

# Roadmap to Student Achievement FY 2010 Final Budget



Alexandria City Public Schools  
Alexandria, Virginia (USA)

<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/>

(As of July 1, 2009)

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Finance

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Executive Director  
Human Resources

John A. Grymes  
Assistant Superintendent  
Federal & State Programs

John Porter  
Assistant Superintendent  
Planning & Operations

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Financial Services staff extends thanks and appreciation to the school board, principals, senior staff, program managers, and support staff who contributed to the production of the FY 2010 Final Budget. This process takes a tremendous amount of time and effort. Your hard work and cooperation allows us to present an effective budget. Your hard work and cooperation allows us to present an effective budget.

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**Association of School Business Officials International**



This Meritorious Budget Award is presented to

**Alexandria Public Schools**

for excellence in the preparation and issuance  
of its school system budget  
for the Fiscal Year 2008-2009.

The budget is judged to conform  
to the principles and standards of the  
ASBO International Meritorious Budget Awards Program.

*Angela Peteman*  
President

*John D. Musso*  
Executive Director



February 27, 2009

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The Honorable Mayor and the  
Honorable Members of the City Council  
City Hall  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of the Council:

**Interim Superintendent**  
Morton Sherman, Ed.D.

**School Board  
Chairman**  
Yvonne A. Folkerts

**Vice Chairman**  
Sheryl Gorsuch

**Members**  
Ronnie Campbell  
Blanche D. Maness  
Scott Newsham  
Arthur E. Peabody, Jr.  
Eileen Cassidy Rivera  
Marc Williams  
Charles H. Wilson

The Alexandria City Public Schools' (ACPS) Fiscal Year 2010 Operating Budget was unanimously approved by the School Board on February 5, 2009. The approved budget is \$196,803,191, a \$2,190,081 or 1.1% decrease from FY 2009. This budget requests a City appropriation of \$165,484,829, a decrease of 1.5% from last year. We believe that this budget is more than a financial document, but a *Roadmap to Student Achievement*, which moves ACPS forward to the goal of higher achievement for each and every student, while recognizing the local, state, and national economic situation. ACPS has turned a difficult budget situation into an opportunity.

The FY 2010 Approved Budget is based on seven guiding principles:

- Champion student achievement and excellent instruction
- Respond to enrollment increases and changing student needs
- Identify efficiencies and accountabilities
- Base decisions on research and data
- Respect the impact of the economic downturn
- Minimize the impact on ACPS employees through shared sacrifice
- Strive to place affected employees in other positions

Some of the FY 2010 Approved Budget highlights include: continued small class sizes and in some cases, such as middle school core instruction areas, reduced class sizes; enhanced elementary science instruction; creation and continuation of exemplary programs; dedication of more money to instruction, including almost \$5.1 million and 70.0 FTE dedicated to meeting the needs of our increasing enrollment, our English language learners, and our students with disabilities; the granting of a half-year step increase for eligible employees funded by reducing benefits and contract lengths, cutting central office budgets and positions, as well as foregoing a market rate adjustment to the salary scales; and preservation of jobs for our employees during these hard economic times with a net change in positions of

17.06 FTE, a reduction that can be met through attrition.

The FY 2010 budget shows a projected enrollment increase of 353, raising the three-year enrollment increase to 1,246 students. The cost per student is declining by almost \$2,000 or 10% compared to the FY 2009 Final Budget. More than \$17.8 million of the division's budget (over 9%) was reallocated to support our most important goal – higher achievement for each and every student.

The FY 2010 budget process brought new procedures that will be carried forward into future years. Staffing formulas were developed and used for elementary homeroom, art, music, physical education teachers, library media assistants, special education teachers and paraprofessional positions, and ELL teacher positions. Three major departments participated in zero-based budgeting this year, and more departments will participate in following years. Schools and departments have goals tied to the division goals with quantitative benchmarks. All new activities will be part of an ongoing evaluation cycle.

Collaboration between School Board members, staff, and the community improved this budget. Changes in the handling of custodial services, Super Summer fees, library media assistants, and focus school staffing are a result of the public process.

While ACPS still has more work to do in improving student achievement and planning the use of resources, we feel that this is an excellent budget. This budget is a result of many hours of analysis, discussion, and deliberation involving ACPS staff, the School Board, and members of the community.

The Superintendent and the School Board invite you to collaborate with us in reaching our goals. I look forward to our work together.

