

**REMARKS: FISCAL YEAR 2020 BUDGET ADDRESS**  
**GEORGE ARLOTTO, ED.D., SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

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DECEMBER 19, 2018

President Hummer, Vice President Gilleland, Members of the Board, County Executive Pittman, Members of the County Council, and residents of Anne Arundel County:

Thank you once again for the opportunity to stand before you and present both the state of our school system and the path that I believe is best for us to follow in the coming year in order to enhance the educational experiences for the 83,000 students that we serve and the 15,000 permanent, part-time, and temporary employees who make up our Anne Arundel County Public Schools family.

When I stood before you four years ago and delivered my first budget address as Superintendent, I spoke of our need to forge new pathways of access, equity, and excellence for all of our students. I spoke about the ways in which our students were engaged and challenged, and the inquisitiveness we seek to instill in them every single day.

I also spoke about the backbone of that work: the incredible people that I am privileged to work alongside in our school system. As I have said many times before, they are truly the heroes of our singular mission to Elevate All Students and Eliminate All Gaps. They are the heart and soul behind the three simple words that guide our efforts – All Means All – and I continue to be inspired by them every day.

I stand here tonight extremely proud of the work that we have done together. We have, indeed, continued to forge those new pathways of access and equity for all students. The Enhancing Elementary Excellence – or Triple-E – program we launched in 2014 allows students to explore areas like STEM In Society, Arts and Humanities, Global Studies, and World Cultures and Language in ways that are designed to spark creativity and excitement. Triple-E is presently in place in six of our 12 clusters, providing more than 18,000 students in 43 schools with access to these experiences as part of their instructional program. An added and often overlooked benefit of this program is that its scheduling continues to afford elementary school teachers with precious additional collaborative planning time that further advances their instructional capabilities.

We also continue to enhance and implement our new elementary curriculum to infuse more project and problem-based learning and active engagement into instruction for students. The goal is for our students to spend less time in so-called “sit and get” instruction and more time in hands-on exploration of subject matter. New curriculum has been implemented in prekindergarten through fifth grades, and we are now augmenting the fourth- and fifth-grade curriculum to provide even more critical reasoning opportunities, student-centered learning choices, movement, and real-world experiences.

Our work together over the last four years has also allowed us to expand the number of elementary schools offering the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme to 13. This program lays the foundation for students who may wish to continue with the IB program in middle and high school. Even if students do not pursue that path, their exposure to the global-oriented mindset of IB helps them become more well-rounded and civic-minded citizens.

We also have completed the rollout of our middle school STEM magnet programs, now in place at Central and Lindale middle schools as well as Old Mill Middle School South. At the high school level, we have fully implemented our Performing and Visual Arts program at Annapolis and Broadneck high schools, and the Bio-Medical Allied Health program at Glen Burnie High School.

Including our two highly acclaimed Centers of Applied Technology, our school system now has eight differentiated magnet programs in place at 18 schools. Our avenues of school choice for students and their families are not limited to those, however. They also now include four charter and contract schools: Monarch Academy campuses in Annapolis, Glen Burnie, and Laurel; and Chesapeake Science Point in Hanover.

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Through these avenues and others, we have created more opportunities and experiences for students than ever before. Proof of this can be seen in the first-ever student-run business undertaken by our school system, the Café at Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts. Using a formerly vacant space in the building adjacent to Bates Middle School, students at the Center of Applied Technology South are responsible – under the careful supervision of Chef Pam Klink and others – for everything from food preparation to the business side of the operation.

The café – which also features an art gallery and performance venue – not only provides students with incomparable hands-on experience in all aspects of a commercial operation, but it gives Maryland Hall patrons a place to relax before, after, or in between classes or performances. This is a true community partnership that benefits our school system, our students, and Maryland Hall.

We are incredibly fortunate that our partnerships extend to the many businesses and agencies throughout our county who offer internships to our students. In the last school year, thousands of our high school students were involved in internships that provided invaluable experiences and, in many cases, have helped launch careers.

