



Franklin

COUNTY SCHOOLS
Superintendent Rhonda C. Schuhler, Ed.D

Good afternoon FCS Staff,

I'm reaching out to make sure that you are informed about a recent development that you may have already heard about in recent days. As it is currently budget planning season and we are actively preparing for the upcoming year, I wanted to be completely transparent by informing you of a step I'm taking in this process.

Franklin County Schools is committed to making a positive direct impact on student outcomes. We have benefitted from COVID relief funding for the past 4 years that has allowed us to target additional support to elementary students through interventionists, and site based instructional coaching support to our teachers at our middle schools.

We also recognize that staff retention is a priority in all areas of operations. Our COVID relief funds have allowed us to offer a longevity retention bonus to our staff for the past several years, and our Board of Education has demonstrated a commitment to maintaining this bonus as part of our budget for the upcoming year. This bonus will cost an additional \$2.5 million and has a positive financial impact on 1028 of our employees. In addition to our longevity bonus, we must look at requesting funding to offset increased utility, retirement, and benefits costs, while also providing 28% of all local funds received to students attending charter schools. This means that we will have a significant increase in our request to the County for next year.

We, like districts all over the state, are working to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and looking at how we can have the greatest impact on student outcomes with the funds that we have. We have been focused for the past eight years on strengthening our media program, providing professional development and support, and revamping the media coordinator role to have the maximum impact on students.

Despite those efforts, we have had inconsistency in the program. Over the past five years, FCS has experienced significant turnover in our media positions, affecting 87% of our schools.



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40% of our schools have turned over two or more times in the past 5 years, and 27% of our schools have turned over 3 times in the past 5 years. We currently have 2 media coordinator vacancies.

After careful consideration, I am transferring our media coordinators into classroom vacancies next year so that we can maintain our existing elementary interventionists and middle school instructional coaches for the upcoming year without increasing the overall number of employees next year requested for local funding.

A few points that I want to clarify:

- **Franklin County Schools is committed to maintaining our libraries.** We will not be closing our libraries. We will continue to have library time, book checkout, STEM activities, media skills development, etc. We are assigning a media assistant at each site to focus exclusively on providing this level of support. We have had instructional assistants serve in this capacity before that have done an excellent job.
- **Franklin County Schools is committed to our employees.** No one will be losing their employment with Franklin County Schools in this process. We have met with each of our media coordinators face to face to discuss this change, the rationale behind the change, and a plan for them to go into existing positions next year based upon their areas of licensure and feedback on areas of interest and school/grade span preferences. They will each have a place with no negative impact on their current salary.

I care deeply about Franklin County Schools and the students that we serve each day. I work to make decisions with that commitment at the forefront. I also try to be sensitive to individual needs and to treat each member of the Franklin County Schools family with respect and care. But I am in a position where I have to make tough decisions at times, and I often have to take a step back and make these decisions based on the “big picture”.

The “big picture” here is providing every student with an educational opportunity that will prepare them for life beyond the classroom. We want to maximize impact on students as they develop literacy skills, and we must ensure that every teacher has the support system in place that is



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needed for them to be effective and feel successful in their day to day work. We want to accomplish this while also keeping our media centers open and in full use for our students.

As we move forward, we will be requesting a significant increase in local funding from the County to maintain our longevity bonus for all employees. We will also be requesting funds to address increased inflationary costs in areas such as utilities and employee benefits. In addition, the Board of Education is committed to addressing both short term and long term facilities needs for each of our schools. We will be collaborating with the Board of Commissioners through a joint Capital Committee to begin to develop a more comprehensive plan for this work. I will keep you posted on our progress.

Thanks for all you do!