Sincerely,

Yvonne A. Folkerts  
Chairman, Alexandria City School Board

Cc: The Honorable Sheryl Gorsuch  
The Honorable Ronnie Campbell  
The Honorable Blanche D. Maness  
The Honorable Scott Newsham  
The Honorable Arthur E. Peabody, Jr.  
The Honorable Eileen Cassidy Rivera  
The Honorable Marc Williams  
The Honorable Charles H. Wilson  
Dr. Morton Sherman

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# Superintendent's Message

May 21, 2009

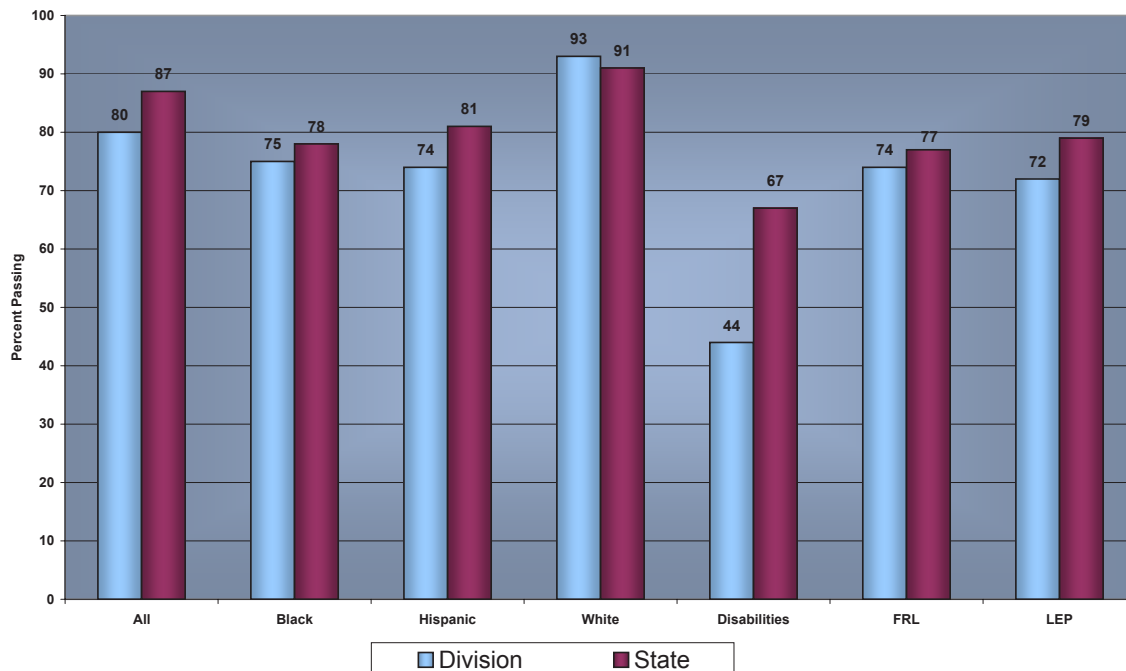
Dear Students, Colleagues, Parents, School Board, and Community:

**Higher achievement for each and every student.** These powerful words are the basis of all we have done in my first ten months as Superintendent. Alexandria is a vibrant community with many assets. Our students, staff and schools provide numerous points of pride, e.g.,

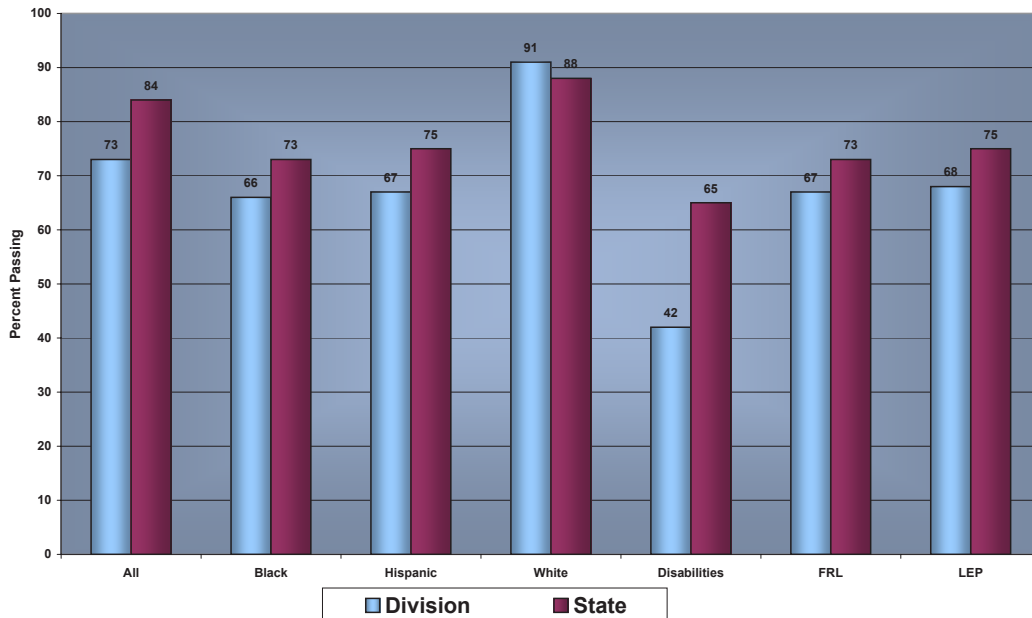
- In FY 2009, 14 of our 16 schools were fully accredited and ten met adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements. Five years ago 12 schools were accredited and five made AYP.
- More TC Williams High School students took Advanced Placement courses in school year 2007-2008 than ever before, and more students than ever before received qualifying scores (52%)
- Over the past five years, ACPS students have shown gains in average reading and math scores on the SAT
- The percentage of minority students taking the SAT is up (to 68%) and is higher than the Virginia (39%) and national (43%) averages
- About 84% of our TC Williams graduates plan to attend college

