



Business Management Services  
Lisa Howell  
Chief Financial Officer

Shavonne Smith, Director  
Budget & Management Services

## *FY 2025 Superintendent's PROPOSED Budget Q & A*

### *Questions from the Board of Education*

*Budget Work Session - January 25, 2024  
Additional Questions*

*Divisions:  
Academics  
Accountability  
Communications  
Operations  
School Support and Leadership*

## Contents: Division Questions

<b>Academics</b> .....	3
1. Boozer-Strother:.....	3
2. Briggs:.....	3
3. Briggs:.....	3
4. Briggs:.....	3
5. Briggs:.....	3
6. Adams-Stafford:.....	4
7. Adams-Stafford.....	4
<b>Accountability</b> .....	4
8. Briggs:.....	4
<b>Communications</b> .....	4
9. Rivera-Forbes (Student Member of the Board): .....	4
10. Rivera-Forbes (Student Member of the Board): .....	5
11. Briggs.....	5
12. Briggs.....	5
<b>Operations</b> .....	5
13. Boozer-Strother:.....	5
14. Boozer-Strother:.....	6
15. Boozer-Strother:.....	6
16. Briggs:.....	6
17. Briggs.....	7
18. Briggs:.....	7
19. Harris II:.....	7
20. Harris II:.....	7
<b>School Support and Leadership</b> .....	7
21. Boozer-Strother:.....	7
22. Boozer-Strother: .....	8
23. Boozer-Strother: .....	8
24. Adams-Stafford:.....	8

## Academics

1. **Boozer-Strother:** What are the specific programmatic expansions for FY25 required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future reflected in the budget? (Pgs. 120-151)

PGCPS has already submitted a Blueprint plan. Updates to that plan will be submitted in the near future. As the teams meet, analyze, deconstruct, and implement the blueprint goals, the existing budget has been structured to accommodate all related activities. Notably, in the 2025 budget request there is a request for the addition of a Family Engagement Specialist position. [Blueprint for Maryland Schools 2023-2024](#)

2. **Briggs:** What is the hourly instructional role in the Specialty Programs and Arts Office? What will that position do? (Pg. 129)

The Department of Creative and Performing Arts (DCPA) hires industry professionals as adjunct teachers to provide one-on-one and small group instruction for performing art students in the Visual and Performing Art (VPA) specialty programs. Additionally, these adjunct teachers provide accompaniment and coaching for small and large ensembles, classes, juries, auditions, and festivals as needed. These funds were previously budgeted at Northwestern HS and Suitland HS. At the start of FY 24, the Department of Creative and Performing Arts solicited for and was approved to assume the responsibility of hiring, scheduling, and monitoring the work and budget of these adjuncts. This is why it is just showing up for the first time in the VPA budget for SY 2025.

3. **Briggs:** We made cuts to the classroom equipment and furniture. Will this impact the program's ability to be effective in any way? (Pg. 130)

This will not impact the program because the reductions were due to the removal of the new school funds that were allocated to the Creative and Performing Arts department for one-time program needs for new schools that opened in FY 24. The funds are being realigned from the departments back to the reserves so that the funds can be redistributed for new schools that will be coming on Board in FY 25. In addition, funds were removed because they will be covered by ESSER funding in FY25 and returned when ESSER funding ends.

4. **Briggs:** I noticed that we requested a lot less than we spent in FY23 for instructional contract services, other contracted services, software licenses, and other miscellaneous supplies. With those costs incurring millions in the past, is this realistic for our budget? (Pg. 136)

The reduction in the sub-object class areas of contractual services and software licenses is a result of several restricted grants ending in fiscal year 2025 led by the ESSER II & III grants in addition to Maryland Leads and several American Rescue Plan Supplemental grants awarded by the Maryland State Department of Education.

5. **Briggs:** What is the need for the Financial Analyst in the CAO office? (Pg. 121)

There was another position in the Division of Academics that supported the grants for the CTE department. Based on the number of grants and the need of the overall division, we are using this position to fund the new fiscal analyst position.

The complexity of managing a myriad of grants, Request for Proposals (RFPs), and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) necessitates dedicated oversight to ensure the seamless functioning of academic initiatives.

