



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Frequently asked questions about the school budget

(First forum)

Q: Can you explain the eight-period A/B block schedule in schools?

A: Students now take 4 classes one day in blocks of almost an hour and a half, and a different 4 classes on alternating days. Under the potential change, they would take 7 classes, which would meet every day for 45 minutes.

Q: Regarding AB block/honor students, if we roll it into not taking a class every day, how will the students be successful with the reduced amount of homework?

A: Because the homework they're getting now is for an instructional period of an hour and half, it's for two days. They should get about the same amount every two days, but it would be assigned potentially in smaller daily assignments.

Q: Can the middle school schedule be changed to 7 periods instead of high school? High school has so many electives and kid getting ready for college that it might be easier to change middle school.

A: Middle school subjects are mostly mandated, with only a couple of electives. You can't really reduce that. Plus, the savings is in reducing some of those high school electives.

Q: Are music and art teachers assigned to specific schools (referencing 26% reduction in elementary music and art teachers)?

A: Right now, they are. That allows those instructors to get to know their students, work on performances and be an additional resource. The potential cut would see schools sharing those teachers, for less instructional time.

Q: Who do the supplements pay for (referencing the elimination of elementary instructional leader supplement and a 25% reduction of all other supplements)?

A: The instructional leader supplements pay a teacher for the extra work of being the curriculum liaison, helping other teachers develop materials based on curriculum changes or material.

Supplements are also paid to teachers who take on extra duty, such as coaching sports, sponsoring the robotics team, the debate team or the National Honor Society.

Q: Is it true supplements in Hampton have not changed in about 20 years (referencing the elimination of elementary instructional leader supplement and a 25% reduction of all other supplements)?

A: It's certainly true they haven't changed in a long time, and Hampton ranks below many of our peer divisions in what we pay coaches and sponsors of clubs and activities.

Q: Is the student vs. teacher ratio the same equation as daycare providers (referencing reduction of kindergarten instructional assistants from full-time to part-time)?

A: No, the state requirements change as the children get older.

Q: Who are considered 12-month employees (referencing 1.6% pay cut for 12 month employees)?

A: Anyone in administration, but also many school personnel, such as principals, school secretaries, custodians, etc.

Q: Do you know the number of parents who drop off kids vs. kids who ride the school bus (referencing increase the transportation/walk zone from one mile to 1.5 miles)?

A: We know how many ride the bus, but we can't really count how many drive their children vs. children who walk.

Q: How does increasing the walking zone save money?

A: We would need fewer buses and fewer drivers and less fuel to transport fewer children.

Q: Can you solicit PTA to monitor cafeterias (referencing the elimination of cafeteria monitors)?

A: That's certainly a possibility. If not, we won't leave the cafeterias without coverage, but it means someone will pick up that duty instead of doing other things – teachers, principals.

Q: How many instructional aides per pupil (referencing cutting field trips by 50% and adjusting instructional supplies)?

A: This potential cut references a per-pupil allocation that goes to the school to cover such supplies as copies of tests and other supplies purchased at the school level.

Q: Are field trips being lumped in with supplies?

A: They aren't really related, but we grouped those two items because they are per-pupil allocations that go to each school.

Q: What are the teachers buying?

A: Many teachers will tell you that they supplement materials out of their own pocket for classroom supplies, decorations, backup supplies like glue and pencils. Sometimes parents are asked to contribute items, say tissues or wipes, but many are unable.

Q: Did Hampton lose federal impact funding? Education is sucking the life out of us? What is causing the disparity?

A: At the moment, we are still getting federal funding that helps to compensate for the cost of education those whose families work and/or live on base for the lack of local taxes. We don't know for sure how the current federal budget issues might affect that going forward. The big disparity is caused

by the state, which has decreased its support of education. Hampton alone has lost \$21 million in state funds over the past 4 years.

Q: Is it accurate that if a 16-cent tax rate increase is approved, that the cuts and 7-class schedule in the high schools will not occur?

A: We can't guarantee that no cuts will be made because we don't have all the information yet, but we are planning for next year along a path that would allow us to keep the 8 blocks if funding is approved. We weren't initially sure that was possible, but it is.

Q: What formula do the schools use to estimate costs/expenses? What goes into schools per pupil expenditure? Do you include building costs, capital improvement, and teacher salary?

