

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 29 : FOLLOW-UP RESPONSES TO JOINT CITY COUNCIL/SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION

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Several questions arose at the joint work session with the School Board on March 28, 2007. Attached please find responses from the Schools to thirteen questions posed by Council members. These responses were e-mailed directly to Council members by Superintendent Perry on March 30, 2007.

Attachment

**City/Schools Budget Work Session  
March 28, 2007  
Questions Requiring Follow-up**

- 1) How did you start off with the \$2.5 million decline in beginning balance? Please provide more details on the \$3.5 million decline in revenue. (Mayor Euille)**

The decline in revenue is explained in the chart on page 5 of the 3-28-07 responses to City Council budget questions. Beginning balance declined because less money was left in the budget at the end of FY 2006. Declines in state and local revenues are shown in detail on page D-44 of the FY 2008 approved budget. The largest decrease is in sales tax receipts, which will drop \$689,931, followed by basic aid, with a decrease of \$114,146. Because of increases in other state revenue areas, the net change in state revenues is a decrease of \$640,572.

- 2) What is the formula for determining the number of support staff at each school? Why are there large differences in the number of support staff from school to school? Please explain how you determine the number of custodians and paraprofessionals at each school. (Mayor Euille)**

The table on the following page compares three elementary schools with different educational programs but similar enrollment and facility size. Samuel Tucker is also shown for comparative purposes.

- Samuel Tucker offers a modified school calendar program and basic special education services.
- John Adams offers the dual language program and extensive special education and special education preschool services.
- Mount Vernon offers the modified school calendar, the dual language program, basic special education, and special education preschool services.

Paraprofessionals are required in kindergarten and special education self-contained (level 2) classrooms, per state Standards of Quality and special education staffing standards. Custodians are staffed based on the industry-wide standard of 20,000 to 22,000 square feet per custodian, with adjustments made to account for specific building use considerations.

As the data show, the main source of difference in support staffing occurs in special education program staffing. The staffing of these positions is driven by special education membership at the school and the state requirements.

	Samuel Tucker	John Adams	Mount Vernon
Projected 2008 Enrollment	596	476	484
Area/Bldg Square Feet	80,180	137,350	112,730
<b>Paraprofessionals:</b>			
<b>General Education</b>			
Kindergarten	6.0	5.0	5.0
Dual Language Support		1.0	2.0
<b>General Education Subtotal:</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>7.0</b>
<b>Special Education</b>			
Specific Learning Disabilities	3.0	3.0	4.0
Autism		2.0	
Developmentally Delayed		1.0	1.0
Mental Retardation		4.0	1.0
Preschool		6.0	0.5
<b>Special Education Subtotal:</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Paraprofessionals Subtotal:</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>13.5</b>
<b>Technical Support Assistant:</b>			
Computer Lab	1.0	1.0	1.0
Bilingual Parent Liaison			1.0
<b>Technical Support Assistant Subtotal:</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Main Office/Library Support:</b>			
Administrative Assistant	1.0	1.0	1.0
Support Specialist	1.0	1.0	0.5
Assistant to Intersession Coordinator*	1.0		
Registrar	1.0	1.0	1.0
Library Media Assistant	1.0	1.0	1.0
<b>Main Office/Library Support Subtotal:</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Cafeteria Hostess</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Facilities:</b>			
Building Engineer & Head Custodian	2.0	2.0	2.0
Full-time & Part-time Custodians	2.6	4.6	4.8
<b>Facilities Subtotal:</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.8</b>
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>26.8</b>

\* Support Specialist paid through Differentiated Resources

**3) Are there long range plans for expanding Literacy for the 21st Century? (Councilwoman Pepper)**

Yes. Literacy is the most important tool, at all ages and across all disciplines, for increasing academic achievement. All teachers at all levels and in all content areas should help students to be highly accomplished readers and writers. However, traditional teacher training often does not provide the skills necessary for being a successful teacher of reading.

