

## Message from the School Board Chair

Dear Chair Price and all Supervisors:

At our School Board meeting on March 9, our Board unanimously approved a funding request of \$257,346,842 for the 2023-24 fiscal year. On behalf of our Board, I respectfully submit this funding request for your review and approval.

Virginia's code requires a School Board to develop and approve a needs-based budget and your own strategic plan envisions a community with exceptional educational opportunities. The funding request we present to you is consistent with the commitments promised by these two documents and by a third—Learning for All, the strategic plan for our school division.

This balanced funding request is structured to accomplish the three goals of our strategic plan, which was developed through community partnerships and approved by our Board in the fall of 2021.

- **Thriving Students.** To facilitate learning experiences grounded in high expectations, ensuring the academic and social-emotional development of each while eliminating opportunity, access and achievement gaps;
- **Affirming and Empowering Communities.** To champion the diversity of all life experiences and to support the physical and mental health of students, staff and families so all are actively engaged in our school community; and,
- **Equitable, Transformation Resources.** Attracting and retaining the highest quality staff, developing and maintaining modern facilities and equipment and to provide all resources in an equitable manner that transforms learning experiences and opportunities.

You will find expenditures grouped by the impact they will have in realizing each of these goals, together with a description of how they will accomplish this purpose, a listing of implementation activities and both short- and long-term metrics.

As our superintendent said in his funding request presentation on February 16, *specifically, you will find investments in safety enhancements, directed staffing for reading and intervention specialists at all schools, staffing to keep our class sizes low, and compensation highly competitive in our market to recruit and hire exceptional school and departmental staff to augment our already outstanding team, nearly 2,700 strong.*

The school division is projecting that K-12 enrollment will rise by 136 students and reach 13,721. When pre-K students are added, overall enrollment in division schools next August will top 14,000.

Notable priorities funded next year also include:

- A Learning Recovery Fund to address the lingering impact of the pandemic on student academic achievement with a specific emphasis on implementing the results of the audit now underway to address achievements gaps in reading and math among all student demographic groups;
- An expansion of summer school opportunities with an emphasis on academic enrichment;
- Increased support services for special education and English Learner students;
- Additional security assistants at each middle and high school and funding for a School Resource Officer;
- New investments in student mental health and,
- Career learning academies aligned with high-growth professions in the county.

Overall, this funding request would include an increase of \$14.6 million in revenue from local government and \$4.6 million in additional state funding. Nearly three-fourths of the school division budget next year will be funded by local revenue and nearly 28 percent supported by state revenues.

There undoubtedly will be further adjustments in this request once the 2023-24 fiscal year budget is approved by the state. Among the most significant proposals now before the General Assembly and Governor is one which would add two percent to our employee compensation, raising the possibility of our proposed five percent increase to seven percent.

I will close by again referencing Dr. Haas, who said in a news release from the school division in February that, *Public education has faced challenging times over the past few years at the national and state level; however, I believe Albemarle County residents, families and students, value our schools.*

I join our superintendent in expressing the admiration and gratitude of our School Board for those who have provided input to the budget planning process and for those on the front-line, delivering services and support to the students, families, staff and community partners who comprise the Albemarle County Public Schools community.

Another invaluable contributor to this process has been and will continue to be our relationship with Albemarle County local government, which has worked closely with the school division to provide early and meaningful revenue projections and information and who shares our firm belief in the contributions that a high quality, responsive and innovative public education system will make to the future well-being and prosperity of all county residents.

Respectfully,



Katrina Callsen

School Board Chair, Albemarle County Public Schools