

Virginia: At the budget work session meeting of the Essex County Board of Supervisors held on Monday, March 27, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Essex High School Library

Board of Supervisors Present: Robert Akers, Jr., Chairman
Ronnie G. Gill, Vice Chairman
Edwin E. Smith, Jr., Supervisor (Virtual)
Sidney N. Johnson, Supervisor
John C. Magruder, Supervisor

County Administration Present: April Rounds, Interim County Administrator, Deputy Clerk

School Board Present: Raymond Whitaker, Board Chair
Scott Croxton, Board Vice-Chair
Garlyn Bundy, Board Member
Andrea Sydnor, Board Member
Sharon Saunders, Board Clerk

Superintendent: Dr. Harry R. Thomas, III

Absent: Mike Wind, Board Member

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Akers called the Board of Supervisors Budget Work Session of March 27, 2023, to order.

Chairman Whitaker called the School Board Budget Work Session of March 27, 2023 to order.

Pledge

ROLL CALL

The Clerk called out the roll for the Board of Supervisors; a quorum was met.

Mrs. Saunders called out the roll for the School board; a quorum was met.

DISCUSSION

Raymond Whitaker stated he has a few comments. These do not reflect the school board. As school board chair educating students in Essex County Schools is of utmost importance and priority. Our students are entitled to a high quality education to be successful, productive and responsible global citizens. Based on the code of Virginia, School Boards are asked to provide a needs based budget and Essex County Schools have been compliant. In order to develop, attract and maintain a highly qualified workforce that reflects our community the Essex County school board needs the necessary funding. To date the Essex County Board of supervisors has cut the schools budget by \$500,000. This is wrong. Inflation has increased so how can you address the funding which makes an adverse effect on education. During Dr. Thomas' tenure no new funding has been granted in support of our schools. Funding disparities in our school district will alter the opportunities for students to meet their academic potential. A budget cut doesn't take us in the right direction. How can you members of the Essex County Board of Supervisors deny our students a quality education which will take them to where they need to

be in the 21st century. Without the necessary funds how can we be competitive with other counties or any other entities. How can we reach the goal of full accreditation at all three schools. Failure to provide the necessary funding will result in the Essex County Public Schools losing its state share of funding which would be detrimental to the students of Essex County. By law we are obligated to do everything necessary to ensure all students receive a fair education. This means that additional funding is needed not less funding. Please do not do any justice to our students and staff again this year by taking funds. Show that you care about the students and staff in the Essex County Public School system. Give to the school what is needed. Full funding not level funding. Invest in our schools so that we can be proud. Other schools will see that Essex County schools system is 1) a great place for educating our children and 2) Essex County is a great place to live and a great place to pursue their career and opportunities. As a tax payer I would like to know why all tax paying citizens of Essex County do not receive the same tax rates as though with land use property. Property assessments are inflated on everyone else while the Board of Supervisors ease the burden on the Land Use Owners. Is this fair?

Chairman Akers stated that as a board they do not determine raises or salaries. They do not determine the academic performance for the duties that are required. They are to allocate the appropriate funding that they can given all the services including public safety that are available. At this point in time there has been no hard decision the School board has yet to adopt a budget and submit it to the board of supervisors. We have not adopted a budget, we used a recommended level funding of last year which was provided to us to build into our budget. Last week, we had length discussions that we have a \$2,000,000 deficit in the County that we had to bring down to break even. There has been nothing cut from anywhere. To say we have cut funding is an unfair statement. You have required local effort and required local match. This county, to the best of my knowledge, as always funded above and beyond required local effort which is required by SOQ. At this point in time there has nothing that has been approved because nothing has been adopted.

Dr. Thomas stated they have a presentation that takes us through the process of how we have developed the funding figures to date. They will talk about the progress we have experienced and reading instruction that will yield great results. Dr. Thomas, Libby Franklin, Mrs. Blount and Mr. Gross will make the presentation.

Dr. Thomas stated that full accreditation is at the forefront of their work. The staff they employ are vital in terms of ensuring that we meet full accreditation.



