



February 15, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Subject: Responses to the County Executive/County Council Budget Questions

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide responses to the County Executive/County Council budget questions. These responses have been provided to the board through the budget work sessions; however, board members have not seen responses in this order/format. If board members have suggested edits, please send to Karalee Turner-Little, Deputy Superintendent, by noon today. We will forward this memorandum to the County Executive/County Council at this time.

How does the school system’s FY 2020 operating budget request utilize strategic planning techniques and performance measures to prioritize need?

The FY 2020 operating budget request is informed by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that directly align to the school system’s strategic plan, the [*Strategic Call to Action*](#), qualitative data from stakeholders, and Board/Superintendent priorities based on limited resources.

How many grants has the school system sought and been awarded and for what dollar amounts for each of the last three years? Are they one-time or continuing?

Annually, an average of 70 grants supplement the operating budget and include grants such as the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant (\$2 million) and the Safe Schools grant (\$600,000). The majority of grants from the past three years are recurring and can be found in an attachment.

How has this revenue been factored into the FY 2020 budget request?

Grants are not a guaranteed funding source and the efforts that they fund supplement educational programs prioritized in the operating budget. The budget is developed with expected Grant

awards to support designated programs and a contingency to allow for acceptance of new Grant opportunities.

What cost savings measures does the school system plan to implement this year and what impact do you expect them to have?

The school system has tightened spending and hiring, when possible delaying replacement of staff in vacated positions not directly impacting the classroom. Our cost savings measures have helped us reduce a projected a \$50.5 million deficit in the Health Fund to \$37 million. We continue to look forward opportunities to find efficiencies and innovate - contracts are being reviewed to identify potential efficiencies and the recently adopted Technology Infrastructure Plan has established a standardized model for technology use within HCPSS by moving away from high-end devices and replacing them with less expensive technology options that still meet our instructional needs.

What are the school system's own strategies and action plans to preempt future Health Fund shortfalls as an alternative to using County dollars?

In both the FY 2019 and FY 2020 budgets the school system has fully funded its portion of employee healthcare costs while lowering the deficit. Where possible, end-of-year savings garnered from efficient program management has been, applied to reduce the deficit.

Does the school system prioritize eliminating the Health Fund deficit in FY20 over other identified priorities?

No. While eliminating the health fund deficit is a priority and continues to be a consideration of budget development, there are additional essential areas that require funding to provide safe and healthy schools and enriching academic environment. A successful school system must balance the priorities of supporting the children and families we serve with other budgetary needs.

What is the school system's criteria for prioritizing deferred maintenance needs over the coming years?

The following criteria informs the prioritization of deferred maintenance needs:

- Industry standards are reviewed for the recommended life expectancy of the system, equipment or components being considered.
- Age and type of system, equipment or components are considered.
- Amount of use our facilities are exposed to consists of school/educational components, along with community use that reduces the life expectancy of the facilities and various components within.
- Cost of repair vs. replacement
- Consideration is given to equipment that is outside and exposed to the weather vs. equipment that is inside.

Has the Facilities and Maintenance Committee been reconstituted, and if so, have they evaluated this issue and provided feedback?

An Operations Advisory Committee is used each time the annual Capital or Operating budgets are developed. This committee is a cross section from Construction, Facilities, Planning and Budgeting and focuses on selecting capital and systemic projects that should be completed. The

committee reviews the deferred maintenance list to determine which projects can be nominated and placed on the capital/systemic project list in order to chip away at the growing deferred list.

How significant a factor is class size in determining staffing needs?

Class size is the driving factor in determining our staffing needs to ensure that staff levels adhere to our staffing parameters.

To what extent do changes to the school system’s student/teacher ratio impact student performance?

Very large class-size reductions, on the order of magnitude of 7-10 fewer students per class, can have significant long-term effects on student achievement and other meaningful outcomes. These effects seem to be largest when introduced in the earliest grades, and for students from less advantaged family backgrounds.

What data can the school system present to paint a clearer picture on attrition and transfers?