We have a strong foundation on which to build. We have the resources, talent, and desire to achieve. However, in spite of our best intentions, about 30% of our students do not meet the state's minimum performance standards. There is more work to be done. It is in everyone's interest that we be a division of high-performing schools with high performing students.

English AYP Pass Rates 2007-08 by NCLB Subgroup



Math AYP Pass Rates 2007-08 by NCLB Subgroups



As a division, we should rank among the “Gold Medal” winners in effective use of resources. Our schools should be award-winning, blue-ribbon schools. Our students should outperform their peers around the state. This is not occurring. The two charts on English and Math SOL pass rates tell the story. Only one group of students performs better than the state average, while all other groups fall below the average. We can and we will do better for our students. We can and will do better for our schools, and we can and will do better as a division in effectively using our resources.

Although the destination is clear, the path is very different now than it was ten months ago when I was hired. In August, housing foreclosure rates were increasing. We talked in September of the possibility of falling off an economic precipice, and in October we fell off the precipice. The revenue outlook was grim and then became grimmer. Many are now calling our economic and fiscal situation a crisis.

We have turned the crisis into an opportunity for restructuring and change. Our promise to our students will be met even during hard economic times. We must all work together to make the difficult and courageous decisions that face us.

## Framework for Decisions

The FY 2010 Final Budget is a **Roadmap for Student Achievement** that moves us forward in keeping our promise. It is a budget that is great for our students, and as good as possible for our staff. The ACPS executive team and principals have reallocated over 10% of the division’s operating budget to support accomplishment of the division’s goals:

- Identify student needs in K-10 math and K-3 language arts and literacy through continued support of the K-12 literacy initiative
- Provide a consistently high level of experiential, hands-on, inquiry-based elementary science instruction and learning and create more mentorship and internship opportunities for our secondary students

- Offer the opportunity to phase in exemplary programs such as the International Baccalaureate
- Implement programs that increase achievement, such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN)
- Address special education compliance and achievement issues

Our guiding principles have provided a consistent framework for decision-making on budget allocations during the many hours of discussion we had on the budget. Embedded in the guiding principles are five key factors in fostering high performing schools.

- Champion student achievement and excellent instruction. Research points to five distinct pillars that support student achievement:
  - Effective teaching. Effective teachers matter at all grade levels.
  - Curriculum. A rich, challenging, and consistent curriculum matters.
  - Small class size. Small class sizes, particularly in grades K-3 have been shown to support improved student achievement when coupled with strong classroom instruction.
  - Assessment and accountability. Teachers, students, and parents must know when students meet the requirements and when they don't. Teachers, students, and parents must work together to address areas where students need extra help to meet the requirements.
  - Planning and collaboration. Teachers need time to work together to share knowledge, problem solve, develop cross-curricular strategies, and implement multi-grade level strands. Professional development is central to this focus.
- Respond to enrollment increases and the changing needs of students
- Identify efficiencies and accountabilities and eliminate or modify activities that do not help us reach our goals
- Base decisions on research and data
- Respect the impact of the economic downturn
- Minimize the impact on ACPS employees through shared sacrifice
- Strive to place affected employees in other positions

## Budget Overview

The FY 2010 Final Budget recognizes the current economic environment. Total FY 2010 operating fund expenditures decrease by \$1.45 million with positions decreasing by 22.46 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The decrease in the City appropriation is 2.0% with a decline in projected state revenue of 6.6%.

