Response to Questions on the FY 2010
County's Line of Business & Schools Program Review Processes
Fall 2008

Request By: Supervisor Foust

Question: What is the cost per student for the Head Start program? How does this compare to other jurisdictions?

Response: Head Start is a national child and family development program that provides early childhood education and comprehensive family support services to income eligible families with children birth to 5 years of age, and expectant parents. Head Start promotes school readiness and self-sufficiency for low-income children and families by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children, and by providing comprehensive family services that include early childhood education; health, mental health, dental, nutrition, prenatal and social services; and parent involvement opportunities and education.

Cost data and information on program operations were requested from surrounding local jurisdictions including City of Alexandria, VA, Arlington County, VA, Loudoun County, VA, Montgomery County, MD and Prince William County, VA. Cost data was not available for Arlington and Prince William Counties. Please note that localities calculate cost per pupil using different factors, and may or may not include costs such as transportation, food, space, etc. in the calculations. Therefore, it can be difficult to make cost comparisons across jurisdictions as cost per pupil can vary significantly.

In Fairfax County, the average cost per pupil for all Head Start programs is $13,820 and all but two of the classrooms are full day. In Montgomery County, MD the majority of Head Start classrooms are half day, with a cost per pupil of $7,700. The cost per pupil in Alexandria, VA is $9,127, although it should be noted that Alexandria does not run a full year program. Staff from Loudoun County, VA report the cost per pupil is $13,271 and the classrooms are half day. The table below details the cost and program operations data gathered for each jurisdiction.

Head Start Services Provided by Local Jurisdictions[1]

Jurisdiction	Hours of Service	Days Offered	Ages Served	Length of Program Year	Cost per Family
City of Alexandria, VA	Full day - hours vary depending on location ranging from 7:30a.m to 6:00p.m.	Monday to Friday	3 to 5	September to June	$9,127
Arlington County, VA	Full day - 8:00a.m. to 4:30p.m.	Monday to Friday	3 to 5	Year round	n/a
Fairfax County, VA	Full day - hours vary depending on location ranging from 7:30a.m to 5:30p.m.	Monday to Friday	3 to 5	Varies by center (September to June or Year round)	$13,820
Loudoun County, VA	Half day - 4 hours per day	Monday to Thursday; Friday home visits, teacher training	3 to 5	September to June	$13,271
Montgomery County, MD	Half day - 3 hours and 15 minutes per day	Monday to Friday	3 to 5	September to June	$7,700
Prince William County, VA	Varies by center Half day - 8:45a.m. to 12:15p.m. Full day - 8:45a.m. to 2:45p.m.	Varies by center Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Friday	4 to 5	September to June	n/a

[1] Please note the cost data provided does not include costs associated with Early Head Start as not every jurisdiction offers this program.