

## ABOUT FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Fairfax County Public Schools website, [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu), provides a wealth of general and specific information including individual school profiles, organizational charts and descriptions, budget information, school attendance boundaries as well as links to Commonwealth sites and information on how parents and citizens can be in a direct informational link. The most complete information is found on school, county ([www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov)) and state ([www.virginia.gov](http://www.virginia.gov)) websites but the following sketch may be of assistance in understanding school operation.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is Virginia's largest school system and the 10th largest in the nation, with about 181,000 students in grades K-12 in Fiscal Year 2015. FCPS is the largest employer in Fairfax County, and one of the largest in Virginia, with over 24,000 positions, about 93% of which are in classrooms and school buildings in direct interaction with students. Funding for its \$2.5 Billion budget (in FY2015) comes primarily from Fairfax County property tax revenues (71%), State aid including sales tax (23%), and the rest from a variety of sources including US aid (2%). All detailed budget materials are also available on the website, as are previous financial documents. The Washington Area Boards of Education (WABE) annually produces a comparison of local school districts on a variety of agreed upon criteria.

An elected School Board (1 member from each Magisterial District and 3 At-Large members) sets the goals of FCPS and adopts the operating budget based largely on the funds made available by the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) in the School Transfer portion of the County Budget. In FY2015, slightly over half of the County Budget went to FCPS, a percentage which has been higher in past years.

School construction and major renovations are funded by voter-approved school bonds, prioritized by the FCPS Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and implemented as bond proceeds are made available by the BOS. See <http://www.fcps.edu/fts/planning/cip.shtml>.

The School Board also employs the Superintendent of Schools who, with a management team, oversees daily operations and implements Board goals. For administrative purposes, schools are divided into 5 Districts, each of which is headed by a District Assistant Superintendent, comprising 5 or 6 high schools, with their respective feeder elementary and middle schools, which are called pyramids. The Mount Vernon, Edison, Lewis, Hayfield and West Potomac pyramids comprise Region 3; South County pyramid is part of Region 4. As shown in the WABE Guide, FCPS has the smallest portion of its budget directed to administration of all local districts. Central management organizational charts can be found at [www.fcps.edu/supt/org.shtml](http://www.fcps.edu/supt/org.shtml).

In addition to School Board goals and oversight, the Commonwealth of Virginia requires public schools to meet or exceed its Standards of Quality (SOQ) which include a variety of staffing, curricula and class size requirements. SOQs provide the basis for state funding, to which the state applies a wealth formula called the Local Composite Index (LCI) to determine actual funding. Virginia also promulgates tests called the Standards of Learning (SOL) which are given at the close of each school year to determine student progress. Virginia uses SOL results to determine accreditation of public schools (private schools are accredited in a different manner and do not take SOLs). The US Department of Education also uses SOL results to determine compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which requires public schools to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in test scores at certain grade levels in order to retain Title I public funding. In addition, the US Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) contains

mandates for educational services for students with learning or other disabilities. The Commonwealth of Virginia has not adopted the federal Common Core, relying on its own SOLs to provide data and assure quality education.

Despite growing racial, ethnic, language and economic diversity, FCPS continues to maintain its status as among the best systems in the United States and to be a critical asset to Fairfax County's continued growth and improvement of quality of life. In addition to its primary mission of educating students, its facilities are an important part of the fabric of County life, providing athletic fields, cultural events, adult and family programs and meeting places for a wide variety of civic and recreational activities, and also form an integral part of regional emergency preparedness.