At Johns Hopkins Healthcare, for example, AACPS students intern in everything from community relations and customer service to information systems, property management, program development, and finance. At the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center last year, two students worked closely with Pepper, a social robot. The students enhanced their computer programming skills by expanding Pepper's motor functions, speech recognition, and even table functionality to make the robot more interactive and valuable to those who interact with it.

These internships – and hundreds of others like them – allow our students to gain experience they may otherwise never get and provide organizations and companies with the chance to shape and mold future employees.

Our partnerships also extend to those who spend time mentoring our students, whether one-on-one or in groups. Take for example Dr. Murray Korman, a physics professor at the United States Naval Academy who has designed a one-year mentorship program for high school juniors that provides them with a wide array of experiences from research and data collection to graphic design and service learning.

Or, take those who are involved in the Senior-Senior Corps we established several years ago. Seizing on the opportunities offered by intergenerational learning, this initiative allows senior citizens and high school seniors to mentor elementary students within the school setting. Mentors help students in areas such as guided literacy, structured play, and social navigation as part of a partnership that helps to create a multi-generational community in which everyone benefits.

Those are just two examples of the more than 17,000 volunteers who generously donated more than 450,000 hours to our schools last year.

That time helps us establish and build upon relationships, the cornerstone of our Strategic Plan approved by the Board last February. If we are to successfully implement the rigor and achieve the readiness we all strive for, we must do it first by building relationships.

The cumulative effect of our curricular work, the impact of our incredible employees, and the investment in partnerships from local businesses, government agencies, and community organizations has paid incredible dividends. They can be seen in tangible examples both large and small, and in the many laudable projects undertaken because these valuable partnerships have opened doors for our students to make a difference.

At Southern High School, members of the football team recently helped in a cleanup project at nearby Union United Methodist Church. As pastor Randy Truesdale told *The Capital*, the church was “definitely in need of a facelift.” Southern's players responded, the morning after a game, in fact. Asked

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about the effort, one player put it this way: “We felt more like a team. This was more than just football, this impacted the community.”

Miles away at Chesapeake High School, members of the school’s regional championship football team had a chance to directly thank those who have impacted them. Prior to the regional final, each player selected an adult in the school building who has had a positive impact on them. The day before the big game, those adults donned their player’s jersey in a display of pride and partnership.

At the Phoenix Academy in Annapolis, the cause is more personal. Stirred to action by the shooting death of a classmate, students have formed Hood 2 Good, a movement designed to give children a more powerful voice, proactively engender more adult support, and reach out to help build bridges.

The dividends of our investments can also be seen in the achievements of our students. Members of the Class of 2018 earned a record \$200.7 million in scholarship offers, an increase of more than \$44 million from the year before. Ten high schools topped the \$10 million mark, among them Meade High School, which saw its offers triple from the previous year. Since 2014, the amount of scholarship offers earned by graduating seniors in our county has risen by 47 percent.

Last year at our Centers of Applied Technology, 841 students earned industry certifications in everything from Certified Nursing Assistant to Cisco Certified Networking Associate. Those certifications are launching pads to successful careers and give our students a significant leg up when competing with those from other jurisdictions for jobs.

The payoff of our investments can also be seen in our graduation rate. Ten of our high schools have rates above 90 percent for the Class of 2017, according to the latest data released by the State. As importantly, since 2011, the graduation rate for African-American students has grown by almost 10 percentage points and the gap between African-American students and white students has shrunk from 8.3 percentage points to 3.3 percentage points. We continue to address achievement gap challenges every day, with the ultimate goal of propelling all of our students to the graduation stage ready to excel in a career, college, or the armed services. Our graduation rate data is proof that we are making significant progress.

Ladies and gentlemen, the cultivation of well-rounded, successful students who take pride in their communities and give back as much as they get is something that can’t always be measured by a test score – and it doesn’t occur in a vacuum. We need every member of our community to play a role, especially when it comes to personal interactions.

That’s why our intentional focus at the outset of this school year was to deliberately and purposefully devote time to building relationships between and among students and staff members. That’s why we have intentionally dedicated significant professional development time at schools and offices to implicit bias training. That’s also why our countywide participation in the National Bullying Prevention Center’s Unity Day 2018, an initiative in which students and staff wore orange to show commitments to fostering acceptance and inclusion and eliminating bullying and hate, was critical. I am proud that we were joined in that effort by local businesses and governmental agencies.

