



Business Management Services
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FY 2024 Board of Education Proposed Operating Budget Q & A

*Questions from Prince George's County Council
Office of Audits & Investigations
2nd Round*

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**Prince George's County Council
Budget and Policy Analysis Division**

Board of Education
Prince George's County Public Schools
FY 2024 Operating Budget Review
Second Round Questions

From: County Executive's FY 2024 Proposed Operating Budget

1. Revenues (Page 84): What is the source of the Teacher Retirement Supplemental Grant?

Response provided by Brent Johnson, OMB Budget Officer: HB 1801 (FY 2012) transferred the normal cost of teacher's pensions from the State to the local boards between FY 2013 through FY 2016. Maryland counties were required to allocate a smaller supplemental amount in FY 2017 and beyond, which would be included in the base MOE calculation. This is derived from general county sources with County's annual contribution to the BOE.

2. Revenues (Page 87): Discuss how the 9.6% allocation increase for Crossland HS will be used.

The \$2,665,300 for the Crossland HS program (from earmarked VLT funding) is reflected in the County's minimum contribution in the FY 2024 proposed County Executive budget. However, the Board of Education's FY 2024 budget does not currently reflect this increase of 9.6%. It will be adjusted during the budget reconciliation process after the County Council approves the FY 2024 budget and is specifically earmarked for Crossland High School CTE Program.

3. Page 656, Increase Cost Differential: "net increase in restricted federal grant programming" – revenues on page 91 show a decrease of 23.7%. What is the discrepancy, and what are the accurate numbers?

Page 656 in the County Executive budget book is reconciling from the original "Approved" FY 2023 budget approved by the County Council in May, which is different from the PGCPSS FY 2023 Approved budget (after reconciliation which captures additional revenue sources that is later approved by the County Council in September). As such, the major changes in restricted federal grant programming from FY 2023 to FY 2024 in the two budget books will be different.

4. Page 658 - "additional use of fund balance over prior year appropriation." Charts show a decrease; discuss the difference.

The FY 2024 Additional Use of Fund Balance of \$70 million in the Board of Education requested operating budget is a reduction of \$47 million or 40% from the prior year. As student enrollment continues to stabilize from the impact of the pandemic, along with the ten-year plan for Blueprint funding, the need to use fund balance decreases.

5. Page 657, County Contribution is lower than the County Contribution Calculation in the CEO's Proposed Budget (Page 34) – what led to this decrease?

The CEO's FY24 Proposed Budget includes a county contribution that is determined by the estimation of student counts of the September 30th enrollment, county wealth relative to state wealth ratios, Education effort ratios, and changes in Telecommunication and Energy Tax revenues. This estimation was completed in early October before the Maryland State Department of Education's release of Preliminary State Aid data to Local Education Agencies (LEA) data in January.

The FY24 County Executive's proposed budget is released in March and incorporates the preliminary data released to the LEAs in January.

The alignment of the County Contribution requested by the Board of Education and the contribution requested in the County Executive's budget is ultimately reconciled before the adoption of the County Budget in May and the reconciliation of the Board of Education Budget in June. However, the County contribution may be adjusted again after the LEAs receive the final State Aid to LEAs in June. If the final state aid requires a change to the county contribution, it will be requested via a supplemental budget request from the Board of Education if received after the June budget adoption by the Board of Education.

The decrease reflects changes in the following assumptions:

- The official enrollment count as of September 30, 2022, was finalized
- Wealth ratios were finalized, which impacted the local share of state aid formulas
- Education Effort Adjustment (state relief percentage)

6. Page 665, To PGCPs' knowledge, what contributes to the low level of kindergarten readiness among incoming students?

As you know, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data reflects children's experiences before entering kindergarten. We view the readiness issue through two lenses, those who attended PGCPs for Prekindergarten and those who did not. Of the 42 percent of kindergarten students who took the KRA in the fall and attended PGCPs for their Pre-kindergarten experience, 83.5 percent attended a full-day program, and 16.5 percent attended a half-day program. Of those in a full-day Prekindergarten class within PGCPs, 40.3 percent scored, demonstrating readiness for the Fall 2022 administration of the KRA. Of those in a half-day PGCPs classroom, 26.1 percent demonstrated readiness.

Approximately 54 percent of parents of students who were administered the KRA in the fall reported that their child had no formal experiences prior to entering kindergarten, of which only 23 percent demonstrated readiness. Formal experiences within Prince George's County would have included a child's participation in one of the following settings prior to entering Kindergarten: Pre-kindergarten, Head Start, Child Care Center, Family Child Care, or a Non-Public Nursery School.

