Dear Sangster Families,

We are approaching the holiday season and Thanksgiving is just around the corner. I love this holiday when family and friends get together just for the sake of being together. It does not require the purchase of gifts, just giving thanks. It is also a wonderful time of year to create family and generational connections that are so important to our children. During this Thanksgiving season, I hope that you and your family will be able to spend quality time together. I wish for all of you a Thanksgiving where you can focus on your blessings and take joy in your family.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Reddel
Principal

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE BUDGET FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Sangster,

You have probably seen or heard about the budget crisis in FCPS. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) anticipates a significant budget shortfall for school year 2016-17 (FY 2017). To balance the budget, FCPS may have to cut, reduce, or redesign current programs. This is real and will impact Sangster. I strongly encourage you to look on the FCPS website http://www.fcps.edu/news/fy2017.shtml to read about the specific proposals on how to balance the budget.

As part of the budget process, ideas on what to cut, reduce or redesign as well as how to increase revenue through fees have been developed by the Budget Task Force with input from the community. Proposals submitted via the Budget Proposal Tool will be shared with the Dr. Garza, Superintendent. On January 7, 2016, Dr. Garza will present the proposed budget to the School Board. Below is some information copied from the FCPS website so that you are informed.

Thank you for your continued support at Sangster and our Fairfax County community.

Your partner in education,

Lisa M. Reddel
Principal
Why is there an operating budget shortfall?

The overall cost of educating our growing and increasingly diverse student enrollment is rising faster than the funding available to FCPS. While Fairfax County has made annual increases in school funding, these increases have not covered the cost of four major expenses: enrollment growth, employee salary increases, required retirement system increases and the rising cost of health care.

Adjusted for inflation, FCPS is spending less per pupil than in school year 2008-09 (FY 2009). It has the lowest ratio of leadership team and management positions to total position as compared to surrounding districts that participate in the Washington Area Boards of Education (WABE) Guide. A state school efficiency review conducted by an independent firm in September 2013 found that FCPS is one of the most efficient school divisions in the Washington metropolitan region.

What happens if there is a shortfall?

FCPS is required to balance the budget. Without additional funding, more cuts will be made and all options are being considered including eliminating or reducing many programs in FCPS. Since fiscal year 2008, FCPS has cut nearly a half a billion dollars and cut more than 2,000 positions as our enrollment continues to grow. We are certainly seeing this trend at Sangster. The salaries of teachers in nearby school districts have increased, while FCPS teacher salaries have fallen behind. A career FCPS teacher is now near the bottom of teacher pay in the Washington region area.

Without additional funding, FCPS will need to have some difficult and emotional conversations with the community to determine which programs to eliminate. Limiting elective choices, reducing career and technical programs, reducing advanced programs, and raising class sizes at all levels are all possibilities.

How can I help? - Your support is critical.

Tell your friends, business leaders, or anyone who resides in Fairfax County about the challenges the school system is facing. If FCPS is no longer able to provide a best-in-class education, not only will FCPS families be impacted—the entire Fairfax community will feel the effect.

Contact the Board of Supervisors. Let them know that they must find a way to increase revenues necessary to support all county services - including schools - if they wish to maintain the quality of living that residents demand.
Contact your Virginia General Assembly legislator and let him or her know that Richmond needs to make increased investments in K-12 education, especially in Fairfax County, if it expects to maintain excellence in the Fairfax school system and to continue to bring business investment to Fairfax and to Virginia.

Contact your federal representative. Ask him or her to support Fairfax County Public Schools and to seek additional revenues for the investment in our children.

Early Dismissal on Wednesday, November 25

Students will be dismissed at 2:05 p.m. on Wednesday, November 25th which is the day before the Thanksgiving holiday. Please be sure that your child knows about any special arrangements you may have to make to accommodate this change in your schedule. Schools are closed on Thursday, November 26th and Friday, November 27th.