We have worked hard to allocate resources to help our students move forward. We have dedicated \$11.69 million in realigned resources to meet the needs of our growing population and to champion student achievement and excellent instruction.

## Enrollment Increases and Changing Student Needs

The cost of enrollment increases and changing student needs accounts for \$6.29 million of the \$11.69 million and funds 85.2 FTE. This includes elementary homeroom teachers, kindergarten paraprofessionals, special education teachers and paraprofessionals, teachers of English language learners, and reconstitution of the staffing reserve. There are offsetting reductions of \$0.64 million and 11.0 FTE, for a net increase of \$5.66 million and 74.2 FTE.

Guiding Categories	Reduction		Addition		Net Change	
	Amount	FTE	Amount	FTE	Amount	FTE
Respond to Enrollment Increases and the Changing Needs of Students	(637,906)	(11.00)	6,294,760	85.20	5,656,854	74.20
Champion Student Achievement and Excellent Instruction	(3,910,311)	(43.60)	5,398,659	33.60	1,488,348	(10.00)
Efficiencies and Accountabilities	(9,169,419)	(108.06)	2,767,157	31.40	(6,402,262)	(76.66)
Non-Discretionary Cost Changes	(272,324)	-	2,751,115	2.00	2,478,791	2.00
Sharing the Impact	(2,411,388)	-	2,034,229	-	(377,159)	-
Reduction of one-time expenditure items	(4,291,763)	(12.00)	-	-	(4,291,763)	(12.00)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>(20,693,112)</b>	<b>(174.66)</b>	<b>19,245,920</b>	<b>152.20</b>	<b>(1,447,191)</b>	<b>(22.46)</b>

### Champion Student Achievement and Excellent Instruction

An additional \$5.40 million and 33.6 FTE are focused on championing student achievement and excellent instruction. This is accompanied by offsetting reductions of \$3.91 million and 43.6 FTE, for a net increase of \$1.49 million and a reduction of 10.0 FTE. These include:

- Enhancing elementary science instruction
- Reducing middle school class sizes in reading and English through reallocation of teacher positions
- Improving instruction for ELL students
- Expanding planning and collaboration time for elementary school teachers
- Funding exemplary programs such as the International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Programme and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)
- Establishing an exciting new collaborative approach for the use of at-promise and differentiated resource funds. These funds are now called the Principals' Promise Funds. Principals will collaboratively identify data-driven, research-based interventions most likely to accelerate student achievement and allocate funds to support the interventions.

### Efficiencies and Accountabilities

A net savings of \$6.40 million with a reduction of 76.66 FTE is gained by reorganizing to obtain efficiencies and by reducing or eliminating less effective approaches to provision of services. Actions recommended include:

- Reorganization of instructional and information technology services
- Restructuring of the Performance Evaluation Program
- Elimination of selected department positions
- Reduction of secondary teacher positions in response to low course enrollment
- Reorganization of the provision of services to elementary students with emotional disabilities
- Increasing fees and making summer programs more cost effective

## **Non-Discretionary Cost Changes**

Non-discretionary cost changes result in a net increase of \$2.48 million and an increase of 2.0 FTE. Employee benefits are the main items included in this group:

- Increased costs for flexible savings and tax-sheltered annuity third-party administrator fees
- ADA compliance
- Higher costs for Virginia Retirement System benefits
- Health insurance rate increases
- Additional funding for Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) compliance
- Increased usage of private carriers to transport special education and homeless students

## **Sharing the Impact**

The impact of constrained revenues is shared across the school division. Adjustments in this area include:

- A step increase for eligible employees to be granted half-way through the contract year
- A longevity increase for eligible employees who have been at the top of the scale for two years to be granted half-way through the contract year
- Contract length reductions of 5 to 25 days for over 70 employees
- Increases in co-payments for health insurance plans
- Decreases in long-term disability benefits
- Additional non-personnel reductions from department budgets
- Reduction of take home vehicles
- Elimination of supplementary benefits for deputy and assistant superintendents

## **Reductions of One-time Allocations**

We have eliminated one-time expenditures in the FY 2009 budget. Removing funding for the one-time bonus in lieu of a market-rate adjustment, the staffing reserve, and other non-recurring items provide a total savings of \$4.29 million and 12.0 FTE.

