

2018 Dr. Walts Budget Intro Speech

Good evening School Board members, colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen.

Tonight, it's my privilege to introduce a proposed Budget and Capital Improvement Program for the 2018-2019 school year.

They're designed to meet educational needs and expand opportunities for every one of our students.

We are talking about more than 90,000 individuals, with a diversity of gifts and backgrounds that make us strong.

They come from all races and religions.

Some are from well-off families; and others struggle to make ends meet.

Many speak English as their first language; but others are just learning. Those English Learners and their families speak more than 140 different languages.

And all our students bring their own unique mix of aspirations and abilities.

Our challenge—and one I am proud to say we're meeting—is to serve each and every one of them.

The proposed budget and CIP will accomplish that by providing for the programs, the professional development, the schools, the teachers, and all the other staff, who are vital to supporting our students.

They will do it by carefully leveraging every single dollar we expect to get this year from the Board of County Supervisors, the Virginia budget, and the federal government.

We are absorbing some big funding cuts, and limiting the new investments that should be made, so we can deliver on the biggest needs.

The resulting proposal builds on funding *all* the existing programs and services that already have our students on the road to success.

It will continue our commitment to closing the persistent performance gaps that separate different student groups nationwide. We have lots more to do, but our students in several of those groups already outperform their peers across the nation, throughout Virginia, and even in places like Fairfax and Loudoun.

Our success shows in both group, and Divisionwide on-time graduation rates. They are now at all-time highs for Prince William County Public Schools students.

This proposal assures sustainable funding to support student career pathways, and to provide specialty opportunities for both career and college-bound students.

It provides for staff professional development that promotes Professional Learning Communities and building cultural competency.

From pre-K and full-day kindergarten, to help for English Learners, and teaching future ready skills, this proposed budget continues to fund the foundations of our success, with only minimal reductions.

It also funds the expense of housing and educating more than 1,100 new students; some who've already enrolled since September 30th. . . and more to come.

That's costly, but we've got it covered.

Additionally, the budget covers our commitment to continuous improvement.

That means we need to invest—to the extent that funding allows—in filling critical needs that better serve our students and community.

And it means having the very best teachers, administrators, and other staff committed to our students and our mission.

That's why my proposed budget marks the third time in a row that I have recommended a well-deserved full-step increase for all eligible teachers and employees.

That step means an average 2-point-7 percent pay increase for employees.

The budget also raises supplemental pay rates by 2 percent for coaches, and for teachers who supervise clubs;

It boosts pay rates for substitutes and temporary employees;

It begins reclassifying the first group of employees that your Board-commissioned study found to be paid well-below market levels. We're following study recommendations to start resolving pay scale problems.

And we're funding "Educator Rising" supplements for all 12 high schools. They can help us to turn promising students into great teachers.

These are investments that will keep us competitive. That's vital as we work to attract and hold on to all the very best people to educate and support our students on their path to success.

Another investment to help students is the proposal's partial restoration of some of the funds that once provided extra services to our most economically disadvantaged students.

Large amounts were cut during the great recession.

We have many more students in need now than we had back then, so we can't spend as much on each of them as we once did.

But this budget's 1-point-5 million dollars in added funding pays for multiple efforts that deliver big benefits for disadvantaged students, from Kindergarten through graduation.

We're also investing in making up for state cuts of about 3 million dollars from our expected funding for regional special education programs.

We expect further state cuts in the future.

But, we will maintain service to students with special needs, because this proposal fills the financial gap.

It also helps the full range of learners with investments in:

Enhancements to our gifted education program;

School improvement support;

A new instructional coach who will join a team of gifted professionals already equipping teachers with instructional tools and help that measurably boost student achievement;

There's even funding for new equipment in our VEX Robotics program. That helps connect students with Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Math.

We have not scrimped on meeting the needs of the whole student.

That's why this budget adds funding for:

A new mental health specialist,

A psychologist,

And two social workers.

We've added new funds to help our high schools offset part of the cost of dedicated Athletic Trainers, and to continue the trainer arrangement that middle schools have with George Mason University. Dedicated athletic trainers have the expertise to help keep our students safe.