ATTRITION

<i>Five-Year Attrition Rates</i>						
Staff Type	10/16/13 - 10/15/14	10/16/14 - 10/15/15	10/16/15 - 10/15/16	10/16/16 - 10/15/17	10/16/17 - 10/15/18	Average
Support Staff	174	255	183	191	186	198
Teacher	281	430	209	216	271	281
Certified, Management, and Technical Staff	54	71	41	43	42	50
Total Separations	509	756	433	450	499	529
Number of Employees	8,082	8,161	8,230	8,435	8,579	8,297
Turnover Rate	6.3	9.3	5.3	5.4	5.9	6.4

Note: An early retirement incentive program was offered during the 10/16/14 - 10/15/15 reporting year.

	Transfers				
	Oct. 16, 2013-Oct. 15, 2014	Oct. 16, 2014-Oct. 15, 2015	Oct. 16, 2015- Oct.15, 2016	Oct. 16, 2016-Oct. 15, 2017	Oct. 16, 2017-Oct. 15, 2018
Involuntary Transfer (Surplus)	118	88	124	61	142
Involuntary Transfer (Administrative)	9	17	17	38	47
Return from Leave	28	27	24	18	28
Voluntary Transfer	102	144	66	169	140
Total	257	276	231	286	357

What are the attrition and transfer rates in Howard County, and how do they compare with comparable systems?

We are not able to get data from comparable systems this quickly. We can provide it at a later time.

Has the school system developed a strategic staffing plan? If so, how does it serve as a basis for the school system’s proposed staffing plans?

All staffing decisions are driven by the school system’s [Strategic Call to Action](#) to ensure a highly diverse and effective staff. Within the guidelines of that strategic plan and budgetary constraints, each HCPSS division chief makes decisions regarding the staffing of each office in the respective division to support schools, students and families.

School staffing is determined by projected enrollment and adjusted throughout the year as enrollment fluctuates. In addition, all school principals have been tasked with working to ensure that the diversity of their staff more closely aligns with the diversity of their students. Human Resources and school administrators are working to recruit and hire a strong and diverse group of teachers and support staff.

What is the structure of the school system’s central leadership team? How does the structure and corresponding salaries compare with other Maryland jurisdictions?

A copy of the organizational chart for the Executive Leadership team can be found on page two of this document: <https://www.hcpss.org/f/aboutus/orgcharts.pdf>. Other Maryland jurisdictions of similar size have similar structures and salaries; please refer to page 1 of the Professional Salary Schedules, Maryland Public Schools

(<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Staff/20172018SalarySchedules.pdf>) for details. Other districts may use alternate titles for chief (such as assistant superintendent), but the structure is very similar.

Has a best practice review of comparable school systems occurred, which could create opportunities to maximize effectiveness and guarantee equity across schools?

While the needs and priorities of Howard County are unique to ourselves, best practices are implemented regularly to learn from the districts in our state and beyond. Whether considering a new academic strategy, operational efficiency, or community participation initiative, staff seek examples of where strategies have been developed and implemented effectively and learn from those systems who are seeing successful outcomes.

Has the school system prepared a fiscal outlook of projected maintenance, replacement, and training?

The school system has a list of deferred maintenance projects and completes these projects based on available funding. We are developing an illustrative schedule of how these projects would be completed if all were funded.

The Strategic Technology Plan presented at the July 12, 2017 Board meeting included a fiscal outlook of projected maintenance, replacement and training. Maintenance and replacement are included as part of the technology life cycle replacement.

For training, the curricular program offices continually develop and update content and best practices for technology implementation. Teacher training is provided by these content leaders during system-level professional learning sessions and at the school level with school media specialists, technology teachers, and other technology leaders in each school.

Has the school system established appropriate device/student ratio benchmarks? If so, on what basis was it developed?

The percent of students with a device is as follows:

- 50% Elementary school
- 63% Middle school
- 70% High school

The ratios were developed through a collaboration of staff representing the Divisions of Business and Technology, the Division of School Management and Instructional Leadership, and the Division of Academics. The appropriate use of technology for learning is an essential life skill. Therefore, ratios were developed considering implementation of the written and guaranteed curriculum and implementation of state and local assessments with consideration for developmentally appropriate strategies for learning.

How do we ensure that teacher training is aligned with the adoption of new technologies so that new equipment is utilized fully?

Staff in the Division of School Management and Instructional and the Division of Academics continually develop and update instructional content and best practices for technology implementation. Teacher training will continue to be provided by content leaders during content-specific professional learning sessions, and at the school level by school media specialists, technology teachers, and other technology leaders in the building.