The Division of Academics operates as the hub of educational programs, with numerous grants, RFPs, and MOUs spanning across various teams. This demands meticulous fiscal monitoring to safeguard against missed deadlines and ensure judicious expenditure. A Fiscal Analyst is crucial in guaranteeing fiscal alignment to spending guidelines,

assuring the implementation of initiatives within appropriate timelines, and acting as a liaison between the Division of Academics and key entities such as the Budget Office, Grants Financial Management Office, and the Strategic Grants Development & Management Office.

While each of these offices plays a specialized role, it is the unique responsibility of the Division of Academics to ensure comprehensive adherence to all aspects of each grant, RFP, and MOU. Additionally, Academics has about 43 department budgets. This role is essential not only in navigating the intricacies of financial management but also in fostering cohesion across departments, ensuring that educational endeavors align with fiscal protocols and contribute to the overall success of the urban school district.

6. **Adams-Stafford:** Please present a plan that addresses the diffusion of successful specialty programs throughout the County. (Pg. 67)

The present objective concerning Specialty Programs is to guarantee sufficient resources, staffing, and successful program replication. The emphasis for the Spring and Summer of 2024 is directed towards developing replication models for each program. This strategic approach enables the school system to determine the requisite number of positions, instructional materials, and discretionary funds necessary for the launch of new programs. Moreover, the challenge of identifying suitable spaces within schools for additional programming persists until boundary adjustments are finalized.

7. **Adams-Stafford:** Please provide a breakdown of the \$64M Special Education Private School line item. (Pg. 149)

The \$64M allocated for Special Education Private Schools covers Tuition for Day Programs, benefiting 896 Nonpublic School Students across 38 institutions.

Breakdown:

- Contracted Services: \$62.8M for diverse Nonpublic Placements Schools.
- Contracted Services: \$1.2M for Foundations (Nonpublic Placement Partnership).

## Accountability

8. **Briggs:** What are the other contracted services and professional contracted services request for \$79k and \$50k going to be used for? (Pg. 172)

Funds for contracted services include \$79,000 for Hannover Research to continue supporting the district with various research and reporting including its Equity Dashboard, Culture and Climate Survey, and the Staff and Student Focus Groups. Additionally, \$50,000 is included for the continued support and maintenance of the Critical Success Indicator (CSI Dashboard) which can be accessed [here](#). Both efforts were formally funded through grants.

## Communications

9. **Rivera-Forbes (Student Member of the Board):** What steps are we taking to increase student engagement in the budget?

To increase student engagement in the budget, PGCPSS will provide clear and concise information about where funds are allocated and how decisions are made. We will also ensure that budget-related information is presented in a format that is easily understandable to a wide range of students.

10. **Rivera-Forbes (Student Member of the Board):** More collaborations with the Student Board Member on student budget involvement.

We will be sure to include you in our communications planning around budget.

11. **Briggs:** Why is there \$33,500 in registration fees in the office of media relations and strategic communications when for FY24, it was just \$500, and the prior year it was \$2,700? (Pg. 116)

In critical, public-facing roles that support the entire organization, it is critical that the more than 30 members of the Office of Communications and Community Engagement have access to annual professional development — an allowance that has been grossly underfunded in past years. Additionally, prior years did not include the newly combined Communications and Community Relations/Partnerships teams (only Communications, which has been severely underfunded). The requested registration supports annual professional development for more than 30 team members — including the Annual National Conference for School PR Professionals (NSPRA) for the Public Information Office; one marketing training each for Marketing Specialist and Graphic Designer; trainings for web team staff that allow them to stay current on industry best practices; and annual conferences for Family and Community Engagement staff to best serve PGCPs. This request is aligned with the PGCPs strategic plan's focus on a high performing workforce, and we strongly believe each team member deserves one quality professional development opportunity each year, which is our ask. Prior years were underfunded due to 1) travel restrictions (COVID) and 2) leadership priorities. Lastly, we are onboarding at least four new team members in Q1 and Q2 of 2024.

12. **Briggs:** What does the educational communication equipment entail in the capital outlay portion of restricted funds on page 116 for the office of media relations and strategic communications? (Pg. 116)

The unrestricted funds support replacement of equipment of the PGCPs TV station including batteries, camera lens, etc. The restricted include funds from the Comcast TV grant in the amount of \$75,000 per year that is paid in quarterly amounts of \$18,750 with the option to use for discretionary purchases of television support equipment including microphones, batteries, cameras, TV studio upgrades and the operation of our Local Access Channel 96. Restricted funds also include capital outlay to fund equipment replacement and upgrades to include computers, cameras, on-air system equipment and video switchers. Additionally, there are technology funds to support computer-based equipment that has a life cycle similar to computers.

