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FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS 2020-21

6/18/20 Update

## 2020-21 Operations Budget

For the 2019-20 school year Forsyth County Schools' operations budget was funded with local (48%), state and federal revenues (52%). For 2020-21, the state is projecting an 11% decrease for education funding and the local digest is projected to increase less than prior years.

When looking at revenue sources for our district, it is also important to note that while other metro-district recently received considerable funds from the CARES Act (federal COVID-19 funding), FCS received \$1.7 million. The district closest to us in size, Atlantic Public Schools, received \$22.9 million. For local revenue, FCS is one of only a few school districts in Georgia to have a senior exemption at the age of 65, which is an annual loss of an estimated \$36 million. Lastly, in terms of state revenue sources, FCS' Local Fair Share contribution has increased over the last four years to be \$62.5 million in 2019-20.

Given these compounding revenue challenges for 2020-21, in building FCS operational budget for 2020-21 we have two goals. The first is to protect all employees in good standing to avoid a reduction in force and keep benefits, if possible. The second is not to increase class sizes or caseloads of staff. Therefore, as we did during the Great Recession, we have been reviewing options to achieve these two goals.

We have made reductions in department budgets, implemented hiring freezes for non-teaching positions, added restrictions on non-essential employee travel, and carefully reviewed our fund balance capacity. A tax (millage rate) increase is not an option. Many in our county are or will be facing job/income loss. Online learning and virtual workdays are not an option to save money. During these days staff members are working so they must be paid; maintenance and operational cost savings are minimal.

90% of FCS' general operational budget is salaries and benefits. It costs us approximately \$2 million a day to pay employee salaries and benefits. **For the 2020-21 school year there will be no step increases, no cost of living increases, and decreases to the student (school) and employee work calendars.** Until we receive our revenue projections from the state and county, we are unable to know the specific number of school and work days, or which days specifically will be adjusted. Please note that all currently scheduled breaks (Fall, Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring) will remain as listed in the [2020-21 school calendar](#).

## **2020-21 School Year**

**Unless directed to do otherwise by the Governor or Georgia Department of Education, school will open on August 6, 2020 as scheduled. K-12 students will have two options: face-to-face and virtual.**

### **K-5 Virtual**

The new K-5 virtual learning option is being created in direct response to the feedback we received from parents/guardians in recent surveys. Families need to understand this will NOT look the same as the virtual experience this past spring. The expectations and rigor will mirror face-to-face instruction, and virtual students will have a full school day Monday-Friday. There will be a significant commitment needed by parents/guardians to help facilitate learning virtually.

FCS will host Virtual Town Hall meetings the week of July 6 to provide more details on this K-5 option. Parents/guardians are highly encouraged to attend these meetings. An online selection form will be issued to parents/guardians on June 26 with a completion deadline of July 10 to allow schools and the district to plan appropriately. Please note that the virtual learning commitment is for the **entire first quarter (9 weeks)**.

Parents/guardians should also note that their child's teacher may not be physically located at the school where they are districted, and if a parent/guardian selects to switch to face-to-face instruction in the second quarter, their child may have a different teacher. FCS will be staffing face-to-face and virtual learning with existing teachers.

### **6-12 Virtual**

Our district currently provides middle and high school virtual learning through the Forsyth Virtual Academy (FVA) program. Parents/guardians and students who may be interested in this option for 2020-21 should visit <https://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/fva> to learn more about the course offerings and how to register. FVA courses are a **semester long commitment (18 weeks)**. Since FVA is a program and not a school, students will still maintain official enrollment at their districted school and therefore be able to participate in school activities/athletics. The deadline to register for FVA classes 2020-21 is July 31, 2020.

During the Great Recession, with decreases in operational costs and adjustments to the student and employee work calendars, FCS was one of the few school districts able to protect jobs, benefits, and class sizes and not impact taxpayers, which are also many of our employees. We came through that challenge stronger, and we will do the same in 2020-21. The final operational budget and school and employee work calendars will be adopted in July, along with the final Guidelines for Reopening FC Schools (for face-to-face instruction).

We are extremely grateful for each of you and understand the time and effort that you have put into supporting our students and their families. Thank you for your continued support, and continue to visit [www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/RestartForsyth](http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/RestartForsyth) for updated information.