The implementation of the technology plan will require additional training for staff. This includes the technical training for specific devices (e.g. Chromebooks) as well as training to support implementation of the instructional program. Curriculum resources are now stored in an online, learning management system. This system provides clarity of expectation for learning, consistent and diverse resources for teacher selection, and opportunities for community collaboration to support learning.

Has there been a communications/engagement plan for families and guardians so that technology competence can be reinforced at home?

There are currently resources available to families and guardians through the Family & Community Resources courses at the elementary level and What My Child Will Learn guides for middle school that involve technology use and suggestions. HCPSS provides many digital tools that students can use anytime, anywhere, with any internet connected device.

With the support of the Bright Minds Foundation, students receiving free and reduced-price meals (FARMs) and their families are provided with technology and internet access for use in the home, as well as training in effective use of these resources. HCPSS recently launched an outreach program to educate families about the FARMs program, so that many more will be aware of the many benefits available, and we are enlisting staff to serve as advocates for the program. In addition, the FY 2020 budget proposal includes a new Multicultural Outreach and School Support Coordinator position, to expand and tailor services needed by our diverse community.

Has a needs assessment been conducted for specialized services for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities?

Needs assessments for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities are regular and ongoing. At the school level, staff develop and adjust student Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) to meet the needs of each student.

The Department of Special Education (DSE) leadership team continually analyze data and seek input of the special education instructors across our schools to identify where resources or additional efforts may be required.

This data-informed approach drives efforts to establish new programs and enhance ongoing efforts aimed at better serving the needs of every HCPSS student.

How is the school system ensuring that ESY is addressing the goals in each child's IEP?

During Extended School Year (ESY) programs, teachers report weekly on progress toward the students' identified goals. This report is sent to the family at the end of each week. At the end of ESY, teachers complete the ESY progress report for the entire session. This is uploaded into Tienet (online IEP platform) and becomes part of the IEP record.

In each of the last three years, how many students who were moved to a less restrictive environment had to be relocated to a more restrictive environment because their needs could not be accommodated?

We do collect Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data (i.e., those moving from less to more) for approximately 34,000 IEPs but require additional time to accurately aggregate the data. One challenge in the data is the LRE codes for preschoolers transitioning to Kindergarten are different so determining the percentage of students moving from a more to less restrictive setting is not easily calculated.

How many requests were made by parents for multiple IEP meetings in each of the last three school years?

Parents or any other member of a student's IEP/IFSP team may request an IEP/IFSP Team meeting. Upon request, a meeting must be scheduled to address any number of standard meeting purposes (e.g., interim review) including *to address parent concerns*.

We do not track who initiates the meetings in between annual reviews, though annual review meetings, and others such as manifestation determination meetings, are typically initiated by the school as they are timeline driven.

What is the process for handling these requests and what are the outcome measures the school system tracks to ensure that parents' requests are handled effectively?

Requests by parents to hold IEP/IFSP team meetings are typically documented at the school level. School teams are expected to schedule an IEP/IFSP team meeting at any point when requested by a parent. If a parent and school staff agree there is no need for a formal IEP/IFSP team meeting, it is still expected that the school team will conference with the parent to address their concerns.

The Maryland Special Education Indicator 8 Parent Survey provides data related to the parents' overall satisfaction of their experiences with the special education process. The DSE reviews this information annually to determine areas in need of improvement. Planning for training and other responsive steps occurs as a result of these reviews and discussions. For the Preschool Survey, a criterion is met if the percentage of respondents agreeing with a response is over 80 percent; for the School Aged Survey, a criterion is met if the percentage of respondents agreeing with a response is over 70 percent.

DSE is finalizing a new IEP team meeting survey card, which will be distributed at the end of every IEP meeting for parents to provide feedback/input. This will allow the DSE to improve supports and services to families. Measures will be set based on baseline information collected after a period of survey card usage.

Additionally, our special education parent liaison and staff in the Family Support and Resource Center regularly engage with families. Parents receive guidance and support about scheduling IEP/IFSP team meetings whenever necessary or when requested by these two resources in addition to DSE staff who have similar roles. Call notes are maintained in each office.

