



Business Management Services
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Budget & Management Services

FY 2024 Proposed Annual Operating Budget Q & A

Questions from Prince George's County Office of Audits & Investigations 3rd Round

Date Received: April 25, 2023

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(Board of Education FY 2024 Proposed Operating Budget)

During the EWD Committee yesterday, Council Members requested a follow-up on the following topics:

1. **State-certified enrollment numbers for SY 2021, SY 2022, and SY 2023. The discussion noted a discrepancy between what was on the CEO’s Proposed Budget Book, the information on the website, and PGCPS’s presentation.**

There has always been confusion around enrollment counts and the reference to "certified." As part of the data correction and validation process, the CEO is responsible for "certifying" both the Total Enrollment counts as well as the Eligibility for State Aid funding. Most often, the Total Enrollment counts (also referred to as the head counts) are referenced when completing enrollment projections and capacity calculations, as well as reported on websites and for talking points purposes. Both the Total Enrollment count as well as the Eligible for State Aid Funding counts for the three years in question are included below.

Year	Enrollment Count	Eligible for State Aid Funding Count
2021	131,658	118,281
2022	128,777	115,972
2023	131,143	124,586.75

2. **How does the State calculate the “certified” numbers?**

The Maryland State Department of Education requires each district to provide attendance-related data for all students three times a year: September, March, and July. The September Attendance Collection (also referred to as the September 30 Collection) is used for determining the total annual Enrollment for the districts. From this enrollment count, MSDE also determines the count of students Eligible for State Aid funding. As part of the data validation process, the CEO is required to certify the summation of the submitted counts within the state's Verification of Enrollment Counts memo. The forms for SY21, SY22, and SY23 are [attached here](#).

The Number of Students Eligible for State Aid for Current Expenses reflects the subtraction of ineligible students and the calculation of FTE based on the number of courses (primarily high school students). As an example, for the 2023 Verification of Enrollment, there were 131,143 students enrolled (headcount); 6,556.25 were ineligible (reasons including part-time enrollment and non-residency as two examples) for funding, leaving a total of 124,586.75 as the actual eligible student count.

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3. What is the cost of implementing universal free meals for students?

a. Please provide a breakdown for “Breakfast,” “Lunch,” and “Both.”

Based upon FY 2022 meal counts and current reimbursement rates, it would cost an estimated additional \$9.1 million to provide free breakfast to all students above and beyond what is currently being reimbursed for students currently receiving a free breakfast. It would cost \$16.8 million to provide free lunch to all students above and beyond what is currently being reimbursed for students currently receiving free lunch. Together, it would cost approximately \$25.9 million to provide both free lunch and breakfast to all students above and beyond what is currently reimbursed for students currently receiving both free breakfast and free lunch.

4. Provide performance metrics for IT initiatives implemented during the pandemic (i.e. Chromebooks). How does PGCPs gauge whether new IT initiatives in schools are being successful?

Before the pandemic, PGCPs was effectively a 1-to-2 school district, meaning that there was one mobile computer for every two students in the system. Like many school districts in the United States, PGCPs is now a 1-to-1 system so that every student has access to their own take-home Chromebook. The pandemic fundamentally and irrevocably transformed teaching and learning in the United States, accelerating the move away from paper-based texts and learning tools to digital ones. Chromebooks are now an essential part of the classroom environment in all school systems for students to access core curricular content, such as digital textbooks and assignments, as well as a necessity for students at home to complete their homework, much like computers are an essential part of every workplace.

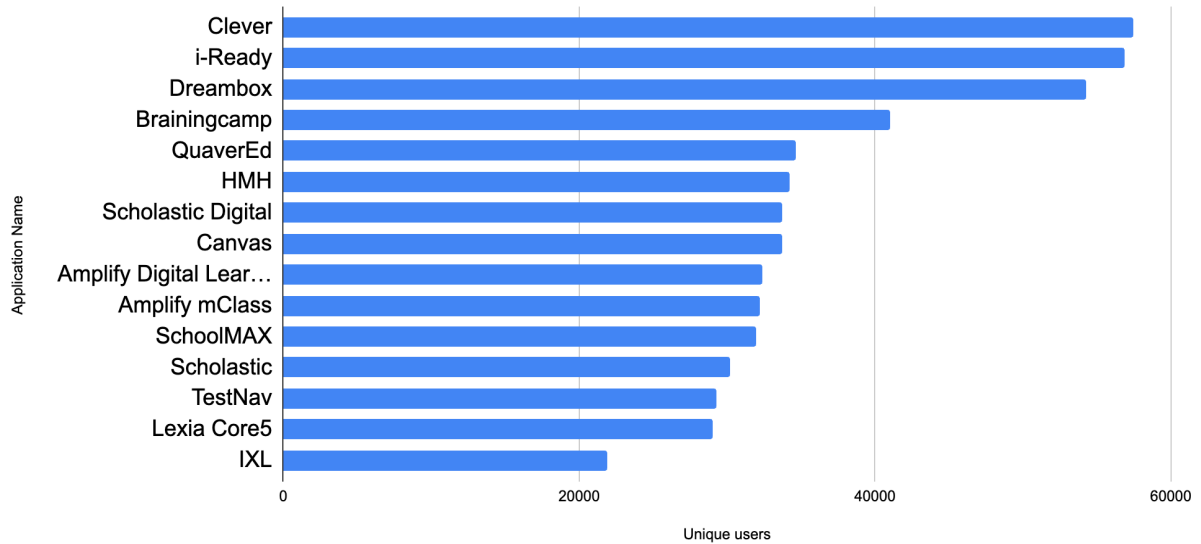
PGCPs is committed to student equity and to ensuring that there is no digital divide in our County. Therefore, one critical metric following the pandemic is that 100% of our students have access to a Chromebook that is less than four years old, which is our business rule for replacing aging devices. We are currently meeting this performance target and do not anticipate any issues in continuing to meet this target for the next two to three years, given the availability of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to apply to Chromebook purchases through September 30, 2024. We are currently developing a long-term technology refresh plan to address the long-term district needs in the area of student technology.

Additionally, during the pandemic, PGCPs purchased an array of digital tools to assist in virtual teaching and learning. These tools both facilitated whole-class teaching and learning in a virtual environment as well as enabled individual student academic intervention. All of these tools were essential through the middle of the 2021-2022 school year when we continued to have over 10,000 students in grades K-6 learning virtually while waiting for approval of the children’s Covid-19 vaccine. With every student back to full-time in-person learning this year in PGCPs, we are closely monitoring the usage rates of the digital tools purchased for pandemic virtual learning to see which ones we will want to continue to purchase licenses for in the future. The table below provides a snapshot of a usage chart for our top 15 digital tools.

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Top 15 Applications in Grades K-5

Based on Unique Users



We are able to drill down further by school, grade level, and even classroom use to determine usage rates and ensure we have the right amount of software licenses available to meet our user needs. We are continuing to monitor and analyze these usage rates to determine professional development areas, as well as to inform future decision-making about which tools we will want to invest in and at what levels of licensure after the expiration of ESSER funding through which we purchase these tools.

Finally, PGCPs is required to submit an ESSER monitoring tool for 2022-2023 to the Maryland State Department of Education to track interventions and tools purchased using ESSR funds and how these interventions and tools are being utilized and implemented. The monitoring tool contains measures of utilization and progress for various interventions and resources that leverage new technologies implemented during the pandemic.