

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners' 2013-14 Budget Dialogues *Summary Report*

OVERVIEW

On January 17 and 24, 2013, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the Board) hosted budget dialogues to gain information from the community in advance of the upcoming Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) budget process. Participants included parents, community partners, staff and, for high schools, students. Most were invited to attend by school principals, who in December 2012 were asked to identify a team of people from their respective school communities who would be interested in and benefit from a discussion about the district budgeting process. In thinking about members of these teams, principals were encouraged to involve people who may not have been engaged in district-level discussions before.

Over the course of two nights, 127 participants representing 48 schools provided feedback to Board members and district office staff. Most of the sessions focused on small-group work to ensure that all participants could have their voices heard.

A full list of participating school communities can be found in Attachment A.

THE DIALOGUE PROCESS

Participants were randomly assigned to small groups (10 groups of six to eight people at each event). Each group included a combination of parents, school staff, community partners and high school students. Each group's conversation was facilitated by a family and community engagement specialist or a network facilitator from City Schools' Office of School Support Networks.

This year's discussion focused on *how* City Schools distributes funding to schools and programs. Each event opened with [Budget Making in City Schools](#), an animated video that explains Fair Student Funding (FSF). The video was produced by communications staff in City Schools' Engagement Office in direct response to feedback from the 2012 Board budget dialogues, in which participants asked for the budget process to be explained in a clear, accessible format. The video screening was followed by a detailed presentation on the various elements of FSF calculations, including different student weights. Following this presentation, groups participated in an in-depth discussion about what the Board should consider when evaluating the weights in the FSF formula, structured around these questions:

- Should weights increase or decrease?
- Should base funding increase or decrease?
- Should additional weights be added?
- What else should be taken into consideration?

Each small group recorded its ideas on large flipchart paper, and then had an opportunity to hear from the other groups as each facilitator reported the results of the discussion.

Following the report out, participants were given a sample school budget to demonstrate how enrollment drives a school's allocation.

Sample School Budget

Direct Education Allocations			
	Students	Unit Value	Total Allocation
Initial Reserves	0	\$ 24	\$ -
Locked Funds - General Education	3	875	2,624
Locked Funds - Students with Disabilities	62	7,845	486,384
Unlocked Funds - Students with Disabilities	3	8,651	25,954
Targeted Funds	0	578	-
AOP Funding (Enrollment changes throughout the school year)	0	22,236	-
Amount Allocated to Charter schools	0	9,194	-
Total Initial Allocation			\$ 514,962
Base Funding	500	\$ 5,198	\$ 2,599,000
Self-Contained Supplement	3	\$ 641	\$ 1,923
Dropout Prevention	0	750	-
Basic	149	1,000	149,000
Advanced	59	\$ 1,000	\$ 59,000
Funds Allocated by Weights			\$ 209,923
Total Fair Student Funding Allocation			\$ 3,323,885

Next, half of the participants were provided with a scenario in which the enrollment declined by 30 students; the other half of the participants were provided with a scenario in which enrollment increased by 30 students (see Attachment B for the sample enrollment scenarios). Groups were then asked to consider these questions:

- What happens to this school's funding when the enrollment changes? What strategies can a school use to influence the funding allocation? What strategies could a school use to increase its enrollment?
- What strategies could this school use to maximize its resources? What strategies does your school use?

Again, each small group recorded its ideas on large flipchart paper, and then had an opportunity to hear from the other groups as each facilitator reported the results of the discussion.

Staff from City Schools' Education Channel 77 recorded the event; a video capturing highlights of the dialogues is now in production.

EVENT EVALUATION

At the conclusion of each dialogue, participants completed an event evaluation, giving their feedback and ideas on how to improve future board dialogues. The results of the evaluation were very positive:

- 85 percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the event met their expectations.
- 89 percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that there was sufficient time for discussion.

- 95 percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to express themselves and that their opinions were valued.

More detailed results from the evaluations can be found in Attachment C of this report.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Participants' responses to the questions posed at the budget dialogues are summarized below. For efficiency and clarity, responses that reflected similar or related ideas have been grouped.