Chasing Excellence:

*Briefing to the BOS
Budget Analysis
Budget Development Update
FY2024*

Dr. Harry R. Thomas, III, Essex County Public Schools Superintendent
Essex County Public Schools Division Leadership Team

ECPS Strategic Plan Goals

ECPS Goal #1: Student Achievement

Essex County Public Schools will engage students in learning opportunities to meet the individual educational needs of each student emphasizing student achievement, personal aspirations, and college and career readiness that prepares students for the local, national, and global economy.

ECPS Goal #2: Highly Qualified Staff

Essex County Public Schools will recruit high-quality staff and retain the division's exemplary workforce by creating an environment where transparency and trust are the norm that reflect the community.

ECPS Goal #3: School Environment

Essex County Public Schools will ensure a fully-integrated approach to safety and security that encompasses both the physical environment and the social/emotional needs of students in promoting a positive educational culture with community support.

ECPS Goal #4: Community and School Relations

Essex County Public Schools will promote, facilitate, and enhance partnerships and communications between the schools, students, and the community.



Our Story, Our Gains, and Our Growth...

Essex County has the highest percentile rank since CIP started collecting the data in 2006!

Essex County is ranked 16th in the state when looking at rank improvement this year!

Essex High School ranked 14th in gains out of all 301 schools in the CIP Consortium!

ALL SOL Tests

Year	Division	Rank
2022	Essex County	111th
2019	Essex County	126th
2018	Essex County	129th
2017	Essex County	125th
2016	Essex County	125th
2015	Essex County	121st
2014	Essex County	123rd
2013	Essex County	114th
2012	Essex County	113th
2011	Essex County	121st
2010	Essex County	118th
2009	Essex County	115th
2008	Essex County	124th
2007	Essex County	120th
2006	Essex County	128th

EHS 2022 Fall Preliminary Accreditation Data By Course

Content	School	2021	2022	Gains
Math 8	EHS	NA	66%	NA
Algebra 1	EHS	80%	100%	20%
Geometry	EHS	65%	67%	2%
Algebra II	EHS	100%	100%	0%
Reading 8	EHS	50%	67%	17%
EOC Reading 11	EHS	62%	78%	16%
Science 8	EHS	56%	56%	0%
Biology	EHS	45%	59%	14%



On-Time Graduation Rate



2019-2020 = 95%
2020-2021 = 95%
2021-2022 = 93%

Virginia Department of Education Projected FY 2023 & FY 2024 State Payments

ESSEX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS [2022–2024 Composite Index: 0.4675]			
Projected FY 2023 Unadjusted ADM ¹	Projected FY 2023 Adjusted ADM ¹	Projected FY 2024 Unadjusted ADM ¹	Projected FY 2024 Adjusted ADM ¹
1,214	1,214	1,180	1,180
FY 2023		FY 2024	
FY 2023 State Share	FY 2023 Local Share	FY 2024 State Share	FY 2024 Local Share
\$11,489,302	\$7,614,441	\$10,799,134	\$7,578,375



As of June 6, 2022, the Virginia Department of Education provided to all school divisions Projected FY 2023 and Projected FY 2024 state payments based on amendments adopted by the 2022 Special Session I General Assembly to the 2022-2024 Biennial Budget as introduced (HB 30). Standards of Quality (SOQ), Incentive, Categorical, and Lottery-Funded Programs in direct aid to public education are detailed here.

¹ ADM Values shown are based on local projections of March 31 ARM for FY 2023 and FY 2024.



Region III, FY24 Comp Package

School Division	FY24 Salary/Step/COLA	FY24 Proposed 0 Year Experience Teachers Salary	Health Ins. Premium Status/Provider
Caroline	Not Determined	\$50k	8.8 Increase-TLC
CBGS	6%	\$46k	14% Increase
King and Queen	7%	TBD	4% Increase
Lancaster	7%	\$47K	9.9% Increase
Westmoreland	7%	Over \$50k	9.9% Increase



Required Local Effort Comparison

School Division	FY22 Required Local Effort	FY22 Actual Local Effort Expenditures	FY22 Percent Local Effort Above RLE
Caroline	\$10,032,566	\$15,068,649	50.38%
Hanover	\$52,385,246	\$95,912,687	83.09%
King and Queen	\$3,072,539	\$3,924,712	27.74%
Lancaster	\$5,762,722	\$11,430,719	96.79%
Westmoreland	\$6,616,718	\$12,145,240	83.55%



Required Local Effort Comparison

School Division	FY22 Required Local Effort	FY22 Actual Local Effort Expenditures	FY22 Percent Local Effort Above RLE
Essex	\$5,578,670	\$7,009,777	25.65%
Richmond County	\$3,059,670	\$4,666,533	52.52%

*Data was reported by school division on the 2021-2022 Annual School Report.