Achieve 3000 and Read 180, software that provides high-interest differentiated reading materials, have been piloted successfully at T.C. Williams and at Jefferson-Houston for the entire year during 2006-07. Both programs have proven records of success in other school divisions.

Data show that we have made extraordinary progress in reading scores at the elementary level since 2000:

3<sup>rd</sup> grade: 55% to 79%  
 5<sup>th</sup> grade: 64% to 85%.

We have also made progress at the secondary level, but much less:

8<sup>th</sup> grade: 57% to 69%  
 High school: 67% to 78%

The scores begin to level off at the upper grades. These scores are the average for all students, and they are much lower for minority students, for ESL students, and for special education students. (Please note the SOL charts in the Frequently Asked Questions for more detail.) Special focus and attention needs to be directed to our populations of students who are our lowest performing.

In 2007-08, students in grades 9-12 and at Jefferson-Houston will continue to use the materials they piloted this year. Special education and ESL teachers will have the support of literacy coaches. Staff development will be initiated to train our reading teachers to be coaches so that the program can spread throughout all grade levels in all schools. When funds become available in future years, we hope to make Read 180 available in all of our elementary schools. The program will be expanded based on need determined by data.

- 4) Please provide a detailed list of the items in the mandatory and essential groups shown in the slides. Can you show us how the items on the reduction list crosswalk to your essential items? (Councilwoman Pepper, Councilmember Lovain, Vice-Mayor MacDonald)

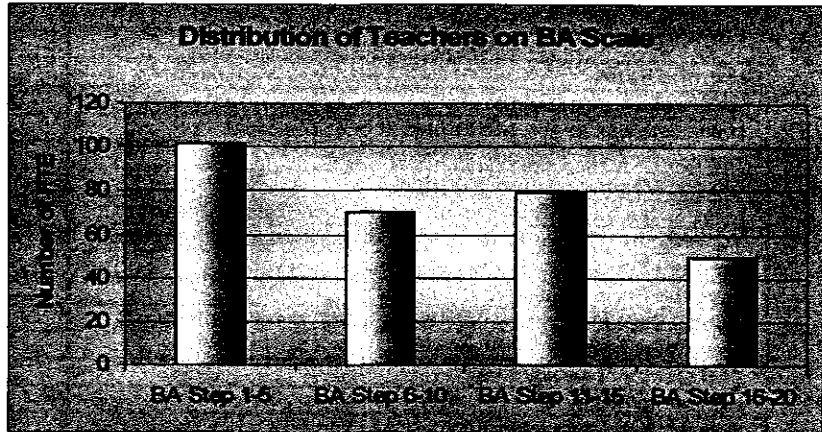
The tables below and on the following page show the mandatory and essential expenditures. Items on the Superintendent's reduction options are shown in the last two columns.

Description	Cost	FTE	Items on Supt's reduction list
<b>Mandatory Items</b>			
VRS Rate Increase	\$1,124,474		
Staffing Reserve	\$1,040,705		
Increased Enrollment in health and dental benefit plans	\$921,661		
Operating Cost Increases	\$407,000		
Use external contractor for TC custodial work	\$690,819	2.5	
Elementary Computer Replenishment	\$466,800		
Athletic Contingency for use of non-ACPS facilities	\$10,000		
Tuition for ACPS Special Education Students	\$326,904		
Extended School Year costs at ACPS	\$13,975		
School health office equipment	\$3,520		
Plant operation and maintenance cost increases	\$140,000		
T.C. Williams Moving Contingency Fund	\$290,000		
Replace Critical Servers	\$38,000		
Renew Critical software licenses	\$82,635		
Transportation for homeless and special education students:	\$100,000		
<b>Total, Mandatory Items</b>	<b>\$5,656,493</b>	<b>2.5</b>	