And that’s why, as we announced two weeks ago, we are making the Global Community Citizenship course a graduation requirement for high school students beginning with next year’s freshman class. The course, developed by Arundel High School two years ago, requires students to identify and discuss topics, events, and issues relevant to their local communities and explore the meaning of cultural, historical, and religious customs and traditions, with a goal of fostering values of empathy, acceptance, and inclusion of all people.

It is no secret, however, that our communities, including our schools, have been the sites of *far* too many incidents of intolerable hatred and bigotry. Let me be clear: This is not behavior that should or will be accepted in any school, any business, any agency, or anywhere – period!

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Our schools absolutely have a role to play in eradicating hate and bigotry because it preys on our children and precludes them from achieving the potential they all have. But let me also be clear: The duty to eradicate this scourge is not one solely laid at the feet of any single institution, including ours. We all have roles to play, and just as is the case when it comes to the education of our children, in this effort all must mean all.

We will continue to do everything we can as a school system to prevent and address these incidents on our campuses. That will include ongoing conversations with County Government as well as the many organizations who have made it part of their mission to stomp out this blight. To every resident of this county, however, I say these four simple words: We need your help.

When I stood here four years ago, I also spoke of another relationship, one which was fractured and in desperate need of repair. I urged that when it came to our work with the County Government, we needed to replace the discord with dialogue in order to move our school system forward. The Board and I have worked hard – really hard – to accomplish that, and we are in a far better place today than we were four years ago. We have not always agreed on issues or approaches, but we have built solid bridges that have allowed us to talk and work reasonably and rationally to advance our cause. That can be seen not just in budget numbers, but in increased staffing of School Resource Officers and Mobile Crisis resources, critical security upgrades, and advanced land acquisitions to address the need for future school sites. Our students and our school system are better for those collective and cooperative efforts.

While we have not been able to do everything we have wanted, we have been able to provide compensation increases to employees in each of the last four years and we have fixed a potentially disastrous shortfall in our healthcare fund. As I said earlier, we have also been able to implement and expand programs that are key to advancing our students. And we must not overlook the work we have been able to do on the capital side, where we have launched 12 school renovation projects, begun construction of the new Crofton Area High School, and upgraded facilities across our county to help create better learning environments for students.

Last month's elections brought new faces and perspectives to the County Executive's Office, the County Council, our county's delegation to the Maryland General Assembly, and to this Board. To every single officeholder I say this: I welcome your ideas and I welcome the chance to partner with you. In another four years, my hope is that it can be said of us that we were champions of collaboration in the best interests of children.

To be sure, we have significant challenges, both inside the classroom and outside of it. As Oprah Winfrey once said, however, "Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new center of gravity. Don't fight them. Just find a new way to stand."

So, I ask everyone tonight to stand with us and continue to invest in the future. Continue to invest in our children. The rewards for that investment reach all of us, no matter our age, race, ethnicity, occupation, or socioeconomic status.

The \$1.26 billion operating budget recommendation for Fiscal Year 2020 that I present to you tonight provides sufficient funding for multiple compensation increases for employees, additional teachers to address enrollment increases and help incrementally reduce class size, and positions to continue to help address the social and emotional needs of our students.

My recommendation allocates \$7.5 million to fund the second half of the mid-year compensation increase provided in the current year. It also includes \$14 million to fund a step increase for all eligible employees in all bargaining units and an equivalent increase for non-represented employees.

I have included another \$13.6 million as a compensation placeholder for additional increases for employees, subject to negotiations with our bargaining units. This funding is sufficient to provide an

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additional step for eligible employees, cost-of-living increases for all employees, or some other distribution – including back steps – that a bargaining unit may desire to negotiate.

I want to be very clear, however, and correct some of the rhetoric that has been tossed about: The Board has asked for enough funding for at least one step increase for all eligible employees in every budget request made to the County since Fiscal Year 2012. Compensation funding, as the Board has discussed many times, comes to us from the County as a pot of money. The decision about whether to convert funding for a step to some other form of distribution to cover more or fewer employees is one for bargaining units to make and negotiate. I would urge represented employees to make their priorities known directly to their bargaining unit representatives on this issue so that their voices can be heard at the bargaining table.