Then, there's technology. It's the future. But it's essential right now for student growth and Division success.

That's why we've dramatically expanded the size of the information pipeline connecting students, teachers, and schools to our community. . . and to powerful resources on the Internet.

This budget covers significant increases in technology contracts and support costs, so we can take full and secure advantage of that expansion.

We're investing in making the information on school and Division websites more accessible to people with vision or hearing challenges, or those who have other differing abilities.

That's a legal requirement *and* it's the right thing to do.

And, since staff are the most valuable asset for educating and supporting our students. . .we're investing in new human resources technology to evaluate, manage, and support our workforce.

Finally, this proposed budget and Capital Improvement Program fuel our ongoing efforts to build, refresh, and renovate the facilities to house and educate our growing student enrollment.

It will fund the opening of the new Independence Nontraditional School at the start of the next school year.

Ultimately, that will combine students from PACE East, New Directions, and New Dominion in a unique campus serving students with different learning needs, *but the same expectation of success*.

We're also funding the very beginnings of success by turning our Washington-Reid building into a preschool center. By including some new preschool funding, the budget will give more of our youngest students a jumpstart on learning.

And there's more:

The budget partially restores cuts dating back to the recession to let us improve our seven and 14-year schedule of school maintenance.

It also invests nearly three-quarters of a million dollars in enhanced school building security, based on recommendations from the Infrastructure Task Force.

And plans in the Budget and CIP mean:

Renewals at seven schools.

And completion of additions at Lake Ridge Middle and Pattie Elementary.

Together, the proposed Budget and Capital Improvement Plan will continue to provide safe, quality student facilities.

They will do it by refreshing and renewing the schools with the greatest infrastructure needs-- the ones that have gone the longest between upgrades—wherever they're located.

The new construction work will give us more classrooms than we have today.

That helps us reduce the number of classroom trailers.

But it's too soon to say how many will be eliminated.

That's because of provisions like those in the state grant that helps us pay for new reductions in K through 3 class sizes. Those provisions actually create the need for 16 more classroom spaces next year.

It makes budgeting a bit of a trade-off between two important goals—class size reduction and elimination of trailers.

We continue to focus on both.

I hope it's clear that we built this budget proposal on the essentials needed to continue service to our students, staff, and community.

The enhancements I've detailed, as well as others, bring the total for next year's operating and debt service budget to 1-point-19 billion dollars.

The few new items that made it into this year's proposal came from a long list of critical needs identified by principals and other leaders.

That list included more than 150 worthwhile investments at costs that would exceed 300 million dollars.

We selected only a few by focusing on the priorities we heard from the School Board, the community, and especially, the people who do the work and the students we serve.

Remember, the total budget...and the funding that supports it... *has* gone up year after year.

Still, this year we had to cope with millions in reductions in specific areas like federal Title I funding, and state payments for Special Education Regional Schools.

Despite other increases, inflation-adjusted funding still means this budget allows us to spend only at per-student levels comparable with 2006. And things were much less expensive then.

That's a testament to our efficiency -- but also to the need for new resources.

In fact, this budget proposal will most likely keep us dead-last in per-student spending of any school division in the DC metro area—despite all the great things it will fund.

That's not where we want, or need, to be.

There is clearly much more we could do...if we had the dollars.

But, we cannot spend more than the funding we receive.

For now, this proposed budget balances with the funding we are confident we will get from the Board of County Supervisors, our state officials, and the federal government.

It also balances countless different programs and services that different people *want*. . .with the hard reality of what we *need* to deliver for everyone.

And we *will* deliver.

My staff and I look forward to working with the School Board to refine this proposal into the best possible budget we can:

To serve our students;

To let us recruit, and retain the very best teachers and staff;

And, most of all to open the door to unlimited opportunities for the future of our children and our community.

With your help, I hope that this proposal leads to a final School Board Budget which reaffirms that ***Providing A World-Class Education*** is more than just our mission statement.

It's what we do.

And now, Associate Superintendent for Finance and Support Services, Dave Cline will walk you through the specific numbers.