FY24 School Division Operating Budget Details



Revenue/ Exp for FY23:	\$18,474,087
Expenditures for FY24:	\$19,344,084
Revenue of FY24:	\$18,512,510
Shortfall:	\$831,574
Enrollment:	1253-66=1187

Reading Journey

Essex County Public Schools

Dr. Blount

What is the Journey?

A study of our **current practices** coupled with **data analysis**, **intense intervention**, and a comparison of our program to the **research**.

13

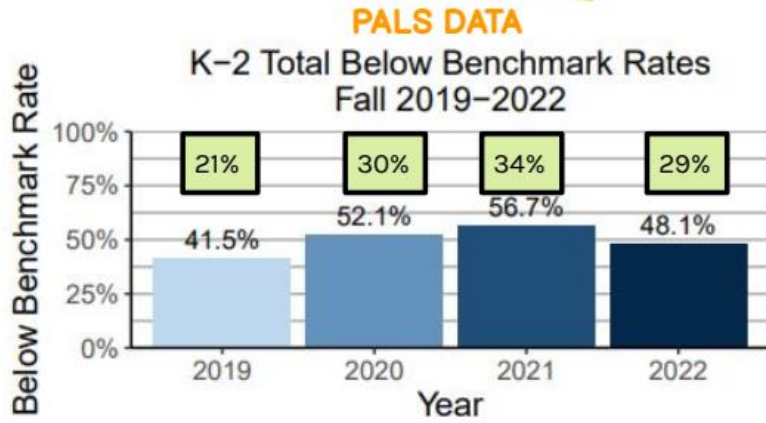
WHY the journey?

The data:

- ◆ We noticed that our data was **trending in the wrong direction/flat** on multiple indicators
 - ◇ PALS
 - ◇ Reading on Grade Level
 - ◇ SOL Data

14

WHY the journey? The data says!



15

WHY the journey? The data says!

Reading on Grade Level

School	TES	JCIS
Reading on Grade Level	33%	40%

16

WHY the journey? The data says!

SOL Historical Data

SOL Test	2015 2016	2016 2017	2017 2018	2018 2019	2020 2021	2021 2022
Division Level Reading Pass	72%	71%	67%	68%	54%	61%

17

What are we doing about this...

MISSION = All students reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade!

1. Research Based Best Practice - Dr. Dewitz
 - a. Study our programs
 - b. Make changes for impact
2. Training and Professional Development
 - a. Teachers
 - b. Paraprofessionals
3. Scope and Sequence of Phonics Skills Progression
4. Building up our book rooms - new relevant reading materials

18

What are we doing about this...

MISSION = All students reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade!

4. Remediation/Intervention - JCIS and TES
 - a. EIRI - Early Intervention for Reading Initiative
 - i. Virginia Department of Education's expectations
 - ii. Any student that does not pass PALS
 - iii. Any student reading below grade level
 - iv. SHALL receive early intervention

19

What are we doing about this...

MISSION = All students reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade!

5. Using the Research
 - a. The research tells us that intervention for students struggling to read should happen as early as possible - starting no later than first grade
 - b. And should continue, with high intensity, until the student is reading on grade level
6. Our paraprofessionals are the bulk of the employees delivering this level of intense intervention.

20

What are we doing about this...

On any given day....

Tappahannock Elementary School

- ❑ Paraprofessionals conduct **27 small groups** of reading lessons **PER DAY**
- ❑ Approximately **135 students** benefit from this intervention **PER DAY**

James H. Cary Intermediate School

- ❑ Paraprofessionals conduct **15 small groups** of reading lessons **PER DAY**
- ❑ Paraprofessionals conduct **2 digital reading** interventions **PER DAY**
- ❑ Approximately **125 students** benefit from this intervention **PER DAY**

21

What are we doing about this...