As PGCPs works with our families enrolled in Pre-kindergarten with PGCPs and families that come from family child care providers and private child care providers, we would attribute the low level of readiness of incoming students to several factors including, but not limited to:

- PGCPs had 17 schools with half-day classes during the 2021-2022 school year.

- Staffing of highly qualified individuals (teachers and paraprofessionals) and access to resources to deliver instruction aligned to the MSDE standards for children enrolled in PGCPs and with outside providers.
- Capacity and/or availability of outside providers to engage in professional development opportunities with PGCPs through the Prince George’s County Resource Center.
- Capacity and/or availability of outside providers to take advantage of access to community services and supports.
- Increasing resources and supports for Special Education and ESOL populations.

However, we recognize that these factors do not apply to all family childcare and childcare providers within Prince George’s County. In an effort to increase support to families overall, we are expanding our Judy Center programs to serve more communities with critical needs. We have partnered with our Title I and Community Schools for increased family outreach. We are continuing our partnership with the Prince George’s Resource Center and the Prince George’s County Early Childhood Advisory Board to service families and educators of young children.

7. Page 665, What is the significance of the “Number of students retained in 9th grade” metric?

It is typically the year in which an adolescent will become disengaged from school leading to problems with student truancy, absenteeism, behavior, and disengagement. Analysis of student data at the ninth-grade level is critical to offer targeted interventions, academic support, and social-emotional support for those at risk of non-promotion and drop-out. Ninth-grade success is highly predictive of graduation. In Maryland, 95.0% of students with no 9th-grade core course failures graduated on time, compared to 78.7% of those with one core course failure and 63.1% of those with two. ([Blueprint for Maryland’s Future: 9th Grade Tracker \(2022\)](#)).

8. Page 665, What is leading to the continuing decrease in enrollment?

From SY22 to SY23, Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPs) increased enrollment by 2,369 students. Looking at the trending data from last year, we can see a decrease in both kindergarten enrollment and the number of diplomas conferred upon students.

SY	Pre-K	K	1st-12th	Total Enrollment
SY22	4,106	9,336	115,335	128,777
SY23	4,824	9,285	117,037	131,146
Difference	718	-51	1,702	2,369

Note: The enrollment counts for Black/African American and White students decreased slightly. In contrast, the counts for Hispanic and Asian students increased, and the number of Non-Binary students increased from two to seven from SY22 to SY23. In SY23, our PreK classes enrolled over 4800 students; of those students, 3,683 qualified for 100 percent funding.

COVID Implications

Undoubtedly, the COVID pandemic compounded existing challenges to teaching and learning and exposed additional ones, including reduced district enrollment. The brief explanations that follow provide context.

Contributing Factors to a 4,304 Student Decline in SY2021 Enrollment:

- ***Lack of New Enrollees***
Data show that fewer new students (i.e., students who had never been in PGCPs before) enrolled in PGCPs schools during SY 2021 compared with the previous year. This is the case overall and at all individual grade levels. This could be due to a decrease in family mobility brought on by the pandemic, as well as families choosing to keep younger children (K and Pre-K) home, especially if caregivers had lost their jobs. Furthermore, the number of students transferring in from foreign countries fell by more than 85% between SY 2020 and SY 2021. Preliminary data from SY 2022 show that the number of transfers from foreign countries is up, but it is still 61% lower than SY 2020's level.
- ***Withdrawals and Transfers***
As the pandemic continued, many families searched for alternatives for their students. Between the end of SY 2020 and the beginning of SY 2021, transfers to homeschooling more than doubled, and withdrawals increased by 35%.

Contributing Factors to a 2,703 Student Decline in SY2022 Enrollment:

- ***Increase of New Enrollees***
The number of newly enrolled students increased by nearly 5,000 students from SY 2021 to SY 2022.
- ***Withdrawals and Transfers***
The total enrollment declined from SY 2021 to SY 2022 because the number of returning students fell by approximately 7,500. Transfers out of the school district increased significantly over the summer compared to previous years. These increases were mainly driven by transfers to public schools in other counties in Maryland and other states. Withdrawals also increased over the summer compared to previous years.

From: Responses to First-Round Questions

9. ***FY 2022 CAFR (Page 46): FY 2022 year-end rate of return for MABE Pooled OPEB Trust was (13.7%) – Does PGCPs expect a continued decrease in ROR? What plans does PGCPs/MABE have in place to address this?***

MABE Trustees understand that the market experiences volatility and fluctuations over time. The investment strategy is to minimize the probability of losses. Therefore, every quarter the financial consultant team analyzes the asset allocation and adjusts if warranted. The ROR for the past few years is as follows: FY 2020 - 2.91%, FY 2021 - 24.67%, FY 2022 - (-13.35%), and currently, for FY 2023 1st Quarter - 5.42%.

