

Response to Questions on the FY 2016 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Hudgins

Question: What are the specific reasons that there are higher per pupil costs for special education/ESOL students?

Response: The following response was prepared by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS):

Additional staffing, itinerant and central support, and specialized equipment are the primary drivers of higher per-pupil costs for students receiving services beyond the general curriculum. Examples include:

- 1) Additional teacher positions for reduced class sizes (often required by state law) or to provide pull-out / push-in services
- 2) Instructional assistants, public health training assistants, or public health attendants to provide students with additional instructional help or personal care
- 3) Itinerant assistive technology teachers and specialized equipment for students needing support to access the curriculum

On average, the cost per pupil for a special education student is approximately double the general education cost per pupil. In 1975, the federal government made a commitment to fund 40.0 percent of the excess special education costs. However, federal funding currently covers only 11.5 percent of FCPS' costs, a shortfall of more than \$71.6 million in FY 2015. The cost of providing English for Speakers of Other Languages services adds approximately 30 percent.