Superintendent Presents Proposed FY18 Budget

Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) Superintendent Dr. Eric Williams presented his Proposed Fiscal Year 2018 Budget to the School Board on Thursday, January 12th, at the LCPS Administrative Offices in Ashburn.

The superintendent-proposed budget represents an increase of $93.6 million (9.1 percent) from the current budget. The current budget is $1.030 billion. The proposed budget $1.124 billion.

“Our Vision 20/20 strategic plan reflects our aspirations. It reflects how we want to do an even better job empowering our students to make meaningful contributions to the world,” Williams told the School Board. “This budget directly relates to the goals and actions of our Vision 20/20 strategic plan.”

Williams cited maintaining class sizes, increasing teacher compensation, expanding full-day kindergarten and enhancing mental health services for high school students as examples of expenditures directly related to the Vision 20/20 strategic plan.

Williams said the proposed budget again answers the question “What might we do differently?”

“We’ve made some significant reallocations that, when combined with limited additional resources, allow our students to achieve even more.”

The superintendent said there are several factors driving the proposed budget:

**Enrollment Growth**

Increases relating to enrollment growth total $32.3 million, including $25.8 million for 308 new positions and $6.5 million of operating and maintenance expenses.

LCPS continues to experience more student growth than any other Virginia school division with 2,957 additional students expected in August.
**Compensation**

The proposal includes $38.7 million for increases relating to salaries and benefits. Funding for compensation includes several components:

- $14.9 million to provide salary step increases that average 2.2 percent;
- $0.5 million to provide a nominal, one-time payment to employees at the top of the salary scale not eligible for a step increase;
- $10.3 million to increase the competitiveness of the teacher salary schedule as part of efforts to retain and attract excellent teachers for every student;
- $2.3 million to extend the hours of bus drivers and improve pay for bus drivers as part of efforts to fill vacant bus driver positions; and
- $2.4 million to support the continued review of the competitiveness of compensation of non-teaching positions, leading to compensation adjustments for some positions reviewed. The Fiscal Year 2018 review would emphasize the lowest-paid positions, such as custodian, cafeteria worker and teacher assistant.

In terms of benefits, the proposed budget includes $1.4 million to pay for the employer portion of a 2 percent health insurance premium increase, as well as $7.6 million for state-mandated contributions to the employee retirement system.

**Enhancements, Restorations, Reallocations**

Expenditures relating to enhancements include $8.9 million to expand full-day kindergarten to create capacity for 82 percent of kindergarten students to attend full-day kindergarten. Enhancements also include $4.3 million to improve standards for staffing schools, primarily relating to providing mental health services for high school students.

The proposed budget provides $2.9 million to partially restore funds cut from line items in previous years due to funding limitations. This includes a $2 million partial restoration to the line item that funds textbooks and digital resources, as well as the addition of three middle school deans. This would return staffing to one dean per grade level in each middle school.

As part of their strategic approach to the budget proposal, LCPS staff members considered whether any current funds could be reallocated to provide greater benefits for students. Under the proposed budget, funds are reallocated for a cost avoidance of $5.5 million.
Other Operations & Maintenance

The proposed operating budget also includes $10 million of other increases relating to Operations and Maintenance, including funds for 36 buses, replacement computers, replacement security radios, and replacement security cameras.

Staffing

The proposed budget funds 11,105.8 employees. This reflects an increase of 459.4 employees (4.3 percent) over the current budget, which funds 10,646.4 employees.

Other Highlights

The proposed budget would also take the following steps:

- Increases personalization of learning with digital resources and expanded use of measures to assess growth in student learning;
- Enhances literacy instruction for special needs students through specialized reading instruction for students and professional development for staff;
- Reallocates funds to expand mental health services for high school students by creating unified support teams comprised of psychologists, social workers, school counselors and student assistance specialists; and
- Expands the provision of additional resources to schools to better meet the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and special education students.

Cost Per Pupil

If fully funded, the Superintendent’s Proposed Fiscal Year 2018 Budget would result in an average cost per pupil of $13,824. Adjusted for inflation, the cost per pupil is 7.3 percent ($930) lower than the 2008-2009 school year. In comparison with neighboring school divisions, LCPS would remain near the bottom in per pupil expenditures.

Revenue

Based on the Governor’s Introduced Budget, the Superintendent’s Proposed Fiscal Year 2018 Budget assumes an increase of $23.2 million, most of which is related to rising enrollment.
The proposed budget reflects a recommended increase in the County transfer to the schools of $64.5 million, an increase of 9.3 percent.

A gap exists between the county transfer recommended by the superintendent and the county transfer reflected in the fiscal guidance provided by the Board of Supervisors to the county administrator. Adjusting for the expenditure and revenue information included in the proposed budget, the gap relating to the anticipated County transfer is $6.3 million to $11.3 million. This gap is significantly smaller than the comparable gap in January 2015, when the School Board’s requested County transfer was fully funded by the Board of Supervisors.