10. Q. 4: PGCPs has consistently used a large unsustainable amount of Fund Balance for the past several FYs. What plan does PGCPs have to build back the “best practice” amount necessary?

As previously discussed, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), “recommends, at a minimum, that general-purpose governments, regardless of size, maintain unrestricted budgetary fund balance in their general fund of no less than two months of regular general fund operating revenues or regular general fund operating expenditures.” PGCPs is strategically increasing the level of unrestricted fund balance reserves (consisting of committed, assigned, and unassigned fund balances).

The FY 2024 Use of Fund Balance of \$70 million in the Board of Education requested operating budget is a reduction of \$47 million or 40% from the prior year. As student enrollment continues to stabilize from the impact of the pandemic, along with the ten-year plan for Blueprint funding, the one-time use of fund balance and established unrestricted fund balance reserves will be more aligned with the GFOA industry recommendation.

11. Q. 26: What factors contribute to PGCPs’ estimated FY 2023 attrition, which is substantially lower than FY 2022 attrition?

Incorrect percentages for estimated FY23 attrition were provided in the initial response.

PGCEA

The projected attrition percentage for FY23, including the summer of FY 2023, is between 12% and 14%.

ASASP Unit II

The projected attrition percentage for FY23, including the summer of FY 2023, is around 7%.

12. Q. 40: Provide truancy data per school. Discuss all schools with high truancy rates.

[Chronic Absenteeism_SY19-SY22](#)

DISTRICT-LEVEL INITIATIVES

ALLHERE – ChatBot

JAVIS - Attendance Chatbot continues to be operationalized in PGCPs, which is responsible for communicating with parents in the 33 schools previously identified as having the highest chronic absentee rates. Prince George’s County Public Schools rolled out ALLHERE’s attendance platform. Jarvis (Just A Very Intelligent System) is a service that supports and engages students and families through the learning process of SMS-based chatbot technologies. Jarvis engages students and families in proactive and reactive campaigns via text. Jarvis answers questions by intelligently leveraging an extensive knowledge base built for Prince George’s County Public Schools. It communicates in English, Spanish, and French. All messages are logged in the AllHere platform.

Attendance Taskforce

Student Services continues to lead an Attendance Taskforce of twenty district-wide participants, including Instructional Directors, Central Office administrators from various offices, and Principals. The task force’s goal is to establish a forum that drives the policies and practices utilized in

PGCPS to improve attendance (chronic absences and habitual truancy). The task force consists of principals at all levels (including charter, specialty, and alternative schools), Instructional Directors, and members of Pupil Accounting, Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education, Home and Hospital Teaching, Records, IT, and Communications. This is the fourth year that it has continued to:

- Review data
- Revise our Attendance AP 5113
- Discuss data quality
- Develop Training administrators and teachers
- Communication plan

CEO and State Joint Letter and Video

Chief Executive Officer Dr. Monica E. Goldson and Prince George's County State's Attorney, Aisha Braveboy, teamed up to create joint messaging for families regarding the need for school attendance. This letter communicates to parents the consequences for truancy and processes that are implemented for students who continue to miss school unlawfully. When an attendance concern arises with a student, this letter is distributed to the respective families of students and requires that parents contact the school for support upon receipt.

GEER Grant

Prince George's County Public Schools was awarded the *Innovative Approaches to Connecting with Students Grant* received through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund. This grant supports the implementation of the Prince George's Re-Engagement Program (PG-REP). The most critical objectives of PG-REP are to accomplish the following:

- Make contact and connect with 100% of the targeted students/families using both traditional and creative methods--while remaining in compliance with all social distancing, health, and safety guidelines;
- Re-enroll more than two-thirds of the students who dropped out for the duration of the fourth quarter of SY 2019-20, connecting them with appropriate school placements while providing the personal support that returnees need to succeed; and
- Sustain engagement of all (100%) re-engaged students located through the efforts of community partner organizations.

The district now has GEER I (6-12) and GEER II (K-5). There are several community partners who are tapped to assist the district with these efforts this year.