## Operations

13. **Boozer-Strother:** Does the budget include funding to expand benefits for bus drivers to increase retention? Does the budget include funding for new strategies for bus driver recruitment? Have the hours of students missed classroom time, and staff time redirected from school management duties to managing late buses, been quantified to build advocacy messaging for greater investment of funding of solutions that are currently deemed "unaffordable"? Are funds "on hold" in this budget for the anticipated routing, ridership, and vehicle type changes to be implemented from the audit given that data is not currently known? (Pgs. 265-268)

The budget is poised to continue benefits for drivers and attendants with the following retention efforts:

- PGCPs contractually reimburses employees the cost of the renewal of the CDL License.
- PGCPs pays for the costs for Fingerprint and Background checks.
- PGCPs pays for the cost of DOT physical and TB testing conducted via an approved vendor.

When a Non-Ortho/Non-Public/and Non-Special Education Driver covers an Ortho/Non-Public/Special Education run, they are compensated at the higher pay differential. All Bus Drivers are at minimum 6.5-hour employees (up to

Prince George's County Public Schools  
Business Management Services  
**FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget**

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8 hours available). They are deemed benefits-eligible and full-time. Bus Drivers are paid for any additional/extra runs they work beyond what this initially bid for as part of the enhanced Plus-In compensation incentive. All permanent bus drivers are enrolled in the Maryland State Retirement System. Applicable Merit and COLA salary scale increases were received on July 1, 2023 with an additional salary scale increase planned for July 1, 2024. Tuition reimbursement is also available up to six (6) credits per fiscal year (\$411.00 per credit).

New strategies for bus driver and bus attendant recruitment include the following:

- Conduct targeted recruitment in the Northern area of the county.
- Hold an appreciation event.
- Combining the CDL preparation class and bus attendants for the bus drivers that have been with the school system, find out why they stay - job satisfaction, work environment, students, or leadership.
- Continue the Transportation Academy - Professional development to grow leaders within the department.
- Employee of the month at each bus lot to reinforce - customer service, consistency, and going the extra mile.
- Bonus for referring another driver (Subject to negotiations).

14. **Boozer-Strother:** The increased building use fees have impacted the ability of Parent-Teacher Organizations and community organizations to provide critical community building and family services to all schools, especially impacting the delivery of services at Community Schools by organizations that cannot pay \$1,000+ to serve families on school grounds. What is the plan for the new budget cycle to consider a category of Blueprint for Maryland's Future School Resource Provider to drastically reduce or remove the fees? (Pgs. 247-251)

Building usage within the normal business hours Monday through Friday, Community Groups and Parent- Teacher organizations are not charged for using our facility outside of the \$2.60 per hour fee to recoup the cost of custodial supplies for the school. However, outside of our normal business hours fees are required to cover the cost of opening the facility, in compliance with AP 1330. Although these groups provide a service to the community, educational funding is not available to supplement their endeavors. [Hourly Rate Schedule For Non-Rent Paying Groups](#)

15. **Boozer-Strother:** What is the specific budget expansion/funding for the Climate Change Action Plan Year 2+ goals? How many electric buses will be purchased in FY25? (Pgs. 240-268)

The Sustainability & Resiliency Director was appointed in FY 2024 to lead CCAP implementation and facilitate sustainability efforts. Two FTE Program Manager positions were requested as out-of-cycle change to the FY 2024 budget. In FY 2025, existing staff reorganization from other departments will add to the staff complement in the Department of Sustainability and Resiliency.

As a pilot, Federal ESSER II grant funds were utilized to purchase 20 electric buses and three portable charging stations to provide a temporary solution for powering the buses. The Operations team is focused now on developing a plan for the full utilization of these electric buses and installing a more permanent infrastructure solution for charging the electric buses. Once progress has been made in these areas, we will be able to determine the number of electric buses to purchase with available funds.

