

## Response to Questions on the FY 2011 Budget

**Request By:** Supervisor Cook

**Question:** What County funded after school recreation or childcare programs are provided in the middle schools? What is the total cost and what fees or fee increases would be necessary to make the programs cost neutral?

**Response:** Fairfax County government collaborates with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) in offering the Middle School After School (MSAS) program in all 26 middle schools. 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 critical part of those efforts.

Based on the County's 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 those youth most in need of these services. As the MSAS program is a joint collaboration between Fairfax County government and 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 the MSAS program budget, Fairfax County government currently provides \$3,141,410 in funding while FCPS currently provides \$870,000, totaling \$4,011,410.

### Cost Neutral Fee Options

- 100% recovery of County-only funding would require a \$147 annual fee. Assuming the current program registration of approximately 21,500 youth was not impacted by the imposition of fees, this option would generate \$3,160,500 in revenue.
- 100% recovery of County and FCPS funding would require a \$187 annual fee. Assuming the current program registration of approximately 21,500 youth was not impacted by the imposition of fees, this option would generate \$4,020,500 in revenue.

Note that the revenue estimates do not reflect the sliding fee scale that might be implemented if the County took into account children, currently receiving free and reduced price meals, who would also attend the MSAS program.

### Potential Impacts

The Department of Community and Recreation Services (CRS) has much 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. Consequently, 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, determining who collects it and deciding where it goes, etc. Additional administrative resources would be needed.

All the fee options previously discussed assume program participation remains consistent. As past experience with fees suggests, participation may decrease while the revenue associated with the fee options may need to be adjusted.

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