Q1: Should Fair Student Funding weights increase or decrease? Should additional weights be added?	# of Times Mentioned on 1/17	# of Times Mentioned on 1/24	Total
<i>Increase base funding/decrease all weights</i>	10	17	27
<i>Increase weight for special education</i>	4	6	10
<i>Increase all weights</i>	4	4	8
<i>Increase weight for advanced students</i>	6	2	8
<i>Increase weight for basic students</i>	2	6	8
<i>Provide a weight for ESOL students</i>	4	1	5
<i>Weights should change based on school type (e.g., K-5, K-8, high school)</i>	4	0	4
<i>Funds should follow students after 9/30</i>	1	3	4
<i>Decrease all weights</i>	0	4	4
<i>Lower or eliminate weight for dropout prevention</i>	2	1	3
<i>Provide incentives for teachers who move students from basic to advanced</i>	2	0	2
<i>Increase weight for dropout prevention</i>	2	0	2
<i>Textbook fund for students</i>	1	1	2
<i>Create weight for students with behavioral issues/Behavioral Intervention Plans</i>	2	0	2
<i>Give special consideration for small schools (e.g., base level of funding regardless of student population)</i>	1	1	2
<i>Eliminate advanced weights and increase the weights for basic students</i>	1	0	1
<i>Decrease the proportion of locked funding</i>	1	0	1
<i>Increase base for schools without Title I funding</i>	1	0	1
<i>Create weight for inclusion students</i>	0	1	1

At both events, participants struggled to determine the best and most equitable way to distribute funding and offered numerous different approaches. They most frequently mentioned adding funds to the base for all students and decreasing the weights that provide schools with additional funds based on certain student characteristics. However, many participants argued for increasing or

preserving various weights, including weights based on student academic performance, special education and dropout prevention.

Participants also provided suggestions for new weights or alternative methods for providing base funding for all students, such as providing a weight for students who are learning English or differentiating base funding by grade band, based on an assumption that it costs more to teach certain grade levels.

Participants also posed several questions regarding the implementation of weights at the school level:

- When and how are the weights calculated? Do weights change from year to year? Can the process for calculating the weights each year be clearly explained on the City Schools website?
- What happens to the budget if a school has an influx of students after the September 30 enrollment adjustment? Can there be additional adjustments?
- What is the connection between weights and the level of services provided to students with those characteristics at the school?

Q2: What strategies can a school use to influence its enrollment (and thereby its funding allocation)?

	# of Times Mentioned on 1/17	# of Times Mentioned on 1/24	Total
<i>Develop community partnerships (e.g., become a community school)*</i>	16	16	32
<i>Increase advertising and marketing, especially online</i>	12	18	30
<i>Improve student achievement and provide special programs—both academic and athletic</i>	3	13	16
<i>Host an open house or school fair</i>	5	4	9
<i>Improve school climate</i>	0	5	5
<i>Engage media to promote great things happening at the school</i>	3	1	4
<i>Highlight academic achievement</i>	4	0	4
<i>Use the Choice Fair to recruit students, especially from feeder middle schools</i>	1	2	3
<i>Provide incentives for teachers who move students from basic to advanced</i>	2	1	3
<i>Community outreach (walks/door knocking/festivals)</i>	0	3	3
<i>Provide resources to the community (GED programs, job search assistance, childcare for students)</i>	0	2	2
<i>Implement dropout prevention strategies</i>	1	0	1
<i>High schools should begin recruiting students in middle school</i>	1	0	1
<i>Support the district's Great Kids Come Back initiative</i>	1	0	1

*NOTE: "Develop community partnerships" was mentioned as a response to questions 2 and 3 and is included in both tables.

Participants felt strongly that implementing a marketing strategy for their school and developing the right community partnerships were the most effective ways of increasing enrollment. These recommendations were often coupled with the recommendation to focus on improving student achievement and providing distinctive academic and athletic programming to attract more families.

Q3: What strategies could a school use to maximize its resources?	# of Times Mentioned on 1/17	# of Times Mentioned on 1/24	Total
<i>Develop community partnerships (e.g., become a Community School) *</i>	16	16	32
<i>Solicit donors and host fundraisers</i>	5	7	12
<i>Recruit volunteers, especially parents</i>	5	4	9
<i>Apply for grants</i>	5	3	8
<i>Share programming with another school (split costs)</i>	2	1	3
<i>Maximize talents of staff/strategically select personnel to provide additional services and resources</i>	1	2	3
<i>Review data to maximize resources</i>	1	0	1

*NOTE: "Develop community partnerships" was mentioned as a response to questions 2 and 3 and is included in both tables.

In discussing ways to maximize resources, participants again mentioned developing community partnerships as a way to provide additional resources and services at reduced or no cost. Participants suggested using volunteers, especially parents, and pursuing strategic hiring practices to acquire staff able to perform multiple duties, thereby allowing schools to offer diverse programming without adding staff. Participants also suggested securing outside funding through fundraisers, applying for grants and finding donors. Finally, some participants recommended that school communities share the cost of providing special programming and review school data to determine where additional resources are needed and where spending could be reduced.