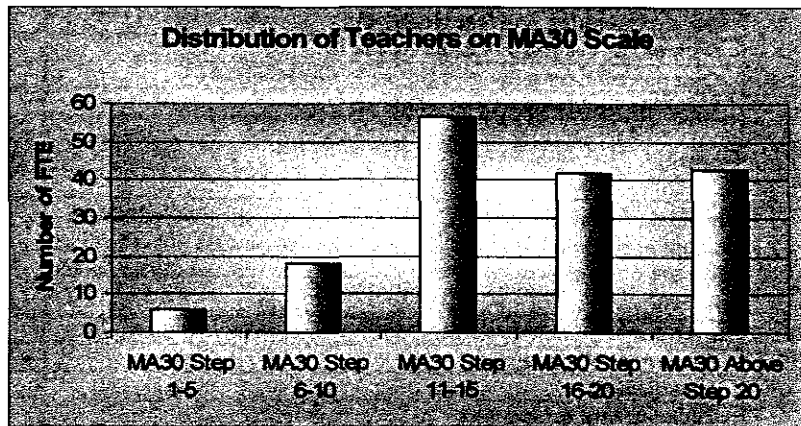
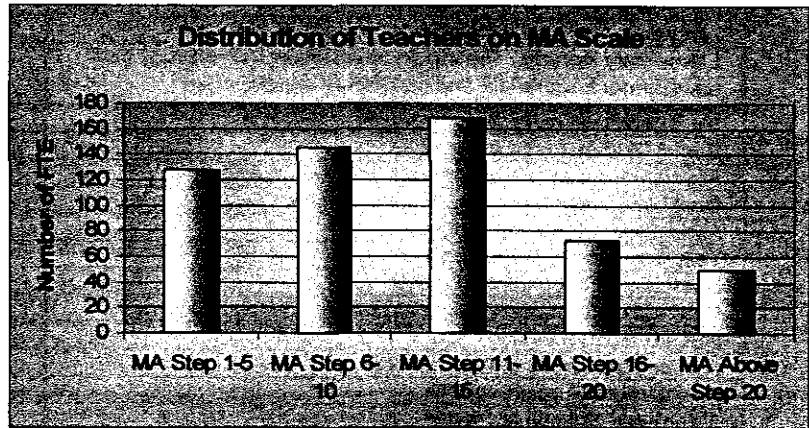
Description	Cost	FTE	Items on Supt's reduction list	
<b>Essential Items</b>				
Salary scale placeholder	\$628,000			
Hold-harmless share, health benefit cost increases	\$904,837			
Homework Club Stipends at GM and DM	\$21,200		\$21,200	
George Mason Assistant Principal	\$58,649	0.5	\$58,649	0.5
Lyles-Crouch ES: Staff Development on Core Knowledge	\$2,500			
TC Williams: Career & Technical Education teacher and Social	\$159,377	2.0	\$64,356	1.0
Increase Funding for Legal Services	\$138,325			
Increase Project Discovery Funding	\$25,000			
School Board: Increase consultant funds, purchase software, board development	\$49,700		\$49,700	0.0
21st Century Literacy Skills	\$690,848	4.0	\$227,137	4.0
Increasing Rigor	\$117,766			
Improving Science Instruction	\$52,680			
Refurbishment of 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Kits	\$31,393			
Language Arts staff development - Word Study	\$84,000			
Elementary literacy: Testing and evaluation; Word Study staff development; materials and curriculum development	\$51,700			
Math hands-on materials	\$26,198			
Social Studies maps and globes	\$27,000			
Physical Education Equipment & curriculum writing	\$22,920			
Dual Language Curriculum Writing Project	\$2,640			
Assessment & testing materials	\$27,000			
Television Studio Replacement Items	\$18,000			
Instructional Technology Trainer	\$83,665	1.0		
Phase III of Blackboard implementation: train the trainers	\$12,639			
ESL curriculum writing	\$10,800			
Human Resources service awards	\$10,000			
Recruitment/Support activities	\$5,000			
Automated Substitute Payroll	\$17,000			
ACPS TV equipment	\$10,700			
Server Upgrades and Replacements	\$127,000			
Support for Wireless Access Points	\$35,000			
Outsourced Computer and Network maintenance	\$41,006			
Uniforms for transportation staff	\$5,000			
<b>Subtotal, Essential Items</b>	<b>\$3,497,543</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>\$421,042</b>	<b>5.5</b>
The items below are part of the \$1.0 Million department reductions, so appear on both the reduction and the addition side of the budget. They are not available for further reduction, as they would be double counted.				
21st Century Literacy Skills: Reading Intervention Program	\$20,000			
Fingerprint Machine	\$13,000			
Advertising	\$10,000			
Citrix Servers & Licenses	\$72,000			
<b>Grand Total, Essential Items</b>	<b>\$3,612,543</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>\$421,042</b>	<b>5.5</b>