This budget recommendation also includes funding for 295.6 positions, 92 percent of which are allocated to people who have daily interactions with children. Included in this recommendation is \$15.3 million for 201 classroom teaching positions, 44.5 of which will address enrollment increases and another 116 of which will help further reduce existing class sizes. We have been unable to secure full funding for these positions in our last several budgets and fixing this issue will take a multi-year plan. But if we are serious about creating smaller environments in which children can learn, we must do it by adding teachers.

We have talked for several years about the growing social and emotional needs of students, and the fact that we are seeing more extreme behavioral issues and at younger ages than ever before. Across our system, there were twice as many incidents of students making statements that implied a threat of self-harm in the last school year as there were five years ago. I am asking for \$1.4 million for 13 positions – seven school counselors, three school psychologists, and three social workers – to help with these issues. Three of those counselors would be deployed to elementary schools, and two each would go to the middle and high school levels.

This budget recommendation also contains \$3.1 million for 47.3 positions to address enrollment increases and enhanced student needs in special education. We are serving a more diverse student population than ever before, and we simply require this additional staffing to meet legally mandated services for our students with special needs. Thirty percent of the funding I am requesting in this area will go to teachers, teaching assistants, and a crisis interventionist at specialty sites, which we hope will help better address the needs of an increased number of students and allow us to continue to educate them in our county instead of funding non-public placements.

We also must continue to add positions to assist students who do not speak English as their first language, a population that has almost tripled over the last 10 years to nearly 6,000 students. This budget includes \$2.4 million for 25 English Language Acquisition teachers, 10 bilingual teaching assistants, two bilingual facilitators, and a technician to assist these students and their families.

As we work to close gaps and catch up, we cannot ignore the need to push forward. That is why I believe it is crucial that we continue to expand the Triple-E program I spoke of earlier. There is \$742,800 in this budget recommendation to do just that for the five elementary schools in the Broadneck cluster, making it the seventh cluster in our county with the Triple-E curriculum.

We are, as you are aware, preparing to expand the high school landscape for the first time since 1983 with the opening of the new Crofton Area High School in September 2020. This budget recommendation contains the first 8.5 position requests for the school, including the principal.

The final round of construction funding – \$24.4 million – for Crofton Area High School is contained in the \$172 million capital budget request I also bring to you this evening. It is absolutely

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crucial that we continue to upgrade and update our facilities in order to provide the best possible learning environments for our students.

The capital budget also includes \$64.3 million for ongoing construction projects at George Cromwell, Edgewater, Tyler Heights, and Richard Henry Lee elementary schools; \$3 million for feasibility studies at Quarterfield, Hillsmere, and Rippling Woods elementary schools; and \$10 million for the design of the new Old Mill West High School.

Additionally, my capital recommendation contains \$11 million for prekindergarten and kindergarten additions at Millersville and Linthicum elementary schools, and \$6 million to construct a classroom addition at Crofton Woods Elementary School and complete one at Solley Elementary School.

As we continue to attempt to erase our \$2.1 billion infrastructure backlog, we must maintain the momentum we have built over the last several years. Just as is the case with roads and other county facilities, the predicament we find ourselves in is the result of decisions made years and decades ago. We have started to reverse that trend and we cannot stray from that course.

Ladies and gentlemen, we continue to have a lot of work to do. I stand here tonight committed to doing everything I can to accomplish that work, and firmly believing that the right ingredients exist to bring about the results that we all want.

When former president George H.W. Bush departed the White House in 1993, he penned a note that he left in the Oval Office for his successor, Bill Clinton. The letter offered encouragement and support and contained seven words that are certainly applicable to our work today. He wrote: “Your success now is our country’s success.”

Indeed, what we do now – all of us – through this budget and every other endeavor, will help determine the future of our county, our state, and our nation. To every resident of this county, I say clearly that this is not just my work. This is not just your work. This is our work. These are our children. All of them. And All Means All.

Thank you.