



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA**

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Good evening Chairman Storck, Superintendent Dale and School Board members. I am Mary Grace Lintz, Acting President of the Fairfax Area League of Women Voters. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

The League of Women Voters is a strong supporter of public education and we know you strive to provide a consistently good education to a diverse student population. We recognize that this is a tough job especially now that fiscal resources are even more constrained than last year.

The proposed budget would save \$11 million by increasing general education class size by 0.5 students. The League believes that the main considerations in determining pupil/teacher ratios should be instructional goals and enhancing student achievement. The proposed reduction keeps FCPS within State requirements; however, we hope that this will not produce a negative effect on student achievement.

Bus replacement is a necessary component of transportation planning. Therefore, in spite of budget restrictions and a slight decrease, we were happy to see that funds were still being used for the lease/purchase of nearly 100 replacement buses. While it will not lower the average age of the bus fleet, this funding will keep the fleet's average age from increasing at a time when more students should be encouraged to take the bus.

We know that expanding foreign language in the elementary schools (FLES) is a School Board priority. But, we do not believe that there is sufficient data to prove its benefits yet to warrant expansion when funding is limited.

The League generally supports program innovations when they are carefully evaluated and proven by piloting. Superintendent Dale explained to the members of the Business and Community Advisory Council on January 29 that the proposed change in the summer school program would reduce the number of students from 16,000 to 12,000. He also explained that it was piloted at several elementary schools in the summer of 2007. We are concerned about implementing such a major change system-wide before a careful evaluation of the results of a pilot program. For example, summer school is used to improve student performance. Will the proposed change negatively affect this goal? We believe the community should have an opportunity to review and comment on such a major initiative as a separate agenda item and not simply as part of overall response to the budget.

We are concerned about the expansion of the Teacher Leadership Program. Enlarging this program to meet needs currently provided through several other programs is presented without sufficient analysis of teacher contract hours, student hours and the success or limitations of the programs as they are now being delivered. This is another area where community input beyond comment on the budget is necessary.

We believe the proposed budget does not have enough educational justification or rationale to explain these major shifts in funding. It appears that proposals critically affecting how Fairfax County Schools deliver public education are being made without adequate evaluation and sufficient information for meaningful input from the community. We urge you, School Board members as policy makers, to ensure that the impact of major restructurings on the students and their quality of education is carefully monitored. Without adequate oversight and review, this is an uncertain budget in uncertain times.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight, and for your continuing efforts to educate our children and grandchildren.

*Mary Grace Lintz*

Acting President