



Message from the Superintendent

Meeting Students at the Leading Edge of Their Potential

It was just over 50 years ago, in an academic setting in

fact, that a president of the United States said, “We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win ...”

The moon landing captured the imagination, support and talents of a nation. And, not inconsequential was the immediate impact this journey had on education and upon young men and women in classrooms all across the country, teachers and students alike.

This point recently was revisited by one of our nation’s space heroes, Dr. Kathy Thornton, who logged nearly 1,000 hours in space and was one of two mission specialists who repaired the Hubble Telescope while outside the shuttle in an historic 1993 flight.

Dr. Thornton, now an associate dean at the University of Virginia, was discussing the current state of the space program and comparing it with the state of education. Noting the end of the shuttle flights and NASA’s substantial budget reductions, she characterized our nation as being “trapped in low-orbit.”

Education today can be similarly described, pulled down by antiquated classroom environments, repetitive instructional methods, inadequate testing, separation from our diverse communities, and unresolved national debates about the way forward.

In many ways, we are educating children as we did 100 years ago, during the dawning of the assembly line. And while the world has evolved over the past century, from covered wagons to space shuttles, the pace of change and progress in education has been far less ambitious.

The costliest consequence of this slow progress has been our nation’s inability to meet one of our most important responsibilities: preparing all students for post-graduate success as citizens, in higher education, and in the workforce.

Budgets contain numbers but they also should be about the lives they shape and the doors to opportunity they open.

“Adequate funding will always be a challenge, but what we cannot afford is fewer ideas, less energy and lower skills ...”

This is the fourth consecutive year that the Albemarle County Public Schools Superintendent is submitting a maintenance of effort funding request. This request of \$155.4 million represents an increase of about 2.8 percent over our current

budget, primarily driven by enrollment growth, increased free/reduced lunch eligible students, and compensation.

All of these drivers go to the heart of our values as a school division. Funding enrollment growth enables us to maintain optimal class sizes. The support our free/reduced lunch eligible students receive produces significant academic progress in this at risk population. Maintaining compensation at competitive market levels allows the division to attract and retain the high-quality educators and classified staff who deliver the exceptional performance our children deserve.

In this request, we are estimating expenditures that are approximately \$1.5 million above revenues. Final numbers from our two major revenue sources—state aid and local

government, which comprise nearly 97 percent of our budget—will not be known for several months and will affect this disparity.

The silver lining in the dark financial clouds of these past several years has been the management discipline and innovation that has led us to do more with less, resulting in significant savings in operational expenses that continue to accrue to our taxpayers. In just the past year, for example, conservation improvements have enabled us to avoid \$160,000 in energy-related costs. We continue to benefit from greater transportation efficiencies that reduce costs by hundreds of thousands of dollars and from more streamlined administrative oversight.

This funding request is built upon the foundation of the “3Rs,” to which it adds “4Cs.” Education must continue to be about reading, writing and arithmetic, and also be about Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration and Communication.

Opening doors of opportunity means meeting children at the leading edge of their potential. Adequate funding will always be a challenge, but what we cannot afford is fewer ideas, less energy and lower skills in preparing our children to meet the sweeping global challenges they will face upon graduation.

The focal point of our strategy for 21st century learning can be found through such programs as Design 2015, our division-wide innovation laboratory. This program features a series of 25 diverse initiatives in our schools, representing the collective wisdom, imagination and purpose of our educators.

Each initiative must advance our capabilities in three areas: the use of technological resources, the learning environment, and the quality of the

instructional method. Each must set out a clearly defined process for measuring meaningful student improvement in mastering the “4Cs” and must have the potential to be a best practice across all of our schools.

Design 2015, together with our Math, Science & Engineering Academy, our Health and Medical Sciences Academy, and our computer coding programs, represent an alignment of general government, school board, school division and school strategies for better preparing our students for post-graduate success.

These programs focus funds, the participation of our educator, parent, business, higher education and government communities, and a passion for new models of excellence to provide the power we need to begin to move education out of low-orbit. Their success depends upon our own ability as a division to think critically, be creative, collaborate and communicate.

A year ago, this message promised a commitment to move Albemarle County Public Schools from good to great. I am grateful for the extraordinary contributions of our School Board and local government partners, our teachers, staff, parents, advisory groups and volunteers, who are moving us closer to that objective. Together, we are making it possible for us to say that the challenge of ensuring that all students are prepared for lifelong success is “one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”

Thank you,

Pamela R. Moran

Dr. Pamela R. Moran
Superintendent of Schools