5) How many teachers are at each step on the salary scale? How many are at the steps that compare favorably or unfavorably with the surrounding jurisdictions? (Councilman Smedberg)

The charts to the right show the distribution of salary steps for ACPS teachers paid through the operating budget on the three teacher salary scales. As the chart shows, the majority of our teachers are on the MA scale, with about 70% on the MA or MA30 salary scale.



The City Council FY 2008 Budget Questions, response 1, compares the three salary scales at three different steps with the surrounding jurisdictions. At this time, we do not know how many teachers will be hired at the step 1 level for the three salary scales, as step 1 teachers are new to the school division. The table below shows the projected number of teachers we have at Step 5 and the maximum amount.



Scale	FTEs at Step 5	FTEs at Max Amount
BA	24.87	20.64
MA	30.80	64.00
MA30	1.00	47.50

**6) Do we have information on how many teachers we are losing and why? What percentage of teachers does this represent? (Councilman Gaines)**

The chart below shows the results of exit interviews with teachers leaving during FY 2005 and FY 2006. The top reasons in each year were: 1) "resign for personal reasons" and 2) resign for relocation" reasons.

Reason for Leaving	School Year			
	04 - 05		05 - 06	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
RESIGN-PERSREAS	46	24.6%	45	24.7%
RESIGN-RELOCATE	44	23.5%	31	17.0%
RETIRE	33	17.6%	32	17.6%
RESIGN-OTHEREMP	22	11.8%	19	10.4%
NON-RENEWAL	20	10.7%	18	9.9%
TERMINATED	7	3.7%	6	3.3%
RESIGN-RETRNSCHL	6	3.2%	3	1.6%
LEAVE EXHAUSTED	4	2.1%	11	6.0%
RESIGN - FR LEAVE	2	1.1%	2	1.1%
TEMP ASSIGN ENDED	2	1.1%	6	3.3%
RESIGN-MATERNITY	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
DECEASED	0	0.0%	2	1.1%
GRANT-ENDED	0	0.0%	1	0.5%
RESIGNED	0	0.0%	4	2.2%
RETIRE-DISABLE	0	0.0%	1	0.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**7) What has worked best to reduce the achievement gap? What is planned for schools that are not making AYP or are not accredited? (Councilman Gaines)**

Strategies have varied from school to school depending on the extent of the achievement gap and the nature of the student population. The key to success, however, begins with thorough collection and analysis of student achievement data.

At Maury, top quality teachers were acquired by re-constituting the staff. Teachers were given additional duties and responsibilities. In exchange, they received a signing bonus and promise of a bonus if accreditation was achieved (which it was!) Central office administration provided weekly monitoring and oversight. The Assistant Superintendent for Federal and State Programs ensured that students at Maury received the maximum funds available for supplementary programs such as tutoring, instructional materials, reading teachers, summer enrichment, etc. Additional support staff was provided.

Differentiated resources have ensured that our schools with the largest at-risk populations and the greatest student mobility receive the funds for additional programs and staff. The Kindergarten Preparation program was piloted in the schools where data identified students with no formal pre-school and the positive results led to our expanding the program to all schools. Senior administration initiated and continue to administer K-Prep.

