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FY 2024 Chief Executive Officer's PROPOSED Budget Q & A

Questions from the Board of Education

Budget Work Session – February 2, 2023
Additional Questions

Divisions:
Academics
Chief of Staff
Human Resources
Information Technology

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS | 14201 School Lane, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

		Questions from Board of Education **Budget Work Session – February 2, 2023**
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		Chief of Staff
Boozer-Struthers	2.	Could the metrics of use of Language Link by school be provided upon request by Board Members if they have concerns about a particular school? Do all school front offices have posters/signs in relevant languages posted for parents to know to ask for this service to be used? Is Language Link promoted by schools through email/Class Dojo, etc. with messages explaining how Language Link works and that a parent can call a school and request Language Link?
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Academics

1. **What software does PGCPs use to track student achievement or to support academic interventions in ELA and Math?**

   The current data platforms being utilized by Prince George's County Public Schools to capture and report district level student performance data are as follows: SchoolMAX (Harris School Solutions), Pearson Access (Pearson INC.), DIBELS (Amplify), iReady (Curriculum Associates), Reading Inventory (Houghton Mifflin), CoGAT (Riverside Insights), and EduSkills (EduSkills, LLC.). With the current data platforms being utilized to capture district, domain, standard, item and individual student level data, no further data platforms will need to be purchased to fulfil the Maryland Blueprint's data reporting requirements. PGCPS currently has the capacity to report on all Maryland Blueprint requirements using the current data sources, such as our Student Information System (SIS) data as well as all district assessment platforms to provide for state reporting requirements. All other intervention programs have data within its software. Staff members are able to pull that data from the vendor.

   Chief of Staff

2. **Could the metrics of use of Language Link by school be provided upon request by Board Members if they have concerns about a particular school? Do all school front offices have posters/signs in relevant languages posted for parents to know to ask for this service to be used? Is Language Link promoted by schools through email/Class Dojo, etc. with messages explaining how Language Link works and that a parent can call a school and request Language Link?**

   Yes, Language Link usage is captured by school and the metrics can be made available upon request. The OIT arranged for language packages to be mailed to all schools from Language Link in May 2022. The packages included: point to your language posters, language reference cards and Language Link stickers with the PGCPS account code for main office phones. The OIT has had ongoing collaboration with the Department of Family School Partnerships and the Office of Community Schools to facilitate language access PD for Parent Engagement Assistants and Community Schools Coordinators. The sessions support the school-based teams in making the connection for families about the language accessible points of access and resources available at their school. At the time of registration with ISAEO, and also at multiple community events, "PGCPS Language Assistance Needed" wallet-sized cards are distributed to linguistically diverse families, empowering them to present the card (with their language on it) to prompt language access support at their point of entry in the schools.

3. **Is there any new technology from the communications department to reach more families? Did you see any gaps and growth for the new budget as pertains to the Communication Department?**

   We believe the existing budget request is adequate to achieve our goal of providing staff, families and community members with accurate, timely information using multiple platforms (primarily direct mail/email/text message, website, social media, telephone town halls). Our challenges in reaching families has less to do with too-few communications tools, but unavailable or outdated contact information. The lack of a current email address is a particular challenge among Spanish-speaking families. (The SchoolMax parent platform includes 70,000 email users and 85,000 mobile phone numbers.) We use text messaging through SchoolMessenger to provide basic information and a link to the email. We also feature year-round campaigns encouraging families to check their contact information in SchoolMax. In addition, families rely more on school-based tools instead of systemic platforms for key information. We work closely with school leaders and parent engagement assistants to amplify messaging, dates and related information.

4. **What possibilities exist with BoardDocs in terms of multilingual translation of Board Documents?**

   We will better use functionality that already exists which is to put documents in a format that allows people accessing Board Docs to use translation tools like google translation. We also contacted BoardDocs. They indicated they do not have this option at this time and have no information on if and when they would provide multilingual translation services.

5. **How are we trying to alleviate the interpretation gaps in terms of the budget such as having one interpreter in each school?**

   Meaningful language access and interpreting for formal meetings is facilitated through the multiple resources available in PGCPS, including virtual and in-person interpreters from the Interpreter Bank and telephonic interpreting services through Language Link. Quarterly Fluency data reported for the BOE ELL Workgroup Recommendations reflects strong fulfillment utilizing these resources. The OIT will continue to work closely with Human Resources for additional Spanish temporary on-call interpreter hires, for these individuals to serve as qualified neutral and unbiased language conduits for formal meetings in schools. We encourage continued hiring of bilingual front line staff for on-site communication directly with families and to build critical relationships. As the budget allows, we recommend future consideration of a full-time

interpreter pool with Spanish interpreters allocated to school clusters or regions to facilitate language interpretation services for formal meetings in school clusters or regions.

6. **How far down people are reading into the newsletter and additional information provided in terms of platforms?**

Open rate is the key indicator for successful email campaigns and newsletter marketing. Our newsletters are opened substantially more than the industry-wide average of 21%. Open rate is one aspect of engagement for our audience; the other, click rates, help us determine where our audience wants to know more, view more, or do more with our newsletter content. We are currently only tracking links to PGCPS webpages. In a newsletter sampling from January 2023, we found that the story mid-way through the newsletter (link to CTE application), received 90% of the clicks. We also saw a few clicks in the utility footer of the newsletter (link to enrollment) indicating that our audience scrolled down the newsletter.

