

Budget FAQ's

Programs

Q1: What is the annual cost of both the Chinese Immersion Program and Outdoor School?

A1.1 (Chinese Immersion Program): ACPS incurs the same expense to employ a teacher, regardless of the program offered. However, the school system pays for a work visa for the Chinese foreign national visiting teachers, of which there are 3. The one time cost is about \$7,000 per teacher. The program also utilizes visiting teachers from the Hanban Institute as Instructional Assistants, for which we pay no salary. The high school Chinese Teacher is also provided through Hanban. The total annual expenses for all Hanban visiting teachers is about \$8,500 (housing, transportation, etc.).

Different programs offered in ACPS may also have higher than average costs associated with them depending on staffing and equipment needs. Examples include Title I, Career and Technical Programs, Advance Placement/College Courses, etc.

A1.2 (Outdoor School): ACPS is required to provide students with meaningful environmental educational experiences. Even if the school system decided not to offer residential outdoor school, it would still be charged with providing some other form of environment education for fifth grade students.

ACPS budgets about \$160,000 per year for Outdoor School. A little more than half of that amount goes to the 4-H Center for food and lodging.

Q2: Should the school system begin to eliminate athletic programs?

A2: This is a policy decision that the Board would have to consider. ACPS believes that it is extremely beneficial for students to be involved in extracurricular activities, such as athletics.

Additionally, Federal Title IX requirements must be met by the school system.

Q3: Why doesn't the school system cut programs instead of personnel?

A3: ACPS has cut and limited programs, as well as personnel, to balance the budget. Low-enrollment programs (typically, those with fewer than 10 students) are eliminated from the master schedule. Examples include Ag Science, Masonry, and several AP offerings. We have cut about 229 full time positions across the board in the past 7 years.

Q4: Why does the school system continue to rent space from the courthouse as opposed to utilizing space at Eckhart, especially if there is low enrollment at Eckhart? And why are there four teachers/coordinators at Eckhart if enrollment is down? Why does the school system continue to pay for students in the Jefferson program?

A4.1, 4.2: This question is currently under review. Students who attend alternative programs typically have significantly greater needs requiring a smaller teacher to student ratio in order to provide the appropriate and required services. The State Board of Education also has very stringent discipline guidelines in an effort to keep students in

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educational settings more similar to the formal instructional setting so students will not be behind when they transition back to the home school.

Students who have IEPS require the educational setting and program outlined in the IEP, as a matter of law.

A4.3: Jefferson is a program whose services are contracted with the school system. Jefferson employees are not employed by ACPS.

Q5: Are there any other options to balance the budget besides cutting programs or staff?

A5: ACPS is reliant on funding from local, state and federal funding sources. The school district cannot bond debt and does not have taxing authority. ACPS takes advantage of grant opportunities whenever they align with program needs. Most grants are awarded to assist with the implementation of a program, but not to sustain it long-term. A school system's operating budget is used to fund programs in the long-term.

Staff/Salaries

Q1: Is the school system considering raises for staff in the future?

A1: Salaries and raises are subject to negotiations, which are subject to the availability of funds. This year, the school board realized that the cost of health insurance increased dramatically, and made the effort to do what they could to offset that increase by offering all employees a .5% COLA, totaling approximately \$350,000.

Q2: Why do supervisors or other central office employees receive raises, while teachers and instructional assistants do not?

A2: This is not accurate. All ACPS employees in all bargaining units received a .5% COLA, including supervisors and central office employees. Additionally, eligible employees earned a step increase on their respective salary scale, as the school board felt that was a priority to preserve these steps for employees. Allegany County is one of only a few school districts in the state that has been able to consistently provide steps over the past several years.

Q3: What are the plans for the media specialists for next year?

A3: Staffing for next year will begin in March and April after students select their courses and budget is finalized.

Q4: Why do we need a Public Information Officer? Could this position be combined or eliminated?

A4: The school board places a high priority on good communication to students, staff, parents and the community. This becomes even more necessary when resources within the school system are scarce. The Office of Public Information is responsible for communications within the school system and communications between the school system and the community; responding to Maryland Public Information Act and Freedom of Information requests from the public; serving as a liaison between the press and the

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Superintendent, Board, and staff members, preparing news releases and informational programs; assuming responsibility for ongoing publications; maintaining and updating the school system's website and [Facebook page](#); and oversight of the Allegany County Education Television channel.

It would be difficult to combine these responsibilities. Just as in the rest of the system, the Central Office has eliminated staff over the past 7 years, including 12 full time positions.

Q5: Why do school psychologists work twelve months? Could they be utilized for summer school perhaps?

A5: When attempting to balance a budget, all possible options are on the table for discussion. This question will be evaluated.

