



**ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Office of the Superintendent**

**MEMORANDUM**

**01/19/07**

**TO: School Board Members**

**FROM: Rob Smith**

**SUBJECT: Response to Civic Federation Questions**

Please find below the five questions asked at the December 5, 2006 Civic Federation meeting to which we indicated we would provide a written response. Following each question is an answer prepared by staff.

*Question #1: Is Debt Service Part of the Cost per Pupil Calculation?*

*Response.* Arlington Public Schools reports the cost per pupil in both the budget and the Washington Area Boards of Education (WABE) guide using the methodology established by WABE. The cost per pupil is also calculated by the State using a different methodology. The specifics of each method are provided below. Neither method includes Debt Service in the calculation.

WABE	State
Enrollment: Total including pre-K	Enrollment: Total less pre-K
Included:	Included:
School Operating Fund (total)	School Operating Fund (total)
Grants & Restricted (Entitlement only)	Grants & Restricted (total)
Capital Projects (MC/MM only)	Capital Projects Fund (Architects fees)
Police Services (in Comm. Act Fund)	Community Act Fund (total)
	Cafeteria Fund (total)
	Comp Services Fund (total)
	Bond Fund (Architects fees)
Excluded:	Excluded:
Debt Service	Debt Service
Community Act Fund (except Police Services)	Capital Projects Fund (remainder)
Cafeteria Fund (total)	Technology (hardware additions)
Comp Services Fund (total)	Technology (infrastructure additions)
Adult Education (in SOF)	Adult Education (in SOF and CAF)
Summer School (self-funded portion)	Pre-K expenditures
	Capital Outlay (in SOF)
	Teen Parenting (total)

*Question 2: Information was shared that social workers were transporting students in the Teen Parenting program to school. Is there a problem with supervision of the program?*

Response: Social workers do not typically transport students to school at the Teen Parenting Program. There is not a problem with supervision of the program. As part of grant funds, the Teen Parenting Program has employed outreach staff to monitor and follow-up on attendance issues with individual students since attendance at school is essential for the long term academic success of students in the Teen Parenting Program. Although it is not a regular occurrence, the Teen Parenting outreach staff have been known to use the program's vans, for which they are licensed to operate for the transport of students, to ensure an individual's attendance at school. Other methods have included the use of contract services with Red Top Cab to provide supplemental transportation services.

*Question 3: Do we have information on the impact of the grade six reading program on student performance?*

*Response:* Although we have not conducted a formal evaluation of the impact of the grade six reading program on student performance, we have monitored the initiative, made changes in response to feedback about the program, and are implementing procedures to provide formal evaluation information.

A little background information might be helpful. The grade six reading initiative was implemented because of concerns that even the most able readers were lacking fundamental skills in some areas of reading. The June 2005 secondary English program evaluation was conducted using data prior to the implementation of the grade six reading initiative, so therefore, did not include the grade six reading initiative. Also, the first cohort of students to participate in the grade six reading initiative is in grade eight this year (06-07). Even if one were to consider this coming spring's (2007) SOL performance on the grade eight SOL in reading, this would not be a reasonable comparison since in spring 06, the grade eight reading SOL was changed to include only grade eight reading SOL and in prior years, it included grade six, seven, and eight reading SOL. Also, some students do not take the SOL but take another reading test that serves as a proxy for the SOL grade level reading test. These other assessments include the Stanford English Language Proficiency (SELP) reading test for some LEP students and the Virginia Alternative Assessment Program (VAAP) for some students with disabilities.

Monitoring from the initial year of implementation of the grade six reading initiative (04-05 school year) indicated the need for more challenging materials for more advanced readers. This was accomplished through a summer 2005 curriculum writing initiative which was implemented in schools in fall 2005. Additional monitoring plans included the use of pre-post test administration of the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment, which is a standardized assessment of reading comprehension. There were initial concerns about the non-standard administration of the DRP and lack of electronic results, so while anecdotally the results were helpful to individual teachers, no generalizable, valid DRP results are available. Subsequent DRP results have not yet been disaggregated. With secondary English Language Arts textbook adoption and secondary and elementary English Language Arts program evaluations complete,

and elementary English Language Arts textbook adoption now underway, it is staff’s intent to further evaluate the grade six reading initiative.

Although it is difficult to control for all of the variables that might impact performance on AYP in reading (SOL and proxy exam results) and the expansion of reading testing in spring 2006 to include reading tests in grades six, seven, and eight, the following comparisons (summarized in the table below) between the five comprehensive middle schools for spring 05 and spring 06 may be an indication of the success of the grade six reading initiative:

- Overall reading pass rates increased by between 3 (Gunston) and 8 (Jefferson and Swanson) percentage points.
- At four schools, the overall reading pass rates for black students increased by between 11 (Kenmore) and 29 (Swanson) percentage points (the increase at Gunston for black students was one percentage point).
- Overall reading pass rates for white students remained constant or increased slightly at all schools.

Year	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006		
Target	65%	69%	65%	69%	65%	69%		
	% passed	% passed	% passed	% passed	% passed	% passed		
<b>Gunston</b>		<b>Jefferson</b>		<b>Williamsburg</b>				
Total	70%	73%	Total	62%	70%	Total	89%	92%
Black	63%	64%	Black	48%	67%	Black	59%	67%
Hispanic	60%	65%	Hispanic	53%	60%	Hispanic	81%	69%
White	93%	93%	White	88%	90%	White	96%	97%
Econ.Dis.	58%	63%	Econ.Dis.	49%	64%	Econ.Dis.	64%	59%
LEP	46%	59%	LEP	43%	54%	LEP	67%	63%
SWD	38%	43%	SWD	32%	39%	SWD	61%	68%
<b>Kenmore</b>		<b>Swanson</b>						
Total	64%	71%	Total	82%	90%			
Black	56%	67%	Black	45%	84%			
Hispanic	55%	57%	Hispanic	52%	65%			
White	91%	96%	White	95%	95%			
Econ.Dis.	52%	56%	Econ.Dis.	51%	64%			
LEP	40%	50%	LEP	47%	65%			
SWD	40%	45%	SWD	53%	64%			

*Question 4: Do instructional assistants receive funds to defray health care insurance premiums upon retirement?*

*Response:* Representatives of the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) confirm that assistants are eligible to receive the health care credit. An email received from a VRS representative on December 6, 2006, stated the following.

“All employees under the professional code (40106) who are reported to the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) for creditable compensation are eligible for the health credit as long as they have at least 15 years of service. The service can be earned or a combination of earned and purchased service.”

*Question 5: Which Arlington Public Schools employees are eligible to receive funds to defray health care insurance premium costs upon retirement and which employees are not eligible for the funds?*

*Response:*

- Employees paid as teachers, administrators, assistants, clerical and technical are **eligible** for health care credit under the VRS.
- All other employees including food service managers and workers, bus drivers, maintenance and custodial staff, and Extended Day workers are **ineligible** for health care credit under the VRS.