

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 8, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO# 44 : JOINT CITY AND ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PLAN FOR MAXIMIZING THE USE OF SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS TO ADDRESS PRESCHOOL NEEDS

At the Joint City Council / School Board work session held on March 30, 2011 City and School staff were instructed to work together to develop a plan to expand preschool services in the City should City Council provide additional funding through the add-delete process. This memorandum provides details of the joint staff recommendation to address preschool needs with additional funding, if City Council decides to do so.

Unfunded Priorities

The City Manager's FY 2012 Proposed budget identifies \$450,000 as an unfunded priority to address preschool needs.¹ The School Board's FY 2012 Approved budget includes \$455,910 to maintain preschool classes currently funded in FY 2011. An additional \$464,571 to expand preschool services within the Schools was not included in the School Board's FY 2012 Approved budget but was identified as an unfunded priority. The total General Fund cost to meet the unfunded needs identified by both the City and Schools would be \$914,571. Realizing the magnitude of this combined request, City and School staff used a target of \$450,000 when developing the plan for expanded preschool services.

Staff Assumptions

The table on the next page shows the cost of preschool services per child if enrolled in an ACPS based program or in a privately operated center supported by the City, and the per child drawdown of Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) dollars.

¹ See Budget Memo #27 for additional information.

Cost per Child for Preschool Services

	General Fund Cost Per Child	# of Children Served	Total Cost	VPI Drawdown
Schools	\$6,156	1	\$6,156	\$3,000
City	\$7,880	1	\$7,880	\$3,000

The City’s cost for preschool services is slightly higher because it is based on a full-year (12 month) program while the School’s cost budgets for an academic year. It is also important to note that ACPS prefers to discuss any expansion of services in terms of additional classrooms and not individual students. In contrast, the City budgets for preschool services on a per child basis because children are provided individual slots in privately operated centers. Staff used the School’s typical preschool classroom size of 16 students as a benchmark when determining how to share potential supplemental funds.

Staff Recommendation

The joint staff recommendation would provide preschool services to an additional 64 children at a cost of \$449,152 to the General Fund. This recommendation funds two additional classrooms within the Schools, which would serve an additional 32 children (16 students per class) at a cost of \$196,992. The remaining \$252,160 would be used to provide scholarships to privately operated centers for 32 additional four-year-olds currently on the Fee System waitlist.² The City and Schools would each drawdown \$96,000 in Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) dollars. The table below outlines number of children that would be served and the funding amounts allocated to the City and Schools.

Joint Staff Recommendation

	General Fund Cost Per Child	# of Children Served	Total Cost	VPI Drawdown
Schools	\$6,156	32	\$196,992	\$96,000
City	\$7,880	32	\$252,160	\$96,000
Total		64	\$449,152	\$192,000

Serving an additional 64 children through a mix of school based and privately operated classrooms will provide a variety of preschool options to families in Alexandria. For example, working families may require full-day, full-year child care which is generally only available in private centers that operate from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. Funding two more ACPS classrooms provides additional options to families in the West End of the City since many of the privately operated centers are located in the East End and these classrooms will serve families that have no other option for prekindergarten.

Scalable Option

Recognizing that there are numerous requests City Council is considering as part of the FY 2012 budget staff would like to highlight that the joint recommendation is scalable. The table below

² There are currently 62 four-year-olds on the Fee System Waitlist.

shows the cost of serving 32 students, half of what is recommended in the joint staff plan for a cost of \$224,567.

Scalable Option

	General Fund Cost Per Child	# of Children Served	Total Cost	VPI Drawdown
Schools	\$6,156	16	\$98,496	\$48,000
City	\$7,880	16	\$126,080	\$48,000
Total		32	\$224,576	\$96,000

Under this scenario, the Schools would be able to provide 1 preschool classroom of 16 students while the City could serve an additional 16 children now on the Fee System waitlist.