



To: School Board Members
From: Staff
Date: March 4, 2021
Subject: Responses #2 to FY 2021/22 Draft Funding Request Questions

The below questions were asked by School Board members before and during the Budget Work Sessions. Staff have provided responses to these questions in this memo. This is the second set of responses.

Compensation & Benefits

1. **Please explain why the Minimum Pay Rate Proposal does not move the minimum pay rate to \$15 for the Non-VRS/Part-time pay scale in FY 22.**

Staff continues to analyze the alternatives for adjusting our classified pay scales to provide a minimum pay rate of \$15.00 for employees. As presented at the February 25th Work Session, the current proposal brings full-time employees to a \$15.00 minimum hourly pay rate and part-time employees to a \$14.29 minimum hourly pay rate in FY 22 ("Phase 1"), with a goal of bringing the part-time employees to a minimum \$15.00 hourly rate in FY 23 ("Phase 2").

Currently there are 2 pay scales in Albemarle County. A non-VRS scale for part-time employees and a VRS scale for full-time employees. The VRS scale is 5% higher than the Non-VRS scale to account for the 5% required VRS contribution for full-time employees. The scales are built in this way to ensure that hourly take home pay for similar work is the same.

One of the challenges in implementing Phase 1 has been the effects that such large changes in pay have upon our pay scales, our pay practices, our relative placement on the scales, and the future placement of new or experienced hires.

For example, the current lowest hourly pay on the VRS scale is \$10.20. There are approximately 425 employees who currently earn between \$10.20 and \$14.99. The variation in the current rates of pay are due to combinations of experience, years of service, performance, and job duties. It would be highly inadvisable to eliminate such differences in pay. Moving a staff member from the minimum of \$10.20 to \$15.00 is a 47% increase in pay. Since increasing pay by 47% for all employees is not realistic nor affordable, a solution is to apply a compression model that bands rates of pay together. The lowest paid receive the highest percentage increase and the increases decline as rates of pay get larger. The current strategy is in overall alignment with Local Government's proposed strategy and continues to use the general structure of our existing pay scales (*per School Board Policy GAD, Commonality in Personnel Policies*).

The resulting compressed pay scales from Phase 1 is the maximum level of compression that staff recommends without creating detrimental equity and hiring issues. For this reason, the full cost of moving forward with Phase 2 could be as high as an additional \$2.5 million, assuming that both the VRS and Non-VRS pay scales are adjusted upward by an

additional 5% in order for the Non-VRS pay scale to have a minimum hourly wage of \$15.00.

Implementing Phase 2 at this time would come at a high financial cost to the organization. In order to address various priorities in the Funding Request, a phased approach (both for financial and operational reasons) is recommended. However, we understand and agree with the School Board's high priority for this proposal, and we continue to work on the most optimal solution.

- 2. I know that some teachers in our division receive stipends based on leading an extracurricular activity or doing something extra. Are we increasing those stipends by the same % we're raising salaries? Where do these stipends show up in the budget, and can we get a general idea of how many those are, a rough generalization of those activities, and the total funds involved?**

The budget allocations for stipends are detailed on page G-27 of the Draft Funding Request document, and those amounts are included in School-Based budgets (Section D). They do not increase the same % as the salary increase. The below total amounts are budgeted in FY 22:

- Extra Class Stipends: \$86,120 (paid to teachers to cover extra classes beyond contractual obligations)
- Athletics Stipends: \$923,637 (paid to athletic coaches)
- ALCP Stipends: \$685,560

The Academic Leadership Compensation Program (ALCP) provides a structure to support instructional leadership needs and professional growth across the Division. Incorporated within the program are a Division-wide instructional component and a school-level instructional component.

