

Response to Questions on the FY 2010 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Supervisor Cook

Question: What fee options exist for recovering a portion of the Middle School After-School (MSAS) program expenses?

Response: The MSAS program was initiated as a core component of the Board of Supervisors efforts to reduce gang presence in our communities. The MSAS program is a key element in the school division's and county's initiatives to not only combat gangs but to improve student behavior, improve academic performance, and develop healthy and successful youth. As such, significant effort was put into encouraging participation among as many middle school youth as possible. The decision not to implement a fee from the beginning of the program was a part of those efforts.

Unlike the SACC model, that primarily focuses on providing quality before and after school childcare, the MSAS program is an open enrollment program where youth choose to attend all or part of the various activities offered. It further differs from SACC in that it leverages family and community resources, such as volunteer activity leaders, coaches and material support to provide and encourage broader involvement in the lives of youth. Based on our past experience and trends in after school programming for middle school aged youth, who generally do not require "day care", a program fee would inhibit our ability to reach the youth most in need of these services.

As the MSAS program is a joint collaboration between Fairfax County government and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), any fee options, and any potential impacts, will need to be jointly considered. Any fee structure would have to account for family income and accommodate students on the Free and Reduced Price Meals Plan.

For review as part of this response, Fairfax County government currently provides \$3,466,410 in funding for the program while FCPS currently provides \$950,000. FY 2010 reductions to the MSAS program included \$325,000 from the Fairfax County government side and \$80,000 from the FCPS side.

Fee Options

- 75% cost recovery of County-only resources equals would require a \$130 annual fee. Assuming the program registration of 20,000 was not impacted by the imposition of the fee, this option would generate \$2.6 million in revenue.
- 75% cost recovery of County and FCPS resources would require a \$166 annual fee. Assuming the program registration of 20,000 was not impacted by the imposition of the fee, this option would generate \$3.3 million in revenue.
- 100% recovery of County-only proposed reductions would require a \$17 annual fee. Assuming the program registration of 20,000 was not impacted by the imposition of the fee, this option would generate \$340,000 in revenue.

- 100% recovery of County and FCPS proposed reductions would require a \$21 annual fee. Assuming the program registration of 20,000 was not impacted by the imposition of the fee, this option would generate \$420,000 in revenue.

As current program registration equals 20,000 middle school participants, every \$5 increment in an annual fee would equal \$100,000.

Potential Impacts

- The Department of Community and Recreation Services (CRS) has experience with implementing fees for after-school programs. Prior to the creation of the MSAS program, CRS partnered with several middle schools to provide smaller, targeted after-school program opportunities through its Teen Services Division. In those programs, families indicated that fees were a primary determinant in their child's ability to participate. In those cases, fee increases, or even the existence of fees, were a factor in limiting the ability to reach the targeted population toward which many specific programs are designed.
- Fee collection would be an issue as the system is not set up currently to administer program membership fees. This would need to be discussed by both partners (county government and FCPS) to determine the specifics of creating the process of collecting revenue, who collects it, where it goes, etc. Additional administrative resources would be needed.
- Fee implementation has not been discussed with the community during this budget process and they therefore may feel like a charge is being implemented without any input from those it impacts.
- The fee options developed above assumes participation remains consistent. As past experience with fees does suggest participation may decrease, the revenue associated with the fee options may need to be adjusted downward.