K = \$260K) - Recommend 0.5 data coordinator be assigned to Planning and Evaluation, with 0.5 coordinator remaining with the Department of Teaching and Learning. Or better yet, can we repurpose an assistant head to be a data analyst head? Many private sector companies are doing this. (p. 364)
    - *Payroll account specialists* (\$X) (asked for 2, start with 1). This year was unusual and will not likely be repeated. Can we spread this out and hire one this year and reevaluate the need for the second. We should look forward, not backward.
  - *Ed Center furniture and technology* (\$750K) - When is the Ed Center coming online? Is this needed in the FY22 budget?

- *Eliminate APS vehicles for technicians* (\$70K) - Reimburse for mileage instead, like the private sector.
- *Language Arts Adoption* (\$400K) - Should we wait on data coming in from the pilot reading and writing tests and early expansion of their use before going through a larger Language Arts Resource Adoption Process?
- *Are there departments or staff that can be combined to reduce overhead and increase efficiency?*
  - Can Safety and Risk Management be combined with Safety, Security, Risk, and Emergency Management?
  - Consider combining Office of Student Services and Special Education (page 390) with Office of Special Education (p. 379)
  - Consolidate the psychologists between student services and special ed to ensure efficient utilization - This suggestion is for efficiency, to ensure that future requests are coordinated and that our psychologists are as well utilized as possible, given their importance.
  - Can Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Equity and Excellence offices be combined? (Have they been?)
  - Review the DT&L structure for efficiency - an observation was made about the number of offices and potential for bureaucracy (e.g., Office of Assessment, Career, Technical and Adult Education, Office of Curriculum and Instruction, Office of English Learners, Gifted Services, Offices of Special Education, etc.)

### **Other Recommendations and Considerations**

- We have concerns about the declining performance in the last several years of English Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Economically Disadvantaged Students and the want to ensure we are sufficiently focused on those groups in this needs based budget to close these performance gaps.
- With almost 20% of APS students not meeting grade level performance, even before Covid-19, we ask for greater focus on quality instruction, with testing data used to target staff, as well as students, for intervention. Professional development should be focused on instruction and ensuring all students meet grade level performance.
- We think we should consider an online High School program and whether it can save cost in the longer term. There appears to be interest, and a draft proposal has been written.
- We recommend consideration be given to how the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Office can most effectively be integrated into the budget formulation process. We recommend significant coordination with Planning and Evaluation to identify outcome disparities.
- We recommend an evaluation of the option school programs, especially from a diversity perspective with a focus on the following:
  - Determine whether the benefits offset the cost.
  - Could the money be better spent improving outcomes at neighborhood schools?
  - Examine the demographics and physical locations from which the schools draw their student populations.

- Identify the areas and demographics in which these schools outperform neighborhood schools.
- We ask that the newly proposed pooled PTA fund be clearly identified - When alternative methods of funding are recommended (as on p. 108), replace "PTA" with verbiage that clearly indicates the APS-wide pooled PTA fund.
- We suggest the Board consider additional consolidation of the Arlington Career Center and Arlington Tech, and Arlington Community High School and Langston Continuing Ed Program.

\*From the Class Size Report, referenced above:

	<b>K</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Recommended Maximum</b>	24	24	26	26	27	27
<b>2017</b>	21.92	20.03	21.51	21.61	22.55	22.51
<b>2018</b>	21.30	20.80	20.70	22.20	22.30	22.60
<b>2019</b>	20.6	21.1	21	21.4	21.8	23.4