Human Resources

7. **There are many articles about the percentage of the US population experiencing long COVID symptoms and impact on work force. Is this a significant factor in employee sick time this year, especially teachers? If so, how is this impacting planning for next year and recruitment of substitutes and long term substitutes?**

Data would not suggest that long COVID symptoms have been a significant factor in employee sick time this year for teachers. Prior to the pandemic, studies showed, specifically in the District, Maryland and Virginia area, that teacher absenteeism was at all-time high, which remains consistent and thus causes the need for additional substitute teachers. In addition, there is the overall decline in the profession and the labor market that now caters to those who would have been substitutes. Human Resources has had to work with our partners in the Divisions of Academics and School Support and Leadership to think of alternatives for master schedules and Student Based Budgeting to take these factors into consideration. In addition, last year, Human Resources proposed a salary increase for substitutes, which was granted to ensure our rates were comparable and in most cases is higher than the surrounding districts. Nationally the average ratio of substitute teacher to teacher vacancy is 1 to every 5.98. Prince George's County Public Schools' substitute teacher to teacher vacancy is 1 to every 3.22. Annually, we maintained a pool of approximately 2,300 substitute teachers.

Given the high percentage of absences and vacancies, the recruitment and hiring of substitute teachers is ongoing throughout the year to improve the likelihood of filling absences. Since July 1, 2022 we have hired approximately 500 additional substitute teachers and remain on track to hire approximately 400 additional substitute teachers by the end of the school year to further strengthen our current pool.

8. **Is anyone filling in for the Executive Coordinator for Diversity that aligns more for LatinX. Data that shows increase and not decrease in LatinX staff population.**

During the 2013-2014 school year, the Division of Human Resources created a position titled: Diversity Recruitment Executive Coordinator. The position was vacated during the 2019-2020 school year and repurposed to support the Office of Equity and Excellence. After conducting time samples of the work products, goals and outcomes, it was determined that the specific position was not needed but rather there should be a collective effort across the recruitment and staffing offices to recruit and onboard diverse populations, as well as collaboration with other offices in Human Resources to collectively build on retention strategies. The data provided shows the number of Hispanic staff increased after the position was vacated and our efforts shifted.

2014-2023 Percent of Hispanic Educators & Administrators										
	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	***20-21**	**21-22**	****22-23**
Educators	2.3	2.7	3.2	3.3	3.6	4.1	4.5	**4.6**	**4.8**	**5.1**
Administrators	1.1	1.1	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.3	**2.2**	**3.1**	**2.6**
TOTAL	3.4	3.8	4.9	5.3	5.9	6.3	6.8	**6.8**	**7.9**	**7.7**

*Blue symbolizes the reduction of the position.
**As of January 2023

9. **Follow up about retire/rehire individual- Her certification lapsed and she is being paid as a substitute teacher.**

The employee is not being paid as a substitute teacher at the rate of $175.00. The employee is being paid at a long term rehire-retiree rate of $213.75.

10. **How can we use budget support to pay for certification for retire-rehire?**

The number of retirees who have expressed concern regarding not being paid at the retiree rate as a result of not holding the required state certification requirement is only isolated to one inquiry. Therefore, there has been no need to consider budget support to pay for certification for retirees. Retirees may contact the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to apply to renew their certificate by completing six semester credits and paying the associated fee of $10.00. Six semester credits must be earned during each five year certificate renewal cycle and must be submitted to MSDE at the time of renewal.

11. **How are we working to keep those retired/rehire or incentives for newly employed educator individuals?**

Annually, Prince George's County Public Schools participates in the State of Maryland Retire/Rehire Program, which allows PGCPS to hire certificated retired Maryland Teachers in MSDE identified Critical Shortage Areas or at Title I schools and compensate them 100% of their salary and in accordance with PGCEA negotiated salary table. We annually recruit & hire retired teachers and substitute teachers through: job announcement, principal referral, call campaign, and job fairs.

12. **What's the percentage of educators coming to PGCPS from Bowie State University or other local universities?**

Over the past three years Prince George's County Public Schools has hosted 158 Professional Development Schools (PDS) Interns from Bowie State University. Of the 158, sixty-four were hired as classroom teachers, 8 as paraprofessionals and 14 as substitutes, the equivalent of 54%.

Information Technology

13. **What are the metrics of teachers' comfort level on Canvas?**

The primary metric we use to determine teacher comfort level with Canvas is our usage rate. We currently have about 56,000 Canvas users, including both students and teachers, and this number continues to climb. Unfortunately, the analytics for Canvas usage are not well-developed by Instructure, the Canvas product vendor, so it is difficult and cumbersome to drill down to individual teacher and school usage rates. However, Instructure has promised an analytics tool release for Spring 2023 that will enable districts to have much greater insight into the variability of usage rates across their partner districts. Once deployed, this analytics tool will enable us to target our training and support to specific schools with lower user adoption rates than others, and point us to teachers who may be less comfortable using Canvas so we can support their development in this area.

14. **What budget implications are foreseen for the future against "AI"(Artificial Intelligence) and other security vulnerabilities?**

For FY 2024, we do not anticipate needing additional funding to address AI issues, such as ChatGPT; there are free open source programs that can address concerns with ChatGPT. Currently, we are in the review stage of our approach to how we plan to handle this AI disruptor. With respect to security vulnerabilities however, we anticipate needing an approximate 5% increase in cybersecurity funding each year going forward to continue our expanded cybsecurity posture to keep pace with our rapidly expanding digital footprint.

15. **What does the Division of IT need from this Board of Education?**

The IT division would appreciate continued support from the Board with increasing technology support staffing commensurate with the significant increase in the deployment and use of technology equipment, including student Chromebooks, as well as the construction and opening of new school sites. Additionally, the IT division would appreciate the Board's continued support in funding technology infrastructure and cybersecurity initiatives that are included in the division's FY 2024 budget request. Finally, for FY 2025 and FY 2026 and beyond, the IT division will need support to address the ongoing funding of technology initiatives that were supported through the federal ESSER program. This includes our 1-to-1 student device program, interactive flat panels for classrooms, and related staff technology needs.