

Response to Questions on the FY 2017 Budget

Request By: Supervisor McKay

Question: When will the Compensation Study be completed? Please provide details about the \$40 million Teacher Salary Scale Investment plan included in the FY 2017 Proposed budget. How are recruitment issues, such as the fact that 200 teacher positions were unfilled at the beginning of the school year, addressed in the allocation of the \$40 million? How does this level of vacancies at the beginning of the year compare with prior years?

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

The Compensation Study is being done in two phases. The first phase consists of a market study to determine how total compensation (salary and benefits) for teachers, instructional assistants, and benchmarked Unified Scale positions compares to the local market averages.

In the second phase of the project, various compensation structures and models will be explored and evaluated. The Employee Compensation Survey was just completed and feedback was collected on employee opinions and preferences regarding compensation program options, such as pay and benefits. This information will help identify ways to attract and keep highly effective employees at FCPS. The survey results will help guide upcoming focus group discussions this spring and assist in the development of future compensation models. Recommendations regarding a new strategic compensation package are expected to be presented to the School Board in early summer.

The \$40.0 million included in the FY 2017 Proposed Budget is an initial investment to improve the teacher salary scale and enable FCPS to attract and retain the highest quality teachers. Early findings from the Compensation Study that is currently underway indicate that beginning teacher salaries (years 1 to 4) and ending teacher salaries (years 21 to maximum) are generally competitive among area school systems, but become increasingly non-competitive as employees attain 5 to 20 years of service. Findings indicate that over a 30-year career, an FCPS teacher earns \$142,000 less than the average of surrounding school-districts, and \$293,000 less than a teacher in Arlington County.

If the \$40.0 million is applied evenly across all the teacher scales, it would provide a 2.9 percent increase. When applied to the salary scales, this closes the gap by nearly half when looking at an FCPS teacher's earnings relative to market over a 30 year career. While this is an initial step to help close the gap between FCPS and neighboring jurisdictions, additional funding will be required in future years to attain and maintain parity.

At the beginning of the school year, about 200 teacher positions were still vacant, and many of those unfilled positions were in critical fields, such as STEM and special education. Teacher turnover has increased over the years. Teacher turnover was 7 percent in 2014, up from 5 percent in prior years, and exit surveys show that pay levels are a driver of this increased turnover. Over a third of the teachers who left FCPS last year had at least five years of service.