## **Budget Impact**

Through our actions we have increased funding for instructional programs by \$1.9 million. Of our total operating fund resources, 59.7% were devoted to instruction in FY 2009 compared to 61.1% in FY 2010.

The revenue constraints and expenditure needs are exacerbated by a surge in student enrollment. Over a two-year period student enrollment has increased almost 900 students. With a projected increase in FY 2010 of another 334 students, ACPS will see a total rise in enrollment over the three-year period of 1,227 students. This is equivalent to adding two large elementary schools.

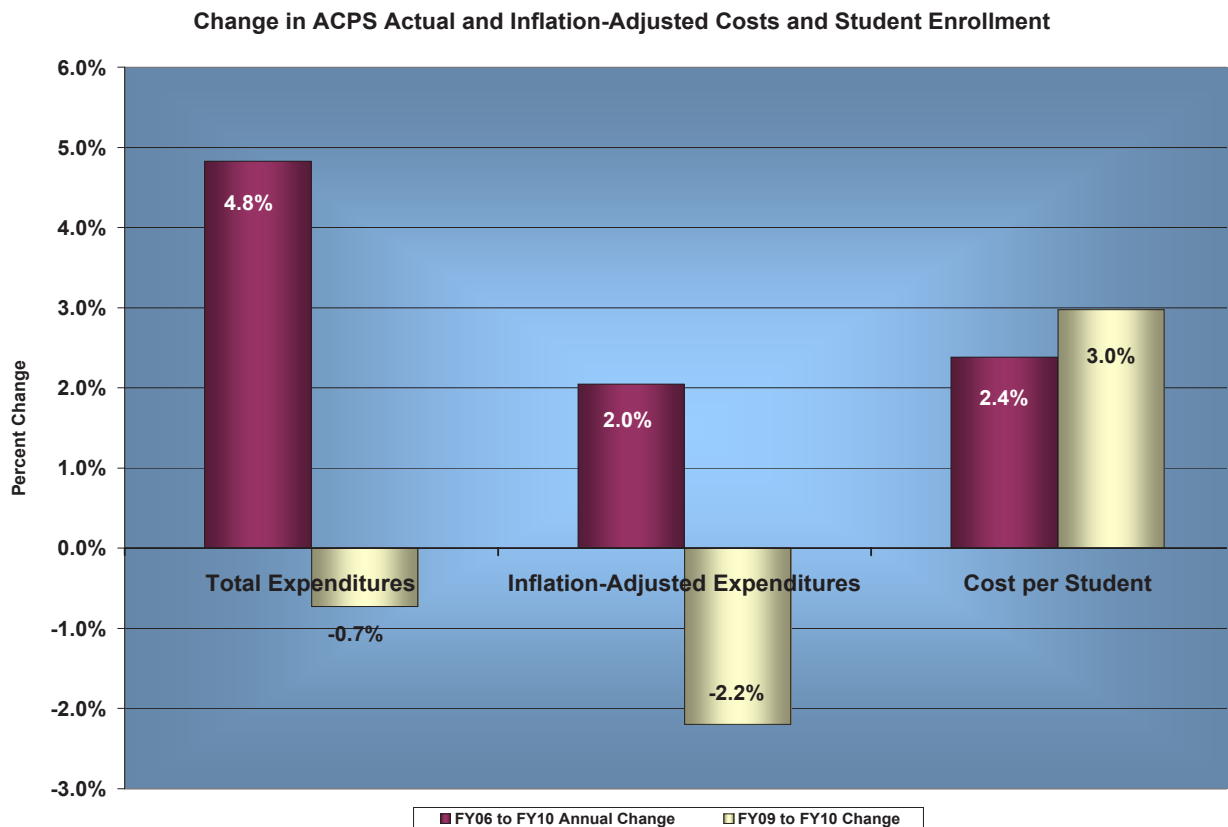
We welcome all students and embrace our challenge to teach each and every one of them to a high standard of excellence. Nevertheless, enrollment increases make tight financial periods more difficult. In the past five years total expenditures have increased by 4.8% annually.