How will this increase assure that the school system will be able to educate more of our children in their home schools and how will success be measured?

An increase in funding will help to ensure that all students receiving special education services are having their needs met as effectively and comprehensively as possible. For many students, remaining in their home school is a critical aspect of their success. For others, they can be better served elsewhere such as at our Cedar Lane School. Determining the greatest blanket of supports for each student is a collaborative effort between the student, parent and staff members that fulfill the IEP. Success will continue to be measured by the efforts detailed in the previous response.

How does the staffing model, which includes 126 new positions, complement the existing model?

Fiscal Year 2019 marked the initial implementation of school-based mental health services in HCPSS.

HCPSS social workers provide a variety of services to schools. School social workers primarily address the therapeutic needs of students exposed to trauma who may experience barriers in accessing mental health services outside of school. Although all students may experience trauma regardless of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, research shows that students living in poverty are less likely to have access to health and mental health services. Thus, schools with high FARMs rates were prioritized to receive services during the implementation year of school-based mental health services. The goal is to expand the model to provide social work services in all 77 schools in HCPSS for all students regardless of average family income.

Based on the job duties of HCPSS school social workers and the National Association of Social Workers' recommendation that school systems implement a ratio "to ensure reasonable workload expectations," the current recommended social worker to school ratio is 1:3 or 1:4 (1 social worker for every 3 or 4 schools).

In addition to the 22 requested social worker positions, the following positions were also requested:

- 18.0 School Psychologists
- 14.0 Nurses
- 15.0 Health Assistants
- 15.0 School Counselors
- 7.0 Pupil Personnel Workers (PPWs)
- 12.0 Behavioral Support Teachers
- 12.0 School Mental Health Technicians
- 3.0 Area Security Managers
- 7.0 Staff members for Homewood School - including 2 Mental Health Therapists, a Teacher, and 4 paraeducators
- 1.0 Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)

These positions reflect movement towards national standards and do not alter the social work and external provider plan in place.

What existing data can be shared regarding the need for additional mental health services in schools beyond what the existing model provides?

Many of the positions added to the budget will support reaching established ratios for existing school system positions; for example, adding school counselors to elementary schools with over 750 students. It is a challenge for an elementary counselor to connect with children when they are required to meet the needs of over 800 children. Another larger group of positions will ensure that each school health room is staffed with a nurse in every school.

HCPSS is using a design to measure the success of the mental health programming that is based on access to the instructional framework. Since we are not yet halfway through the first year of this model, it is too early to provide data specific to our schools. However, when a child has access to needed mental (behavioral) health services, the child is then able to access education services and increase overall well-being (e.g., academic, attendance, behavioral, social-emotional).

- Percentage with higher GPA (high school level)
- Percentage with improved MAP percentile (elementary and middle school levels)

Do data on chronic absenteeism and existing disciplinary practices factor into the assessment?

Yes. Office referrals, suspensions, chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and daily attendance are all considered when assessing.

How does the school system's new wellness/mental health plan leverage existing partnerships and resources in the community and provide coordinated services for students and families?

Student Support Teams (SST) for students in Pre-K through Grade 12 provide a structured process for identifying students' social-emotional, academic, and/or behavioral needs and connecting students and their families to appropriate resources. SST members coordinate care and monitor the progress of students who have been identified through SST. SST has four goals: 1) Students and their families are connected with school and community resources to address their needs; 2) Student progress is monitored for the ongoing effectiveness of the resources/intervention; 3) Staff members increase their knowledge of school and community resources to support students; 4) Coordinated Student Services Objectives and strategies are identified and monitored.

What coordinated efforts have been forged to leverage Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMSHA) and other grant funding to support the school system's model?

The Howard County Public School System has been selected to receive additional trainings and support through the State of Maryland's Student Assistance Program (SAP). The Maryland State Department of Health (DoH), Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH)

are building upon a foundation of student support staff, school nurses and health educators in schools to enhance their training to better equip school staff to prevent student substance use, and to identify, intervene, and refer students with Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) to appropriate treatment.

HCPSS has recently collaborated with the Howard County Health Department to apply for a grant to support Opioid Abuse Prevention and Outreach in Howard County. This grant will support development and implementation of a program that provides necessary community relations and education functions.