Q6: The Special Education Department seems top heavy. Can the director and supervisor split elementary and secondary duties rather than having two supervisors?

A6: There is currently no director of special education. The school system utilizes one supervisor and two assistant supervisors to fulfill these duties. There is a difference in salary between a director and the lower-salaried supervisor.

Q7: Why is there a supervisor for math and for science? This used to be one person's responsibility.

A7: ACPS has utilized both a math and science supervisor for more than ten years. With the changing standards and assessments and with a greater emphasis on STEM, it is necessary for each of these content areas to have the support of a content specific supervisor. These are both areas of greater accountability on mandated testing.

Q8: Why does the school system pay for professional development speakers, and why do they pay for substitutes so that teachers can attend PD?

A8: Professional development is very important to help our staff stay current in order to benefit students. A continuing problem, sometimes more so than funding, is that of having enough time for professional development. Most of the school system's professional development expenses are paid for out of Federal Title IIA funds, whose sole purpose is for use in professional development. These are also mandates requiring professional development where we do not.

Q9: Can we see a breakout of teachers that are paid using unrestricted (local discretion) versus restricted (money provided by state and government that must be spent based on specific criteria) funds?

A9: Page 6 within the ACPS budget (located on the school system's website at www.acpsmd.org) outlines the following: 1) Teachers paid with local funds 623.5; 2) Teachers paid with "other" funds 53.

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Q10: Why is new administrative staff being hired at a higher salary than that of their successor's original position?

A10: Any time new employees are hired (teachers, administrators, classified staff, etc.), they are placed on their unit's respective salary scale based on their experience and education. In almost all recent cases, the school system has filled vacancies at lower classifications and salaries as a cost-saving mechanism.

Q11: Why does the school system have two supervisors of Human Resources?

A11: ACPS has one Supervisor of Human Resources. The Chief Administrative Officer oversees the Human Resources, Food Services, Transportation, Maintenance and Operations departments.

Q12: What criteria determine the entry-level salary for new hires? Is it based on education and experience or is there a rubric?

A12: Entry-level salaries are based on education and experience.

Q13: Why is a school responsible to pay \$200 to have a SmartBoard moved to another classroom as a result of staffing changes?

A13: There is a cost associated with the relocation of a SmartBoard. ACPS maintenance personnel could do this work, when their schedule permits; however, this process is usually lengthier due to scheduling constraints.

Q14: Why does the school system pay for services from Maryland Electric rather than utilizing maintenance department personnel?

A14: See #13 above

Q15: Why does the school system employ an energy manager?

A15: ACPS's energy program was established in an effort to realize savings in energy costs. The Energy Manager works collaboratively with all departments of the school system to explore and implement strategies and systems that will result in the reduction of energy use and increase cost savings. This is only one of the responsibilities assigned to this employee. ACPS does not employ a full time energy manager.

Class Size/Redistricting/Consolidation

Q1: Will the county be considering future school consolidations due to budget concerns?

A1: When attempting to balance budgets, all options will have to be on the table for consideration.

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Q2: How will the budget crisis affect class sizes?

A2: One unfortunate side effect of employing fewer staff is an increase in class sizes.

Q3: Are there plans in place to utilize six instructional specialists as classroom teachers to help offset larger class sizes?

A3: Some of our instructional specialists are paid using Federal Title IIA funds. Stipulations of using these funds are that these individuals can only teach one class; and they must serve as mentors to teachers with 1-3 years of experience. Moreover, these individuals serve as instructional coaches within the school.

Q4: Is the school system planning to redistrict attendance areas?

A4: Redistricting attendance areas is being considered by the school board, especially at the elementary level, as schools are both under and over enrolled, making redistricting a necessity. This will be a spring 2017 discussion.

Q5: Is the school system discussing consolidation?

A5: The issue of consolidation is one that the elected school board could need to consider, after redistricting elementary boundaries. Consolidation process is specifically addressed in COMAR, and it is typically a yearlong process. This is a discussion that could impact the FY2019 budget.

Q6: Where does Allegany County rank in terms of student enrollment?

A6: ACPS ranks 16th in the state in enrollment.

Health Insurance

Q1: Has the district considered consolidating services with the county and city to be covered by one health insurance plan?

A1: Yes, this option has been reviewed. However, the plans that cover these entities are too different in terms of co-pays, coverages, etc, and insurance plans are included within negotiated agreements. Premiums are responsive to insurance claims, and a larger group covered under a plan spreads out the risk and does not necessarily mean lower premiums.

Q2: Does the school system negotiate with any company other than CBIZ for health insurance? If not, why?