Pupil Personnel Workers

Pupil Personnel Workers (PPWs) have a critical role in supporting truancy by collaborating, educating, and planning with school stakeholders to decrease chronically and habitually truant students. They attend and participate in regular school team meetings and work with school staff to develop attendance action plans and attendance contracts for students. Monthly, they send chronic absenteeism and habitually truant data to principals. They also analyze data trends to determine reasons for student nonattendance. PPWs' work involves outreach and educating the school community through workshops and training on attendance policies, interventions, and supports for students with attendance concerns. In dire cases, they refer students to the Truancy Reduction Court- program to provide interventions and to the Interagency Council on Attendance.

School Messenger

Prince George’s County Public Schools rolled out a new district-wide communication tool, SchoolMessenger. The SchoolMessenger system is a robust communication tool that the district, schools, and teachers use to communicate with parents, students, and community members using phone calls, emails, social media, and text messaging.

13. Q. 41: Which of these interventions have provided tenable results? How is success measured with each initiative? What data supports it?

All of the strategies listed above have an impact on addressing student attendance. Pupil Personnel Workers send monthly chronic absenteeism and habitually truant reports to schools monthly. It is monitored in the Office of Pupil Personnel Services. Schools are provided with Actions taken to manage and document activity around the student’s attendance. This spreadsheet is used in school team meetings, as a collaboration tool, and as a measure of what is working to address attendance. Schools use the Business Intelligence Report to inform school-based attendance teams on monthly data at a glance showing trends in order for schools to use strategies to address and monitor student attendance. The Office of Monitoring and Accountability sends central office departments attendance reports monthly. These reports are sent to schools by the Area office. Our partner, AllHere provides data reports and is scheduled to join the Central office Attendance task force to provide the monthly report of their targeted schools and engagement of parents. In January, ALLHERE provided an overview on the impact to our chronic absenteeism for the 32 schools they support from 2018-2022. The presentation shows trends of improvement in that 87% of schools supported have shown improvement in their attendance.

14. Q. 48: Provide the data for SY 2022.

2017 - 2022: Subgroup Graduation Demographics (Graduation % / Count)					
SY	All Students	English Language Learners	Hispanic/Latino	Students with Disabilities	Title 1
22	76.57, (7520/9821)	54.75, (634/1158)	61.81, (2195, 3551)	68.24, (649/951)	59.71, (778/1303)
21	77.6, (7470/9626)	58.01, (543/936)	66.03, (2115/3203)	64.32, (613/953)	67.13, (727/1083)
20	76.17, (7969/10462)	57.27, (855/1493)	62.31, (2410/3868)	65.99, (586/888)	65.59, (934/1424)
19	78.55, (7427/9455)	59, (646/1095)	64.37, (1843/3863)	63.8, (608/953)	74.22, (737/993)
18	78.47,	55.36, (527/952)	62.38, (1817/2913)	66.32, 701/1057	70.4, (516/733)
17	82.69,	51.1, (324/634)	65.87, (1534/2329)	71.85, 712/991	83.66, (425/508)

15. Q. 50: Which of the interventions listed have been proven to work? What data supports this?

We utilize dual enrollment to allow students to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. Students are able to accelerate their path to high school graduation as well as springboard their college education. PGCPS has agreements with three institutions of higher education totaling approximately 130 different courses where students can earn high school and college credit in a variety of content areas. Students are able to choose college course(s) in their area of interest, which has been shown to support high school graduation.

We have implemented Naviance to enable students to support their own self-discovery as well as to provide information regarding colleges and careers that support their personal, academic, and career goals. Each year our students in grades 6-12 login to the system to perform various tasks related to their post-secondary goals. This school year, students have logged into the system over 400,000 times, with an average of 4-5 logins per student. We have also sent over 26,000 documents to institutions of higher education for our seniors whose post-secondary plans include matriculation to college.

16. Q. 65: How long until the plans listed are fully implemented? Discuss any intermediary actions taken or planned to help increase the score in the future.

As previously discussed, Prince George's County Public Schools have hired an external contractor to provide preventive maintenance requirements and barcode our mechanical equipment. This project should be completed in the 1st or 2nd quarter of FY24. The data should provide information determining the resources required to implement the program fully. The full implementations will be determined by the resources available. This program's scope is massive, with 209 facilities and thousands of pieces of equipment. However, we are working with the IAC, similar to other school systems, to determine a short-term solution to improve our scores.

17. Q. 66: The FY 2022 MEA Report notes two (2) major deficiencies – one under “playgrounds, equipment, and fields” and another under “electrical distribution and service equipment.” Have these major deficiencies been corrected? If not, please discuss why it has not occurred.

Playground equipment and field at James Ryder Randall required contractor support and capital expenditures, causing some delays; however, they have been completed.

Electrical distribution and service equipment at C. E Reig have been completed in-house within 45 days of the inspection.