



McLean Citizens Association Resolution
Class Sizes in Fairfax County Public Schools
March 4, 2015

Whereas, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) staffing formulas and administrative practices result in a wide range of general education class sizes; and

Whereas, in allocating teacher positions to elementary, middle and high schools, FCPS voluntarily uses three needs-based staffing formulas for general education (including Advanced Academic) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, and

Whereas, FCPS uses separate formulas to allocate special education teacher positions to schools, which distinguish between types of disabilities (Category A and Category B) and their severity (Level 1 and Level 2), where the more severe disabilities are designated as Level 2; and

Whereas, Level 2 special education students, who generally are pulled out of the general education classroom for more than half the day, currently are excluded when counting the number of pupils in general education classes; and

Whereas, FCPS general education staffing formulas reflect the maximum allowable average general education class size for elementary, middle and high schools; and

Whereas, FCPS general education staffing formulas budget for maximum average general education class sizes per school of 26.75 at the elementary school level, 27.5 at the middle school level, and 30.5 at the high school level; and

Whereas, FCPS reports a much lower actual county-wide average class size for each of these three levels, and specifically a county-wide average class size at the elementary school level of 22.3, a county-wide average middle school class size of 24.6, and a county-wide average high school class size of 25.6; and

Whereas, there is a wide range of average class sizes at the elementary, middle and high school levels in FCPS; and

Whereas, although the county-wide average elementary school class size (excluding Level 2 special education students) for FCPS schools is 22.3, seven of the nine elementary schools in the greater McLean area have average class sizes of between 23.5 and 25.8, and only two have lower average class sizes;

Whereas, by school, the average class size for each McLean-area elementary school is:

- 23.9 (Chesterbrook),
- 25.8 (Churchill Road),
- 24.7 (Colvin Run),
- 23.5 (Haycock),
- 25.3 (Kent Gardens),
- 22.1 (Lemon Road),
- 24.6 (Franklin Sherman),
- 25.8 (Spring Hill),
- 21.4 (Westgate); and

Whereas, although FCPS does not publish data on average class sizes at each middle and high school, given the FCPS staffing formulas for middle and high schools, the average class size at each FCPS middle and high school in the greater McLean area is likely to be closer to the budgeted maximum class size for that level, rather than to the lower county-wide average class size for that level; and

Whereas, FCPS currently has over 1,000 elementary school general education classes with 20 or fewer students, excluding Level 2 special education students; and

Whereas, over 800 of those general education elementary school classes with 20 or fewer students have zero or one additional Level 2 special education students; and

Whereas, the fact that schools in the greater McLean area have consistently had larger average class sizes and more very large classes than the county averages, including many elementary, middle and high school classes with 30 or more students, raises questions of fairness; and

Whereas, the number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals (FRM) is used to allocate teacher positions and other resources to schools; and

Whereas, in FY 2015, FCPS received:

- 1) \$16.6 million in Title 1 federal grants, which FCPS used to fund 147 positions, including 104 Title 1 teachers and 6 instructional coaches at 40 elementary schools with a high percentage of students receiving FRM,
- 2) \$4.8 million in state grants to cap Kindergarten through 3rd grade class sizes at about 40 elementary schools with a high percentage of students receiving FRM; and

Whereas, in FY 2015 FCPS spent:

- 1) \$43.1 million of local funds to hire an additional 492 teachers and other employees to work at elementary, middle and high schools where more than 20% of the students qualify for FRM,
- 2) \$80.3 million to hire over 800 employees to provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services at 196 schools, of which \$14.8 million is funded by federal and state grants and \$65.4 million is funded by local tax revenues,

- 3) \$4.3 million in local tax revenues on the Priority Schools Initiative-2 program, to provide additional instructional coaches, training, substitute teachers and other resources to 35 low-performing elementary and middle schools; and

Whereas, FCPS has almost 1000 trailers, many of which are located at schools that have one or more classes with 20 or fewer students; and

Whereas, FCPS does not have sufficient construction bond proceeds to fund all the necessary renovations on existing schools plus proposed additions and new schools planned to accommodate projected future enrollment; and