Tucker and Mount Vernon have a high population of ESL students, for whom summer learning loss is a significant problem. These students regress each summer. (Tucker also has a 40% mobility rate, so that many of the students who take the SOLS in May have not

been in ACPS schools for the entire year.) The modified school calendar produced an immediate increase in achievement scores at Tucker. (Refer to the evaluation of Tucker MSC on the ACPS website.) A similar evaluation will be done of the program at Mount Vernon, but participation in the intersessions and the enthusiasm of the community indicate favorable results.

Currently only two schools are not fully accredited: Jefferson-Houston and George Washington; thus, the funds allocated for middle school rigor and for literacy materials at Jefferson-Houston.

Jefferson-Houston's staff has also been re-constituted. A team of top professionals (the Deputy Superintendent, the Executive Director of Elementary Programs, Director of Student Services, curriculum specialists, social workers, and other central office administrators) meet with the Jefferson-Houston administration weekly to provide coaching and mentoring and to react immediately to identified needs. The Assistant Superintendent for Federal and State Programs acquired federal funds to begin a full-day pre-kindergarten program at Jefferson-Houston. Intensive attention and resources are being applied to ensure Jefferson-Houston's success. The School Board and Curriculum Committee receive regular updates on the progress to date.

We believe that the renewed focus on literacy and the provision of quality differentiated materials and instruction will improve scores across the board. Staff development will focus on coaching and teaching teachers to differentiate instruction to enhance rigor for all students. In all of our schools, PEP specialists, peer coaches, reading teachers, and math and science specialists have improved instruction, resulting in improved achievement.

**8) What will happen to the current TC Williams custodians who will lose their jobs as a result of the shift to an outside contractor? (Councilman Gaines)**

We have two retirements, and one full-time position that is currently vacant, so there are eight full-time (occupied) positions that are being eliminated. All eight will have full-time positions with the custodial contractor, if they choose to work for that company. This is part of the contractual agreement with SSC. The employees may also elect to transfer to another ACPS location where there is a vacancy. Administrators in our Facilities Department have met with the custodial staff to explain all of their options. Human Resources staff will schedule a one-on-one meeting with each employee to discuss his/her particular situation and to review all of the options.

**9) Are we really getting the best return on our investment, or is it time to pause and see if there are more cost-efficient ways to obtain the same level of achievement? Do you continually monitor to ensure that you are using cost efficient methods? (Mayor Euille)**

Calculating the "return on investment" (ROI) of funds to public schools is a difficult methodological issue that has been discussed extensively in the professional educational finance and economics literature. Calculating an ROI requires quantification of costs and benefits; in the public sector there are external and internal costs and benefits.

Internal costs are straightforward, and measure how much it cost to do a specific thing. Internal benefits are more difficult. If you are investing in driver's education for teenagers, how do you measure what portion of the student's improved driving ability is due to the driver's training provided by the teacher and what portion is due to continued practice with parents?



External costs may also be difficult to measure. In the case of driver's education, external costs might include increased road usage or air pollution from an increased number of cars driven. In some cases, external costs may be negligible, and in others substantial. External benefits are results that accrue to a larger group than the initial participants. The external benefits of driver's education could include a reduction in death, injury, and property damage resulting from accidents and lower auto insurance rates for teenage drivers and their families.

These measurement issues in educational cost-benefit analysis have led educators to rely on research-based program decisions, coupled with student assessments to determine educational progress. Most individual school divisions do not have the staff or student population to conduct full-scale educational research. Universities and other organizations can pool the results of interventions in many different school divisions, under many different circumstances, and use sophisticated statistical techniques to infer the impact of specific program designs. Columbia University's Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education, the Association for Effective Schools, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are examples of organizations engaged in substantive research on the best and most effective practices in education. (Links to these organizations are provided below.)

<http://www.cbcse.org/pages/our-mission.php>

<http://www.mes.org/>

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/>

ACPS relies on such research in its design of specific interventions and general program development. For example, the research on the effectiveness of early intervention led to the design of the K-Prep program. Research on language acquisition and literacy has contributed to the design of the dual language programs. Research on effective staff training methodologies has led ACPS to adopt a model of embedded staff development. These are just a few of the proven, research-based activities occurring in ACPS.