Concerns and Next Steps....

- ❑ How will we continue to provide this level of needed support for our students to afford them the opportunity to read on grade level without the paraprofessionals?
- ❑ Is there a model we can use that will allow us to service the same amount of students that need our support without the paraprofessionals?

22

ECPS Accomplishments Since August of 2019

- Completion of the Athletic Concession Stand: \$250k
- Completion of EHS Track: \$499k (Bids between \$840k to \$1 Mill+)
- Completion of a Badge Entry and Upgraded Camera System: \$500k
- Work Started on a Grandstand Upgrade (between \$250-500k)
- Implementation of JROTC Program-Anticipated Cost of \$250k in Startup Costs
- Upgrades of the HVAC System at TES: \$500k
- Two Electric Buses: \$1 Million
- Technology Upgrades: \$ 1 Million
- Highest Aggregate SOL Achievement Ever -111 in 2022 (16 most improved)
- Implemented Synchronous and Asynchronous Virtual Instruction
- New Instructional Accountability Model (Cited by VDOE as an exemplar)
- New Instructional Model (16 most improved system in Commonwealth)
- Enhanced Literacy Program and Model
- 14th Most Improved High School and School Division in VA (Out of 132)



**Thank you for your
attention!**

***Budget Development Update
FY2024***

**Dr. Harry R. Thomas, III, Essex County Public Schools Superintendent
Essex County Public Schools Division Leadership Team**

Chairman Akers asked if there was a budget request at this point in time?

Dr. Thomas stated that their board will meet on the 13th of April and will approve an operating budget. That delay came due to the school board wanting to restructure the type of raise that they had in the budget.

Chairman Akers asked if they were still basing the SOQ on 1180? Dr. Thomas stated that is correct. Chairman Akers reiterated that the why and how it is used does not fall on the Board of Supervisors. It is only the ask and what can be provided.

Johnson asked about the reading for 2021 stated that they asked for a reading specialist and he is sorry that they turned them down

Dr. Thomas made a clarification on how the enrollment is used to create budget. The two figures of 1214 vs 1180 you have your enrollment and you have the enrollment you can use to develop your budget. In the fall we go with those figures and we have to produce an actual enrollment based on what we projected. Our current enrollment is 1253 but you have to take out your placement students and your prek students, which you can not get funding for. This fall we based our budget on 1214 but as we drilled in to that the number we could give to the state was 1130. Essentially we have been operating on a budget deficit since the fall. We could have taken the position to really reduce our staff then. What we have done is used our ESSR funds to offset of enrollment.

Chairman Akers stated that the number that sticks out and that people reference is \$800,000 deficit. Almost all of that is a reduction of the state not the locality.

Dr. Thomas stated it is driven by the difference of enrollment from the prior year which is the 1214 vs the current enrollment.

Chairman Akers stated that the discussion has been whether the County has cut \$500,000 from the school budget and that is not entirely true. The school transfer outs has been what has driven that. Where that number has gone up and projecting \$1,800,000 for 20+ students over the next year due to the law that was changed allowing private Day schools to charge whatever rate they want.

Dr. Thomas disagreed, the private day placements have driven funding substantially. We have roughly 22 students many of those were transfer students. It is a burden that the Schools have to pick up. The \$500,000 that Mr. Whitaker is talking about is over the past four years the county reducing revenue by \$250,000 in two separate years. The county local share was significantly more than local effort and now more into balance.

Chairman Akers would agree. Last year when the two met they looked at that was needed with the SOQ to maximize the state funding and we agreed. He doesn't see that being any different this year. The only thing we talked about reducing down is that the school pays for its proportionate share of the private day placements which just so happens to be about \$500,000 increase to what it has in years past.

Dr. Thomas stated that this is a byproduct of the effort of the administrators across the division to deal with the discipline. Discipline is not where it needs to be but we have taken an assertive approach to it. Another 15 students in alternative setting to make classrooms conducive. We have discussed the possibility of developing a program internally that could help mitigate those costs.

Chairman Akers stated that the board has a willingness to help put something like that in place.

Supervisor Smith stated that without a budget to look at there isn't much discuss.