Attachment A

Participating School Communities

Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts	Garrison Middle School
Baltimore City College	Gwynns Falls Elementary School
Baltimore Polytechnic Institute	Hampden Elementary/Middle School
Baltimore School for the Arts	Hampstead Hill Academy Elementary/Middle School
Baltimore Talent Development High School	Hazelwood Elementary/Middle School
Beechfield Elementary/Middle School	James McHenry Elementary School
Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove	James Mosher Elementary School
Booker T. Washington Middle School	Johnston Square Elementary School
Callaway Elementary School	Lakewood Elementary School
Calvin M. Rodwell Elementary School	Lyndhurst Elementary School
Cecil Elementary School	Moravia Park Elementary School
Claremont High School	Mount Royal Elementary/Middle School
Cross Country Elementary/Middle School	National Academy Foundation School
Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle School	Northeast Middle School
Digital Harbor High School	Patterson High School
Dr. Bernard Harris, Sr., Elementary School	Paul Laurence Dunbar High School
Dr. Rayner Browne Elementary/Middle School	Pimlico Elementary/Middle School
Edgecombe Circle Elementary/Middle School	Sarah M. Roach Elementary School
Fallstaff Elementary/Middle School	Thomas Jefferson Elementary/Middle School
Federal Hill Prep Elementary School	Vivian T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy
Fort Worthington Elementary School	W.E.B. DuBois High School
Francis Scott Key Elementary/Middle School	Western High School
Frederick Douglass High School	William Pinderhughes Elementary/Middle School
Gardenville Elementary	Youth Opportunity Academy

Attachment B

Sample Enrollment Scenarios

Enrollment **DROPS** by 30 Students

Direct Education Allocations			
	Students	Unit Value	Total Allocation
Initial Reserves	0	\$ 24	\$ -
Locked Funds - General Education	3	875	2,624
Locked Funds - Students with Disabilities	58	7,845	455,004
Unlocked Funds - Students with Disabilities	3	8,651	25,954
Targeted Funds	0	578	-
AOP Funding (Enrollment changes throughout the school year)	0	22,236	-
Amount Allocated to Charter schools	0	9,194	-
Total Initial Allocation			\$ 483,583
Base Funding	470	\$ 5,198	\$ 2,443,060
Self-Contained Supplement	3	\$ 641	\$ 1,923
Dropout Prevention	0	750	-
Basic	140	1,000	140,000
Advanced	55	\$ 1,000	\$ 55,000
Funds Allocated by Weights			\$ 196,923
Total Fair Student Funding Allocation			\$ 3,123,566

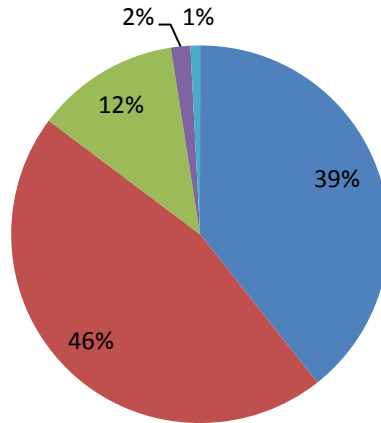
Enrollment **INCREASES** by 30 Students

Direct Education Allocations			
	Students	Unit Value	Total Allocation
Initial Reserves	0	\$ 24	\$ -
Locked Funds - General Education	3	875	2,624
Locked Funds - Students with Disabilities	66	7,845	517,764
Unlocked Funds - Students with Disabilities	3	8,651	25,954
Targeted Funds	0	578	-
AOP Funding (Enrollment changes throughout the school year)	0	22,236	-
Amount Allocated to Charter schools	0	9,194	-
Total Initial Allocation			\$ 546,342
Base Funding	530	\$ 5,198	\$ 2,754,940
Self-Contained Supplement	3	\$ 641	\$ 1,923
Dropout Prevention	0	750	-
Basic	158	1,000	158,000
Advanced	63	\$ 1,000	\$ 63,000
Funds Allocated by Weights			\$ 222,923
Total Fair Student Funding Allocation			\$ 3,524,205

Attachment C Evaluation Summary

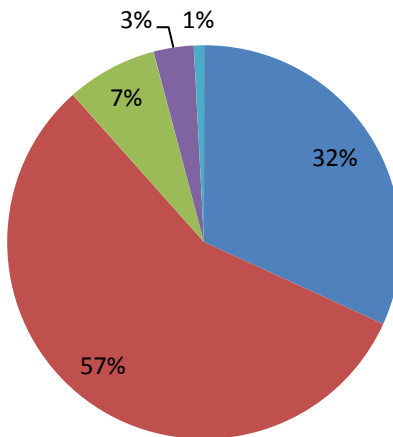
(1) This event met my expectations.

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree



(2) There was sufficient time for discussion.

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree



(3) I was able to express myself and my opinions were valued.

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