HCPSS consistently seeks opportunities to better serve students through grant funding. We would welcome the partnership of County government and other community groups to apply for a SAMSHA grant, which would offer a tremendous opportunity.

Is universal screening part of the school system’s new wellness/mental health plan?

HCPSS is exploring universal screening, which is a well-documented strategy for identifying students who would benefit from behavioral or mental health support. HCPSS is a careful steward of student data and would need to have a strong and meaningful plan for collection and protection of this sensitive data before putting a universal screen in place.

What performance measures is the school system using to evaluate social-emotional learning outcomes?

HCPSS is studying attendance, behavior, academic performance data, and teacher implementation data as part of the process.

In the school system’s opinion, how can the County-funded Mobile Crisis Team better serve the needs of students in crisis?

The Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) is exemplary, and more teams could support additional capacity. HCPSS would also benefit from additional community services for students who need more intensive and targeted services than those offered by the school system. Many times, MCT is able to de-escalate a situation, but after the crisis is resolved, the student soon returns to school bringing many of the same needs. Ongoing partnerships between the MCT and HCPSS will establish transition plans for supporting students through crisis and towards developing daily strategies to increase well-being.

How does the school system’s efforts leverage existing partnerships and resources in the community?

The HCPSS Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) supports schools in many ways, including the planning and leadership of events that build relationships and trust, engage students and staff in dialogue, elevate student voice, and foster a sense of school-wide community and inclusiveness. By partnering with the Local Children’s Board, DEI has been able to provide an increased number of effective facilitators, resulting in an increased ability to respond to the requests of schools. HCPSS aims to increase the capacity of DEI so that services such as these are proactive, coordinated, systemic, and sustainable. Additional services will include coordinated anti-bias activities, benchmarks, and accountability. These services will engage and leverage existing community resources by collaborating with system partners.

We have worked closely with Howard County Office of Community Resources and other community partners to increase collaboration with the HCPSS to support the development and implementation of new programs and community-specific engagement initiatives such as summer food access, child mental health and wellbeing, and early intervention programs. We have also engaged with stakeholders across racial, cultural and economic communities with the goal of co-constructing community and family engagement efforts.

What is the school system’s plan for restorative practices at schools most in need and how does this plan align with existing County efforts?

The school system’s plan is to increase the capacity of the Office of DEI to provide coordinated, systemic, and sustainable services that foster a restorative culture in every HCPSS school and classroom. This includes scaling the restorative justice pilot currently involving Oakland Mills Middle School, Long Reach High School, Swansfield Elementary School, and Mayfield Woods Middle School. It also includes increasing the number of trainings, such as those that support existing efforts and engaging stakeholders across the community. The HCPSS will equitably prioritize schools most in need during the scaling efforts.

What are the data around discipline that have informed the school system’s plan to ensure equitable discipline practices?

From 2016 through 2018, HCPSS’s out-of-school suspension rates had been consistently lower than the state average. Suspension rates have remained at 2.6 percent or lower over this three-year period, compared to 4.3 percent or higher across the state. In 2018, HCPSS’s overall Kindergarten through Grade 12 out-of-school suspension rate was 2.2 percent (1,225 students suspended of 55,470 enrolled), reflecting a decrease from 2.5 percent (1,342 students suspended of 53,634 enrolled) in 2016. However over-representation of certain student groups in suspensions has persisted. Namely, Black or African American students and Hispanic/Latino students, as well as students who receive FARMS and students who receive special education services, were suspended at higher rates than their peers. Male students were also suspended at higher rates than female students. These patterns were observed regardless of school level and persist over time.

How have you analyzed those data points to prioritize resources in this area?

Community Superintendents and Performance Directors work with principals and staff from schools that have higher percentages of students who are being suspended at higher than expected levels to provide the resources and supports needed to improve student outcomes. Through the school improvement process, schools with larger challenges related to discipline data create professional development opportunities for staff members, provide meaningful

supports to staff members who are new or may be struggling, and carefully monitor student behavior. Analysis of school culture and climate is part of the school improvement process which has led many schools to concentrate on developing a restorative culture. Additionally, the HCPSS provides differentiated staff to schools based on student performance and demonstrated needs. Discipline data is part of this allocation of resources. The allocation of alternative education teachers is also driven by discipline data.

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