Response to Questions on the FY 2015 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Herrity

Question: Please update the earlier response (County Q&A #54) estimating cost savings from a realignment of the eight clusters into four administrative areas as was the case prior to the adoption of the cluster system in FY 2002.

Response: The following response is an update to question number 54, previously included in package 3, on pages 79-80, and was prepared by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS):

A reduction from eight clusters to four clusters would result in an estimated savings of $1.7 million and include the elimination of 4.0 cluster assistant superintendent (CAS) positions, 4.0 cluster director positions, and 2.0 administrative assistant positions. FCPS does not recommend a reduction from eight to four clusters as it would increase the span of control of each CAS from 25 to 50 schools and from nearly 25,000 students to nearly 50,000 students. This would put each cluster in the top 100 list of largest school districts in the United States. Keeping at the current span of control, which still means each CAS has a span of control comparable to a larger than average school district in the United States, provides for better onsite monitoring and support for principals and each school community.

While it may not be intuitive, previous changes to FCPS' area/cluster structures (i.e., changing from fewer areas to more clusters) actually flattened the organization and reduced the number of high-level positions.

The organization and staffing of and the responsibilities executed by the eight cluster offices is cost effective. CAS have four primary responsibilities, including: providing leadership, direction, and accountability for principals by monitoring school effectiveness through formative and summative data, staff and parent input and surveys, and feedback from the school communities; reviewing academic performance of students and using the data to work collaboratively with principals and school leaders in implementing and monitoring continuous school improvement through the School Improvement Planning process; recommending, supervising, and evaluating principals; and serving as a liaison to the parents and school communities as they interface with the school system.