ACPS administrators – both in schools and in central offices – regularly and systematically review the research on effective educational programs. This information is used in reviewing current ACPS practices, ranging from the approach taken by teachers in the classroom to the best school division organizational structure and practices for educational achievement.

**11) What are your plans in looking for long-term efficiencies that cannot be addressed in just one budget cycle? (Councilman Krupicka)**

ACPS will continue to collaborate with City agencies to seek efficiencies in transportation, maintenance of grounds and buildings, purchasing, health insurance, etc. We will continue discussions on how we can perform all overlapping tasks more efficiently and we will continue to consider the advantages of out-sourcing in appropriate areas.

One long-term issue is where ACPS administration should be housed in order to avoid large rental payments and another is how to relieve crowding in some of the west end schools. These topics are on the scope of work for the Facilities Committee this year and all will require significant collaboration with the City.

**12) How effective is the laptop program and what has been done to improve the software and functionality of the laptops since the beginning of the program? How do students feel about the laptops and are they using them? (Councilman Smedberg)**

Presently online research databases, interactive classroom websites, online textbooks, virtual labs, math and science simulations, word process and data analysis tools are available to students in grades 9-12. Calendars, online agendas, posted assignments, individualized progress reports are used extensively.

Electronic communication between students, teachers, and the school community is a way of life in our secondary schools, just as it is in the business community. All teachers now have completed a full day of training in Blackboard, a program used by many colleges and universities. Teachers use Blackboard to promote continuing on-line discussion of class work. Discussions that were once limited to one class period can be extended over a longer block of time so that students can develop a more reflective and in-depth examination of topics. Teachers have found that they now hear the voices of students who are often not vocal in face-to-face classroom discussions.

Achieve 3000, Read 180, and other online lexiled resources are the foundation of the literacy program. These programs provide individualized instructional materials on each student's literacy level.

SOL and SAT preparation materials are available on-line to all students. Also, all new textbook adoptions depend on the capability of having the textbook and supplementary materials online. Writing tools provide immediate feedback on the quality of essays.

The instructional technology coordinator provides training and support to teachers on employing technology in innovative lesson planning.

An evaluation of the laptop program at T.C. Williams was conducted by the Monitoring and Evaluation Department after the first year of implementation and can be found on the ACPS website. For School Year 2004-05, 72% indicated the computer made it easier to do research projects. The laptops address the very real digital divide in Alexandria. Eight-seven percent of students on free/reduced price meal status indicated that the computer helped with research. Since that study, the additional teacher training and the implementation of Blackboard has caused the use and popularity of laptops to grow exponentially. Currently, an outside evaluator is conducting a study of the effectiveness of our instructional technology program as well as the entire technology services department.

**13) How many employees are currently paying for some of their health insurance costs? How many people are in each group? (Councilman Smedberg)**

The chart on the following page shows the number of employees enrolled in each type of health plan as of January, 2007.

Currently, no employee in the administrator group pays any of the premium costs for the plans shown. Selected support employees also have 100% of the premium costs covered by the School Division. The plans and employee groups receiving 100% coverage of the premium costs are highlighted in yellow. There were a total of 379 employees in these groups as of January, 2007.

Company	Type	Employee Group	Family	Individual	Two Party	Grand Total
Kaiser	HMO	Administrator	-	3	1	4
		Professional	25	88	31	144
		Support	20	21	9	50
		Support 25+	-	-	2	2
	POS	Administrator	-	-	-	-
		Professional	1	8	1	10
		Support	2	4	1	7
		Support 25+	-	-	-	-
MAMSI	HMO	Administrator	2	13	4	19
		Professional	57	305	79	441
		Support	101	147	108	356
		Support 25+	7	6	7	20
	POS	Administrator	15	19	15	49
		Professional	42	216	69	327
		Support	22	63	39	124
		Support 25+	3	4	2	9
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>297</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>1,562</b>

