

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens' Associations

**Remarks on the Proposed FY 2017 Fairfax County Public Schools Budget
Presented at the 28 January 2016 Fairfax County School Board Meeting**

I am Ed Saperstein. Tonight, as Co-Chair of the Federation's Education Committee, I am speaking on behalf of the Education Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations.*

We appreciate the focus in the proposed budget on instructional quality and improving Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) employee pay. To the extent funds are available we agree with increasing compensation for FCPS employees as compensation is crucial in attracting and retaining a superior workforce. As part of this, we support the idea of using some funds for a "Teacher Salary Scale Investment" to adjust the salary scale in areas where FCPS is becoming increasingly uncompetitive.

FCPS is currently engaged in a compensation study. In that study we urge you to consider flexible compensation packages as younger employees could have different needs than employees close to retirement. Also, FCPS is having a committee look at health care options. In doing this, the committee may wish to review the health care costs for post-retirement FCPS personnel.

As you well know class size is a difficult issue. We believe an innovative approach could help. In that spirit, we recommend trying the following pilot program in some high schools which may require a waiver or discussion with state authorities.

The pilot program is to ask some high school principals to choose one or a few courses to have much larger class sizes than normal, and use the related cost savings to have reduced class sizes in some other courses. The larger classes could be taught similar to college lecture classes and, if feasible, periodically broken down into smaller groups. Teachers teaching the larger classes could get a bonus or reduced number of teaching periods, but this should be done in a way to free up resources so they can be used where most needed.

Another idea is to examine expanding online learning in some areas, with a view toward freeing up resources, reducing or rebalancing teacher workloads and perhaps providing students additional opportunities in specialized areas. We hope FCPS remains open to such ideas and nimble enough to try them.

Diversifying the revenue base in Fairfax County could help improve funding for our schools, and we appreciate your efforts in trying to accomplish this. As mentioned in the Fairfax County Federation's 2016 Legislative package, we are working to diversify the revenue base by increasing the Virginia tobacco tax since our tobacco tax is much lower than the national average, and even lower than our neighboring major tobacco growing states. Also, we are working to achieve County-City Revenue Equalization in Virginia.

We appreciate your efforts on these matters and thank you for your collective service to the children in our communities.

*Nancy Trainer and Ed Saperstein, Education Committee Co-Chairs