- Typically, there are about 800-1000 ALCP stipends assigned each school year; some teachers pick up multiple stipend roles.
- Some common roles include, but are not limited to: 504 Coordinator, Class or Club Sponsor, Content Advisory Team (CAT), Department Chair, Diversity Resource Teacher, Lead Teacher, PLC Content Team Leader, School-Based Intervention Team (SBIT) Coordinator, Special Programs/Projects Coordinator, Teacher/Team Leader, Web Content Coordinator
- The ALCP role duties and amounts are reviewed individually as needed; if large funding adjustments were needed that would come before the School Board as a separate initiative.
- The overall ALCP program funding does not shift based on employee annual salary increases.
- More information can be found here: <https://www.k12albemarle.org/our-departments/instruction/alcp>

3. What staff supports do we have with regards to their mental health?

Below are some examples of Benefits/Wellness initiatives put forward over the last year:

- Increased Employee Assistance Program (EAP) visits from 5 – 8 visits per member/per issue/per year (with the most recent utilization rate of over 22% for January 2021; our pre-COVID participation averaged 9-10%); Offered \$0 co-pay virtual provider visits through 2021
- Beginning April 2020 and ongoing - Compiled over 50 different wellness resources to support individuals during the pandemic, including various mental and emotional wellness-specific resources. This is a permanent resource for employees to access via the BeWell website:
<http://bewell.albemarle.org/programs/Pages/Wellness-in-the-time-of-COVID-19.aspx>
- Created a Mental Health Resources page on the BeWell website to direct individuals to local, national, and population-specific resources, including crisis text lines, food or rent assistance support, and resources for people of color and LGBTQIA+ communities
- Promoted EAP and additional wellness resources for schools at staff meetings via Zoom at the start of the 2020-2021 school year and continue to send email reminders of Mental Health resources available
- 6-week Holiday Resilience campaign during November and December 2020 to promote mental and emotional resilience during a very unique holiday season. Recruited Wellness Champions in schools to promote mental health resources among staff
- Self-Care Challenge running for the month of March 2021 to encourage employees to prioritize their self-care through colorful food choices, healthy sleeping habits, regular movement, and daily relaxation breaks
- Human Resources are regularly meeting and soliciting feedback to continue to improve and develop opportunities for staff

ACPS-created programming is included in this employee Compass post:

<http://compass.k12albemarle.org/?p=2335150>

4. Please provide more detail about the health care contribution in FY 22 and the planned one-month holiday.

Based on guidance from our third-party benefits consultant and the agreed upon on Management Plan adopted by local government and schools staff, we have adopted the following approach to manage both employer/employee premium rates and fund reserves for FY22:

- There is a planned rate increase in FY22 because it is a guiding principle of the management plan for the fund to match premiums to projected expenditures.
 - In order to pace employer/employee premium rates with expected vendor premium increases, our approach smooths the expected 12.5% premium increase from the health plan provider across two fiscal years. The plan year is based on a calendar year, January – December, 6 months in FY21 and 6 months in FY22; the premium rate increase for FY22 equates to an increase of approximately 10%.
 - Our consultant cautions there may be a spring back effect that may result in a rise in future claims and medical expenses. The spring back is a result of delayed medical care during 2020 and progressing medical conditions during the year.
- There is a one-month employer holiday planned in FY22. Based on the past performance of the fund, the fund reserve is very healthy and the management plan allows for premium holidays in this circumstance.
 - The fund reserve allowed an opportunity to lower the overall expense for FY22 in the form of a holiday for employer and employee premium contributions. This one-month holiday in employer contributions equates to \$1.4 million in savings to the School Division and will offset the increase in the other months.

The Healthcare Plan Committee, comprised of both Local Government and Schools' staff, will determine the month in which the premium holiday is granted in the coming months.

New Proposals

Student Safety Coaches (“SCC”, formerly School Safety specialists): To be discussed at Work Session #3

5. May we please get a breakdown of Salary, Benefits, Other?

Category	Cost	Notes
Salary	\$ 370,850	\$46,356 per FTE on average
Benefits	\$ 165,117	\$20,640 per FTE on average
Operations	\$ 15,000	
SRO Transfer Elimination	\$ (264,592)	
Total	\$ 286,375*	

**Difference here between page A-40 is the revised health care rates discussed in Work Session #2.*

6. Why eight Student Safety Coaches (SSC)? Will they be permanently assigned to the comprehensive high schools and middle schools?