Whereas, changing the general education staffing formulas to reduce the number of small classes would reduce the amount spent on needs-based staffing, the number of students assigned to trailers, and potentially reduce the need for future additions and new schools; and

Whereas, the FCPS FY 2016 Advertised Budget includes \$3.1 million in recurring funding for:

- Aides at some schools that otherwise would have 1st through 3rd grade classes with 28-30 students or 4th through 6th grade classes with 31 to 35 students,
- Teachers at some schools that otherwise would have 1st through 3rd grade classes with 31 or more students or 4th through 6th grade classes with 36 or more students; and

Whereas, the FY 2015 Mid-Year Budget Review included one-time, non-recurring funding for a \$0.8 million increase in the FY 2016 countywide staffing reserve, to provide additional teachers to elementary schools with large class sizes; and

Whereas, the FY 2015 Third-Quarter Budget Review may include one-time, non-recurring funding for an additional \$1.0 million increase in the FY 2016 countywide staffing reserve, to provide additional teachers to elementary schools with large class sizes; and

Whereas, in the FY 2013 Final Budget Review, the School Board voted to provide recurring funding, not one-time funding, for an additional 0.5 resource teachers at each of thirteen specified Title 1 elementary schools; and

Whereas, the FCPS Superintendent, Dr. Garza, has implemented new policies to improve the accuracy of school-based projections for student enrollment, which are used to determine the initial number of teachers and other employees allocated to each school; and

Whereas, the FCPS Superintendent, Dr. Garza, has announced her intention to reallocate teachers in September 2016 based on actual enrollment at each school; and

Whereas, the FCPS Superintendent, Dr. Garza, has announced her intention to issue a regulation with transparent rules regarding the allocation of positions from the staffing reserve; and

Whereas, FCPS Superintendent Dr. Garza has directed regional assistant superintendents to scrutinize carefully future requests by principals to trade classroom teacher positions for other positions, when such trades would result in unduly large class sizes;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the MCA:

1. Commends Dr. Garza for:
 - a. Taking steps to improve the accuracy of school-level projections, which are used to allocate staff positions and also affect infrastructure decisions,
 - b. Implementing policies to reallocate teachers based on actual enrollment,
 - c. Directing the regional assistant superintendents to exercise oversight over principals who request “trades” of classroom teacher positions; and
2. Urges the School Board to:
 - a. Include in the FY 2016 Approved Budget the \$3.1 million in recurring funding to reduce the number of very large elementary school classes, regardless of the amount of the FY 2016 transfer from the County,
 - b. Substitute \$0.8 million of recurring funding for the \$0.8 million of one-time funding in the FY 2015 Mid-year Budget Review to reduce the number of very large elementary school classes,
 - c. Substitute \$1.0 million of recurring funding for the \$1.0 million of proposed one-time funding in the FY 2015 3rd Quarter Budget Review to reduce the number of very large elementary school classes,
 - d. Modify the elementary school staffing formula so that each school’s budgeted average general education class cannot be less than 21 students or more than 25 students, including Level 2 special education students assigned part-time to those general education classes,
 - e. Direct FCPS staff to estimate the savings and costs from making these changes to the staffing formula for elementary school general education classes,
 - f. Establish a new goal of ensuring that average class sizes for schools within each of the elementary, middle and high school categories are consistent, to the extent practicable, within FCPS,
 - g. Direct FCPS staff to publish data on average class sizes at each middle school and high school annually, and to post such data on the FCPS web site; and
3. Urges the Board of Supervisors to collaborate with FCPS in evaluating the impact of FCPS staffing formulas and policies on the FCPS operating budget and Capital Improvement Program.

*Approved by the MCA Board of Directors
March 4, 2015*

Cc: Jane Strauss, Dranesville District School Board Member
John Foust, Dranesville District Supervisor
FCPS School Board Members
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Dr. Karen Garza, FCPS Superintendent
Kristen Michael, FCPS Assistant Superintendent for Financial Services
Edward Long, County Executive
Joseph Mondoro, Fairfax County Deputy Director of Management and Budget