A2: ACPS has a contractual relationship with CBIZ as they serve as a consultant who specializes in healthcare. They provide the school system with an analysis of costs and trends and makes recommendations based on this analysis. Services provided by CBIZ may be negotiated. CBIZ is the only large company in Western Maryland.

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Miscellaneous

Q1: Is there funding to receive new blacktop at Washington Middle School?

A1: New blacktop at Washington is currently not a part of the school board's capital budget.

Q2: Are any local funds being used for the Allegany High School Project?

A2: Yes. The school board contributed \$3,239,444 towards the project. The county provided the required local match for state funds. This is the same process that was used with the construction of Mountain Ridge High School.

Q3: When was the last time that the county funded the school system above Maintenance of Effort (MOE)?

A3: The last time the school district was significantly funded above MOE was FY 2012 when the county provided \$574,293 over MOE.

Q4: Why is Allegany County's special education budget ranked 4th in the state?

A4: Special Education services are driven by Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). There is a high correlation between high poverty and high enrollment in Special Education Programs.

Q5: Where is the budget located for review?

A5: All ACPS budgets and audits can be located on the school system's website, www.acpsmd.org. Click on "Departments, Finance, Budgets and Audits."

Q6: What is the difference between the Capital budget and the Operating budget? What is the fund balance?

A6: The capital budget is money specifically earmarked for buildings, facility improvements, or one-time large capitalized purchases. The operating budget funds the school system's day-to-day operations (i.e. salaries, utilities, maintenance and operations, etc.). The fund balance is any unspent money that carries over from each fiscal year's operating budget.

Q7: Has the school district ever considered a four-day workweek as a cost saving measure?

A7: In Maryland at the elementary and middle school levels, The Annotated Code of Maryland, Section 7-103, requires that schools be open for pupil attendance 180 days and a minimum of 1,080 hours during a ten-month period; or if normal school attendance is prevented because of natural disaster, civil disaster or severe weather conditions, schools shall be open for at least 1,080 hours in a ten-month period. At the high school level, COMAR Section 13A.03.02.12(A) defines the high school year as 180 days with a minimum requirement of 1,170 school hours during a ten-month period.

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Budget Priorities/Categories

Q1: When the school board makes a budget request to county government that does not get fully funded, how do they prioritize what will remain and what will get cut?

A1: The school board sets budget priorities. The superintendent and administrative staff prepare options and recommendations to the board for balancing the budget after funding is set. The school board will discuss their priorities for FY18 at their upcoming December meeting.

Q2: Can you explain the different program budgets? What are common categories within the budget (i.e. payroll, equipment, maintenance/operations)?

A2: There are different sections within the budget, including breakdowns of unrestricted or general funds, restricted funds, the food services fund, and the information technology fund. The Maryland State Department of Education requires the school district to report information by objects and categories. The budgeted unrestricted percentage appropriations for FY 2017 are outlined for each below:

***Objects**

Salaries and Wages	57.32%
Contracted Services	8.02%
Supplies & Materials	3.23%
Other Charges	25.36%
Equip. & Buildings	1.09%
Transfers	4.98%

***Categories**

Administration	2.12%
Mid-Level Administration	6.15%
Instruction	39.08%
Special Education	14.22%
Student Personnel	0.57%
Health Services	0.66%
Transportation	5.61%
Operations & Maintenance	8.84%
Fixed Charges	22.01%
Food Services	0.49%
Capital Outlay	0.26%

***Object Clarification:** Contracted services are expenditures for services performed by persons who are not on the LEA payroll, including equipment repair. Other charges are expenditures for employee benefits and other miscellaneous expenditures that cannot be classified elsewhere. Transfers are payments to other LEAs or transfers between major fund types within the LEA. Transfer accounts represent the release of funds from one account to another account where the expenditure will be reported. Transfers would also include non-public student placements.

***Category Clarification:** Fixed charges are expenditures for employee benefits such as a pension, healthcare, workers compensation, social security, and unemployment.

Q3: What is the per pupil cost to have a building open for the instructional day?

This is a hard question to answer because of the huge variance in the size, population, and function of each building. For example, a high school is going to be much more expensive to operate than an elementary school since it is used so heavily and has more students.

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Q4: What criteria are used to rank budget priorities?

A4: The school board's priority when setting a budget has always been on the classroom. ACPS ranks 6th in the state in terms of instructional per pupil expenditures versus 21st in administrative costs. Data is from the 2013-2014 MSDE Cost per Pupil report.

Q5: How are content area budgets determined (i.e. science, math, ELA, etc.)? Are these budgets a combination of local funds and grants?

A5: Many factors determine content area budgets as they depend heavily on standards, state initiatives and professional development expectations.