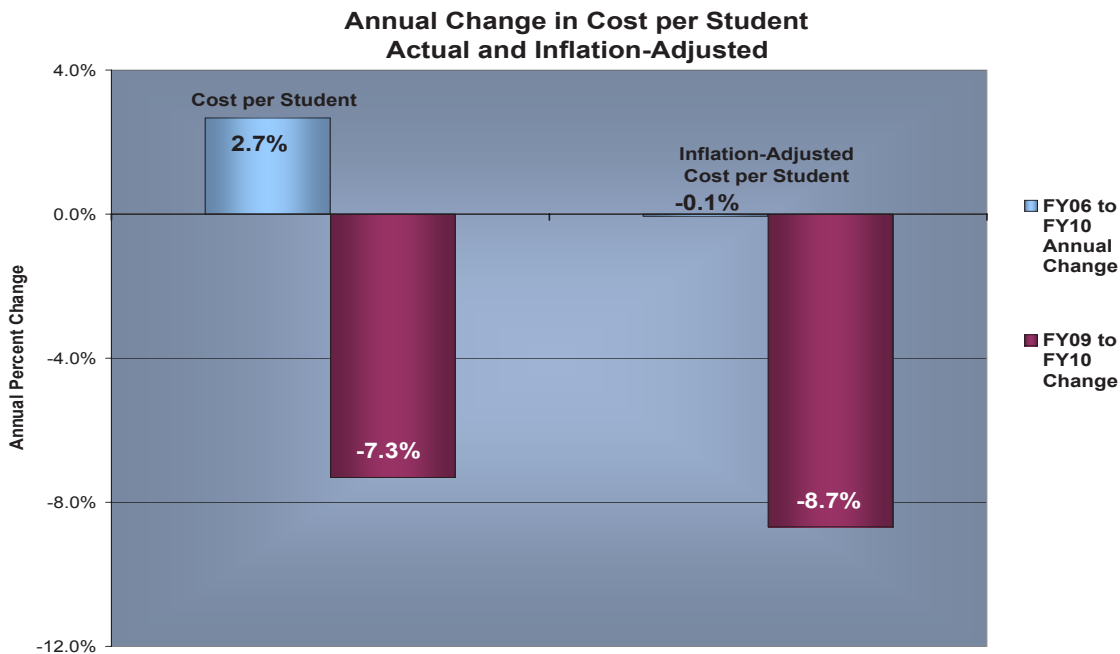
From this budget year to next total expenditures are projected to decrease by 0.7%. Total expenditures have kept pace with inflation, as shown by the inflation-adjusted increase of 2.0% over the five year period. However, adjusted for inflation the FY 2009 to FY 2010 budget declines by 2.2%. Student enrollment has increased by 2.4% annually during the same period, more than the inflation-adjusted annual increase. For the current budget cycle student enrollment is projected to rise by 3.0%, a significant difference from the inflation-adjusted decrease in expenditures of 2.2%.

Higher student growth with lower expenditures impacts the ACPS cost per student. Over the past five years the cost per student has risen at an annual rate of 2.7%. In the current budget cycle, the cost per student will decline by 7.3%. Adjusted for inflation, the cost per student has actually declined by 0.1% annually. From FY 2009 to FY 2010 the inflation-adjusted cost per student will decline by 8.7%

Given these trends, we must be frugal and prudent managers of our resources. As your superintendent, I am charged with preparation of a budget that meets the needs of our students. The FY 2010 budget does this while recognizing the economic realities of our City and state.

The budget is a **Roadmap to Student Achievement** because it is still a work in progress. We have more work to do in improving student achievement and our planning and use of resources. Because state revenues are uncertain and will not be known until the Virginia legislature passes the FY 2010 budget, we have conservatively estimated funding from the state.





We have started the implementation of new processes to support decision-making:

- Three major departments (Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Facilities, and Financial Services) participated in modified zero-based budgeting this year.
- Another nine offices (federal and state programs, summer school, English language learners, special education and student services, health services, pupil services, parent academy and engagement resources, technology services, pupil transportation) will participate in zero-based budgeting in the FY 2011 budget cycle.
- Staffing formulas were developed and used for elementary homeroom, art, music, and physical education teacher positions, special education teacher and paraprofessional positions, and ELL teacher positions. Work will continue on formula-driven allocations.
- Schools and departments have goals tied to the division goals with quantitative benchmarks.
- Principals and department heads will collaborate in the coming months to develop more comprehensive planning and budget allocation processes and tools.
- All new activities will be part of an ongoing evaluation cycle.
- Collaborative planning with principals across schools and across school levels has begun.
- More visible accountability metrics are being developed and posted in schools, on the ACPS web site, and in ACPS documents.

We have made remarkable progress in the ten months. We have committed, passionate, and capable employees who are working hard to help us meet our promise to each and every student. I am confident that this budget moves us in the right direction to fulfilling our promise.

Morton Sherman, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Margaret Barkley Byess  
Assistant Superintendent, Financial Services