Vice Chairman Gill stated that the schools are in a better place then where they were. Since there is not a budget to look at we have used the state calculation tool showed us which is about \$7,600,000 which

is 48% above the state mandated Standards of Quality. We provided that amount last year and have put that in for this year right now and the deficiency is because of the state.

Dr. Thomas asked what iteration of the budget they are looking at?

Vice Chairman Gill stated it was the one that Dr. Thomas gave him that was dated June of 2022 it's the same number that Libby showed in the presentation. The state has not approved a final budget yet either.

Vice Chairman Gill stated sometimes with surplus schools could ask for that surplus to be reinvested back in the school. This school system has had a surplus the past couple year where there has been a lot of grant money out there. We could possibly reallocate the surplus if there was something that was needed at the school.

Supervisor Magruder last year in the request to maximize state funding we met that need. With the understanding that any surplus left over we would mark half of that surplus for CIP work. Are we still on that same lever?

Dr. Thomas stated they talked and had a discussion about that but do not know if we took affirmative action as a board in terms of language that would codify that.

The school board stated they did take action in the form of a resolution to that effect. Chairman Akers stated that the county has language for that but just needs to adopt the resolution.

Mr. Croxton stated he does not believe that the splitting 50/50 was in the proposal but that is certainly reasonable.

Supervisor Magruder stated that we are returning surplus funds back to the schools. In the seven years he has been on the board the schools have had a surplus. It is not a budget cut when there are surpluses, we just reduced the surplus. The following year there was still as surplus. He understands that some of the surplus is from two-year grants.

Dr. Thomas disagrees the \$450,000 surplus was supplanting grant money they already had. They did not get their full allocation. For the last 3 years the three different finance directors have said the school did not get their full accounting and full allocation from the county. That surplus is not get full allocation not getting excess funds. They can provide the documentation. We had \$450,000 in ESSER obligations that were outstanding, the county transferred funding to get us to \$0. That appears as a surplus when it is using the grant money and not being reimbursed.

Supervisor Magruder on the allotment because the county controls the money we only allocate the money as you give us the bills. We are not withholding funds we are just allocating what you all have spent.

Dr. Thomas the schools do not provide the county with bills they look at the expenditures and they provide funding to cover the expenditures. The state provides us a revenue. The revenue from an operations stand point and the revenue we receive from grants is comingled. That money is not separated out for operating vs money that is received back through grants.

Chairman Akers stated that we will work better at more of the auditing to make sure as to what is grant money vs what would be a surplus.

Supervisor Magruder asked about technology access is important. Broadband \$2,000,000 ESSER Funds plus \$2,000,000 county asked about school esser fund for \$500,000?

Dr. Thomas met Lombardo and they had discussed \$300,000 that was not ESSER funds but infrastructure funding. The Infrastructure technology or infrastructure upgrades, we could not give esser funds for broadband because it was not allowable but would entertain the idea to pay down a debt service to help with broadband. We would like to try to do that but we have had to use ESSER funds to supplant employment so that we did not have to have a reduction. We would like to do our due diligence to make sure we could handle a \$300,000 to the county.

Supervisor Magruder wants a date to know when that decision could be made.

Dr. Thomas stated a date could be given in a week.

Chairman Akers stated that they allocated the joint maintenance facility in the CIP and is part of \$2,000,000 that we will be trying to work out of.

Dr. Thomas stated that on April 10th they go to town for lot line adjustment.

Supervisor Magruder asked if the plans include an access road.

Dr. Thomas said yes they do.

Akers stated this would be great.

Mr. Croxton access road would be out for bid. The positive traffic benefit computed 100 turns off marsh st and could eliminate 62 turns and get rid of all left turns with the access road.

Mrs. Bundy apologized about not having budget. She stated that she wished the board was there earlier to hear the public comments from our staff members. She wants very best for the schools. The board members also need to focus on economic development so funding can increase.

Sydnor paraprofessionals don't get paid enough. We hope it works out.

Chairman Akers stated there are tough decisions that need to be made at the top and maybe thats where they should start.

Supervisor Smith stated had he known about meeting prior he would be there.

ADJOURN

Whitaker adjourned the school Board.

Having no further discussion, Chairman Akers adjourned the Work Session meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman

Clerk of the Board