

### ★ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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March 20, 2020

To: The Honorable Mayor Linda Johnson  
and the Honorable City Council Members:

The following document is the *Suffolk City School Board's Approved Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021*. This budget includes the *School Operating Fund*, the *School Grants Fund*, and the *School Food Services Fund*. The General Assembly approved its budget on March 12<sup>th</sup> and this plan is based on that approved budget. The School Board's Approved Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 totals **\$182,996,070** - a 6.01% increase.

The budget challenges identified by our new Superintendent Dr. John B. Gordon III, include the following:

#### **Students**

- Equity with access to technology for all students
- Class sizes in excess of 30 students in the northern middle schools
- Mental health and safety of our students
- Extra-curricular activities
- Support for the Fine and Performing Arts

#### **Teachers**

- SPS ranking of 9<sup>th</sup> of 11 in Region II consistently across our current scale
- Progressively more vacant and unfilled teacher positions (37)
- Inconsistency between steps on our current scale (compression)
- Not enough steps on the scale to reward most experienced teachers

#### **Support Staff**

- Compression and lack of certain position competitiveness with other districts
- Bus Drivers scale starting salary well below surrounding districts
- Custodial staff responsible for cleaning in excess of 25,000 square feet when industry standards are 18,000 square feet

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To meet these challenges, the approved budget invests in a new teacher's scale, in order to bring our starting teacher salary to \$46,000, a 3% cost of living (COLA) raise for full time support staff, a new bus driver's scale in order to increase starting hourly rate to \$14.60, and a 1.5% (COLA) raise for our permanent part time staff. In addition we will be internally reviewing all our support staff positions and scales for recommended changes in the 2021-2022 budget cycle.

Salaries remain our highest priority as we compete with other school divisions for teachers in a time of critical teacher shortages. There is an investment in staff of \$8,652,318 included in this approved budget. It is imperative that we are able to recruit and retain effective teachers to maintain high quality, successful educational programs in our school division.

The School Board's Approved Budget requests an increase in the city's appropriation investment in the amount of **\$3,940,000** for our school division. The safety and mental health of our students continues to be one of the most growing areas in our budget. Investments in additional school counselors, in-school suspension monitors, safety monitors, will allow us to expand our services in these areas. A telephone application that notify staff, students, and parents in the event of an emergency is also part of this investment. Dedicated allocations for Fine and Performing arts as well as a Fine and Performing Arts Specialist position will open opportunities for our students in these areas. Athletic coaching stipend increases for the secondary sports will assure the ability to attract and retain coaches for quality sports programs. For the entire list of investments included in the approved budget, please see the school division's website.

We remain committed to improving teaching and learning for all students, improving teacher salaries, attracting and retaining highly qualified staff and providing the best educational experience possible to all students enrolled in our school division.

The *School Board's Approved Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021* is presented for your consideration and discussion. We thank you for your previous support and we look forward to working with you in continuing to provide quality educational programs that meet the needs of the students in our City.

Sincerely,



Phyllis C. Byrum

*Chair, Suffolk City School Board*

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xc: Suffolk City School Board Members  
Patrick Roberts, *City Manager*