A: When we look at the total cost per pupil we take all the schools' costs and divide by the number of students.

Q: Have there ever been cuts to the school board budget? All school budget cuts are focused on staff and facilities. Where are cuts to School Board budget?

A: The School Board budget is a very small percentage of our expenses.

Q: If the 16-cent increase is approved, will transportation to the Magnet schools be restored for next year?

A: That is not planned.

Q: Consideration could be given to changing the schedule for teacher assistants, perhaps has them come in at a later time?

A: If we reduce the instructional aides to part time, we will make every effort to maximize their time, but they won't be in the classroom for the full day.

Q: If the tax increase is funded, what cuts comes back first. Teachers? Block day? What is the decision process for reinstating these cuts?

A: That's part of what this public process is about – finding out what the majority of our citizens think is most important. In addition, the School Board will hold public hearings on the budget. Ultimately, the School Board will vote on the final budget.

Q: How many people here tonight are city/school employees?

A: Employees who are city residents are invited to participate just like any other homeowner. We pay taxes and use the city and school services as well. Note that many of the employees here are not polling, though, and are here to help support and answer questions.

(Later forums)

Q: Regarding the 7 period block, does the time they (students) are released change?

A: School dismissal is currently 3:09 and the proposed release time will be 3:10 if a 7-period schedule is adopted.

Q: How does the new 7-period schedule affect IEP for kids with learning trouble who are double blocked now on the 8-bell schedule?

Students will continue to be able to take double-blocked classes in the 7-period schedule.

Q: Why does Physical Education and Health have to be taken up to the 10th grade?

A: Two credits of health and physical education are required for graduation and may be taken at any grade level during high school.

Q: How will the student make up the requirements needed with a 7 period day?

A: Seven periods for four years provides 28 credits and affords students the opportunity to earn any of the Virginia diploma types, including the Advanced Studies Diploma.

Q: Why are we considering cutting teacher positions? This would increase class sizes and classes are too huge already!

A: Some teaching positions are recommended for elimination due to declining enrollment. Other positions are part of the proposed budget changes to close the budget gap.

Q: Why is the state underfunding Hampton? Why does the state add lottery money for education and then take an equal amount from education and put that money in the general fund?

A: The state is not specifically underfunding Hampton – all school divisions in Virginia have been affected by the economic downturn of the last few years. Hampton receives its funding from the state based on our local composite index (a measure of the wealth of a locality compared to others in the state) and based on benchmarks that are set for funding positions required under the Standards of Quality. Funding is also based on the projected student enrollment in a division.

Q: What happens to the classroom ratio? Where is the opportunity to make up courses when you cannot afford summer school?

A: We currently staff at a ratio of 24:1 in English/language arts and 25:1 in other areas with the exception of select CTE courses. The staffing ratio is anticipated to remain the same in a 7-period schedule. While opportunities for online courses and other recovery opportunities may be available to students, transitioning to a 7-period schedule may impact recovery opportunities.

Q: When or how can we get away from the Standards of Learning?

A: This is a requirement of the Commonwealth of Virginia and not something over which the school division has any control.

Q: What is the Blue Phantom Inn? Purpose?

A: This unique program is a magnet for students desiring a career in the food and beverage industry. The program starts with a transition class for those who want to experience the industry. Culinary Arts I – IV are for serious students who desire a career as a Sous Chef, Executive Chef, or want to work in food service. Students earn National Restaurant Association industry credentials in [ServSafe](#), learn using the [ProSTART](#) curriculum system, basic kitchen safety and health in a Virginia Health Department inspected kitchen, run a working restaurant with cash customers, and gain additional professional experiences. The Blue Phantom Inn has been featured in Southern Living magazine.

Q: What are they going to do with the jobs of part-time people (custodian, subs)?

A: If we outsource custodial services, it will impact all custodians – full time, part time and substitute.

Q: What’s the dropout rate currently in the city and how will the proposed change impact on the rate?

A: The dropout rate is 5.2%. It is not anticipated that the proposed schedule change will negatively impact the dropout rate.

Q: Why not cut the school administrators salary (over \$100,000) instead of cutting services?

A: The current budget proposal includes a change in twelve month contracts from 249 to 245 days per year. This results in a 1.6% salary reduction for all twelve month employees, including all of those who make more than \$100,000.