- The understanding is that 8.0 FTEs will provide the schools in the division with the human resources needed to provide both the security portion of the responsibilities now required to be addressed internally, as well as the additional expectations of student safety, namely mental health support, de-escalation strategies while intentionally integrating into the culture and system of the public schools they serve in order to establish strong rapport with students and staff.
- While placement and organizational position within the division is yet to be finalized, the prevailing thought going into the process is that the Student Safety Coaches will be “anchored” at the secondary locations, and support the elementary schools, on a rotational basis and when needed.

7. Job descriptions, operation manuals, org charts and hiring are due to be completed by 12/21. Will SROs still be in the buildings before December? When will we start the hiring search for SSCs and who will be our ideal candidates?

- The expectation is that Student Safety Coaches will be in buildings in the Fall.
- Searches will begin as soon as the financial resources have been allocated and approved. The Division is poised and ready to begin this process.
- Hiring the ideal candidate is critical to the success of this effort. We are looking for candidates that believe (and act in alignment with that belief) that all students are inherently good young people and that their behaviors do not define them. Additionally, the ideal candidate would recognize that each day a student should start with a “clean slate”. We also would be looking for an individual that has a calling for working with young people and is intrinsically motivated to support them. While skills are very important, in a position like this, many skills can be learned. However, the ideal candidate must demonstrate something deeper than mere skills. The ideal candidate would possess an ability that doesn’t typically come about because of study alone. For example, the ideal candidate would demonstrate strong self-regulation skills, because that is critical if they are to help others regulate their emotions in crisis situations. They would also have a natural, almost instinctive ability to listen deeply to students and be able to understand, relate, and/or empathize with students' emotions and experiences. Lastly, it is important that the ideal individual be on a journey to become anti-racist and is reflective about race, racial consciousness, and racial bias.

8. Training sessions for SSCs are scheduled for 2022. How much time will they be out of their schools for this?

- Onboarding is expected to begin as early as practical, most being targeted this summer, prior to the beginning of the school year in the Fall. Ongoing professional development will need to be planned for and special consideration will be given to minimize any impact on school functioning and safety.

9. Has Nick King’s replacement been hired yet?

- A new Director of Student Services has not been hired as of this date. The hiring process is well underway with two finalists under consideration. We should have a new Director of Student Services named by the third week of March, 2021.

Equity Expansion: To be discussed at Work Session #3

10. I am very supportive of adding these three FTEs. May we please get a breakdown of Salary, Benefits, Other?

Category	Cost	Notes
Salary	\$242,691	\$80,897 per FTE
Benefits	\$90,984	\$30,328 per FTE
Operations	\$20,000	
Total	\$353,675*	

**Difference here between page A-42 is the revised health care rates discussed in Work Session #2.*

11. I asked about the second bullet point under Outputs last week and asked what was meant by “promoted” as it sounded to me like “job” promotion. The answer I received seem to indicate “publicized” promotion rather than “job” promotion. I just want to confirm that I am reading the response correctly.

Yes, that is correct. Candidates will be recognized for their work.

One-Time Expenditures

To be discussed at Work Session #3

12. Where is the summary breakdown of the \$4,131,040 in the Draft Funding Request book?

The various expenditures are scattered throughout department and school budgets in the Draft Funding Request, but there is a summary on page B-21.

13. I did see the One-Time transfers to Special Revenue Funds of \$3,320,356 on C-8, but the numbers are different.

The \$4.1M in one-time expenditures include:

- \$3.3M One-Time Transfer to Special Revenue Funds (C-8)
- \$50,000 1st Year Teacher Incentive Pilot
- \$416,000 Capital Outlay
- \$200,000 School Board Reserve
- \$70,000 Budget Software
- \$75,000 Superintendent’s Contingency

14. Will we be discussing the other anticipated one-time expenditures that Dr. Haas is considering, even though they are not in the budget per se?

There are other anticipated one-time expenditures that are being considered in the current fiscal year. These will be discussed separately at a Regular School Board meeting in the Spring.

Revenues

15. What are Employee Fingerprint Fees, from page B-6?

Newly hired ACPS employees are subject to criminal background checks (fingerprints and CPS) prior to starting work. The current fee for these two services is \$37. New hires are responsible for \$26 of that fee with the County subsidizing the remaining amount.