16. **Briggs:** The \$26 million deficit for the Capital Programs line item under Chief Operating Officer is coming from what? (Pg. 39)

The \$26M is not a deficit, but an accounting for Federal ESSER III grant funds, which flow through the Operating budget rather than the Capital budget. The \$26M in the FY 2024 Estimate relates to the funds in the ESSER III grant to support HVAC Replacements for various schools; Building Automation System Refreshment; and Portable Filtration & Dehumidification Units. This is the final year for ESSER III funding.

17. **Briggs:** Are the security and safety services something we can negotiate? We agreed to these detectors, but they don't seem to be the most pressing financial needs in the district.

The safety and security of our staff and children must be of the highest priority. Crime and problems in the surrounding communities can often find their way into our schools. We have had at least three PGCPs students killed in gun related violence as the result of problems in their neighborhoods. In addition, schools nationwide and regionally are seeing an increase in group fights. Having the necessary safety and security staffing and measures in place has already reduced the number of firearms recovered and our unarmed safety and security personnel have been responsible for each recovery. Two firearms were recovered when students attempted to avoid the screening process but were intercepted by Safety and Security personnel. Due to our screening process, we are also seeing reductions in the number of knives and drugs recovered.

The addition of Security Assistants will allow for minimum staffing at locations currently understaffed. The addition of Investigative Counselors will allow for better supervision of Safety and Security personnel. Currently, there are only one or two supervisors in most of our clusters. The clusters can be up to 15 schools. While the addition of safety enhancements has proven to be effective, they require at least one person to stay with the device and address any alerts. This reduces the number of Safety and Security staff available to monitor student behavior and respond to requests for assistance from staff. It is imperative we continue to strive to make our schools as safe as possible and fully funding the request will get us closer to our goal.

18. **Briggs:** This is more of a note: The budget book needs to be updated on page 17, where it states that the CIP represents a period of six-year cycles; it should not be updated to ten-year cycles. (Pg. 17)

It should be changed to 10 years as our new projections do not support 6-year cycles. The Budget Office will need to make the adjustment.

19. **Harris II:** Have funds been considered to replace the technologies/software used to track our bus fleet? (Pg. 18)

Funding has been secured by our stop arm vendor, Bus Patrol. Additional funding is potentially "on hold" as well.

20. **Harris II:** Have CCAP priorities been implemented into FY25, if so please specify? (Pg. 19)

Various departments within the administration have been and continue to incorporate funding into their budgets as well as leverage external grant opportunities to support the implementation of CCAP priority actions. Some of these budget items include two FTE positions to support building automation, pilot composting programs in schools, procurement of 20 electric school buses, convening of student and leadership Climate Change Summit, expanded use of trash contracts to support Waste Management and Recycling program, and design of new school construction to be solar-ready and energy efficient to name a few.

## School Support and Leadership

21. **Boozer-Strother:** Has funding been restored for the Early Childhood Center at Northwestern HS for Adolescent Single Parent Program and CTE program? (Pgs. 270-292)

This program was a partnership with Northwestern High School and the state. While this was not a CTE program, the CTE team has a course at the school that supported this initiative. PGCPs will not be restoring funding for this program. The 2022-2023 school year was spent building a plan to support all pregnant teens in the district. This plan revamped the use of positions for full implementation during the 2023-2024 school year. This program was only at two schools (Northwestern High School & Bladensburg High School) and it was not serving the students of those

schools but the adults working in the schools. The PGCPS students now are supported with a voucher to go to other daycare centers.

22. **Boozer-Strother:** Is the funding for student extracurricular activities for after school hours for social-emotional engagement and academic enrichment expanding for FY25? (Pgs. 284-289)

The academic enrichments of tutoring and interventions that were implemented systemwide during the 2023-2024 school year will be implemented again during the 2024-2025 school year. Community Schools have funding to support afterschool activities. [Interventions/Enrichments](#)

23. **Boozer-Strother:** The International Student Office is understaffed for the volume of enrollment performed by this team. Why is there not a staff expansion? (Pg. 41)

They currently have 13 staff members who provide services to the schools. We have expanded this team in the past couple of years. We do have plans to continue to expand as the budget allows.

24. **Adams-Stafford:** The number of Community Schools has grown but the number of staff has not. Please explain. (Pg. 42)

Community School Coordinator positions are grant funded and have increased with the number of schools added. In addition, 2 additional Community School Specialists and 1 Financial Analyst have been added to support the coordinators at new schools.