Q: Where does the lottery money go?

A: Lottery money is used to provide funding for at-risk students, preschool education, smaller class sizes in grades K-3, special education regional programs, English as a second language, early reading intervention, foster care, and a portion of textbooks. It is not “additional” money received by school divisions, but part of the total funding received from the state.

Q: How will the budget cuts impact the Title I Program?

A: The cuts to the operating budget do not impact the Title I program since it is in a separate fund. Title I is funded with federal grant money. However, there is a possible impact due to the effect of sequestration, which could result in a reduction in funding of 5-10%.

Q: Does the school division understand the difference in the education and training between RN’s and LPN’s and how this will impact our children, especially with the increasing medical needs of our children?

A: Yes. Our health services director is already working on plans to mitigate the effects of the staff changes.

Q: Every high school in Newport News offers Physics. What’s needed to bring Physics to Bethel High School?

A: It is anticipated that Bethel High School will offer physics in 2013-14 based on student interest.

Q: Earning an associate’s degree in paraprofessional education helps an aide perform better for teachers and students. How does one pay back college bills without a permanent position?

A: We understand the stress this proposed budget has on a number of our employees who may be impacted. We encourage all employees (including instructional assistants) impacted by this proposed reduction to apply for any full time position in Hampton City Schools for which they are qualified. In the meantime, please know that the administration and School Board are actively working to advocate for additional revenues in the form of a tax increase. We will not know the outcome of this until City Council passes its budget in May.

Q: Should we reduce our kindergarten instructional assistants to part-time and seriously affect our kindergarten children’s learning?

A: See below.

Q: How did the school system zero in on T/A part-time hours when this is my only FT job? Why outsource custodian jobs? These are their full-time jobs also.

A: Recognizing the value of these positions and reducing the hours allows us to continue providing support in every kindergarten classroom despite the budget challenges we are facing. We truly regret the impact of these proposed cuts on our employees, but must continue to focus on the support we provide to our students.

Q: The schools that were closed and are now vacant, are there any costs associated with these properties? If so, what are they? Do they impact our budget?

A: Schools closed in the last few years include Lee, Mallory, Merrimack and Wythe elementary schools, Mary Peake 3-5 Gifted Center and Spratley Middle School. Spratley was repurposed into a 3-8 gifted center, and Lee has been repurposed into an adult and alternative learning campus. We have rent-paying tenants occupying space at Mary Peake and Mallory. We continue to pay utilities (water and electric) for all of the schools; however, the rent for Mallory and Mary Peake covers the costs for those buildings. The buildings that do not have tenants have minimal levels of utilities running in order to keep the security systems operable and to maintain a climate that prohibits building deterioration.

Q: What happens to the building (Moton) if it is closed?

A: A final determination has not yet been made; however, our approach has been to find an appropriate reuse for the building (see above).

Q: Instead of cutting instructional assistants, cafeteria monitors, guidance counselors, etc. who work directly with the students shouldn't we be cutting from the central administration center, including Human Resources, secretaries etc. who do not affect the students?

A: We hate to make any reductions since every position in Hampton City Schools exists to support teaching and learning. Since the 2010 fiscal year the school division has cut 376 full time equivalent positions. Of those, 27.9% of the non-school based employees are gone, compared to 12.1% of the school based employees. Our School Administrative Center operates with a minimal staffing level, especially when compared to surrounding school divisions. As an example, HCS has approximately one executive level position for every 2070 students, while Newport News has approximately one for every 1862 students, Norfolk has approximately one for every 1550 students, and W-JCC has approximately one for every 1350 students. We will continue to review the staffing level at SAC for further efficiencies.

Q: What is the impact on the middle school? Will their block classes change?

A: The middle school proposal will eliminate teaming in some schools, resulting in a junior high school model. Block scheduling is expected to remain in the middle schools. The need to move to a junior high model is dependent upon the teacher-student ratio in a given school.

Q: Does HCS plan to close schools?

A: Moton is on the list of budget reductions for FY14. While the facility itself will be closed, the program will be relocated to other schools within the division. This proposal, in many cases, may create an opportunity for four-year-olds to receive pre-kindergarten services in their zoned schools and will result in an aligned PK-5 instructional program. We do not anticipate a change in the number of pre-kindergarten students we serve.