

WJCC School District Budget FY2020

THE VILLAGE INITIATIVE RESPONSE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S PROPOSAL

The Village Initiative is an action-oriented grassroots organization committed to working together with the Williamsburg/James City County School District to achieve greater equity and diversity in our school system. Equity is important as **all students should have the same opportunities to succeed**. The Village Initiative is pleased to see some additional resources committed to supporting teachers and achieving equity in the proposed budget. However, **these commitments do not go far enough** and some funding priorities **make our most vulnerable students more unsafe, deepening the school to prison pipeline**.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- Strength: 2 additional EL teachers and a .5 FTE for an educational interpreter.
- Concerns:
 - **2 additional EL teachers are not enough**, as Mr. Kelly and Dr. Beers suggested at the Jan. 22 meeting. This would put our EL student-teacher ratio at 1:43, which still leaves us lagging behind most of the 8 other districts in our region.

COUNSELORS

- Strength: 5 additional school counselors to address the emotional issues, trauma, and anxiety identified by teachers.
- Concerns:
 - We are concerned that **5 new counselors may not be enough** given issues facing students.
 - We need a proportionate number of **counselors of color who can build relationships** with students of color.
 - We are especially concerned that our ELL students do not have access to **trained, bilingual counselors**.

SAFETY

- Strength: 4 middle school assistant principals to develop a **long-term, community-based approach** to safety that focuses on building relationships with students and families.
- Concerns:
 - 4 security officers at the middle schools **will not necessarily improve the safety of our most vulnerable students and raises concerns about added policing of students of color**.
 - Our district already has worrying racial trends in its approach to discipline. In 2017-18, students identifying as Black, Hispanic or of two or more races accounted for 68% of short-term and 79% of long-term suspensions, even though they only make up 38% of the student population in the district as a whole.
 - Reject proposals that **deepen the school-to-prison pipeline** and redirect funds towards **hiring and supporting more teachers and counselors to build safe schools**.

RACIAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY GAPS

- Concerns:
 - **Little attention to opportunity gaps by race and socioeconomic status**, as Ms. Cook and Ms. Young noted.
 - Students with greater need are concentrated **within some schools** (e.g. Lafayette vs. Jamestown). Funding across schools should be allocated based on **student need**, not simply on student **numbers**.
 - The proposed budget does not address **the recruitment and retainment of teachers of color**, despite that they increase the likelihood that students of color perform well on tests, are identified as gifted, are held to high expectations, and graduate from high school, while reducing their likelihood of suspension and expulsion.
 - Direct funding towards:
 - **Opportunities for teachers of color** across the school district to **develop recommendations to improve their experience**.
 - Stipends and joint planning time for teachers of color willing to serve as mentors to new teachers of color.
 - The development of **new curricula and/or school events that enhance diversity and equity**.
 - Building relationships with HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) to recruit teachers of color.