

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Marnell A. Cooper
Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners

Gregory E. Thornton, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

February 19, 2016

Dear City Schools Families, Staff, Partners, and Friends,

As we reflect on our accomplishments in the current school year, we can be proud that we have made progress in the face of a challenging budget, including ensuring every student receives free school meals through the community eligibility program, applying for and receiving several large grants, and continuing to grow our arts and athletics programs.

We are already thinking ahead to building on these successes for the 2016-17 school year. At the same time, education funding being discussed across the state will affect City Schools' budget and planning for the coming school year.

As always, our students and schools will come first when planning the district's budget. This year, for the first time, spending will also be grounded in our five-year strategic plan, which was developed with extensive feedback from schools and communities and provides a framework for making decisions about where funds can have the most impact on students' success. This framework is particularly important for planning for 2016-17, as we work to close the gap between our expected revenue and expenses.

On the revenue side, City Schools will receive fewer dollars because of

- A drop in enrollment
- Decreased state contributions stemming from the formula the state uses to calculate the relative wealth of each local school district

At the same time, expenses are increasing due to

- A significant increase in the cost of employee health benefits
- A change in a state requirement that shifts the responsibility of paying teacher pension costs from the state to the district

While we are working with state and local officials to increase our funding for next year, we must also prepare in case sufficient funds are not provided. After the difficult budget season last year, City Schools has already cut districtwide costs significantly. If funding is not increased, additional cuts will be inevitable and painful. All options for reducing costs and maximizing resources will be considered, as long as they can be applied fairly across the district and support financial stability for the long term.

We value your input while developing both school budgets and the district budget for the upcoming school year, especially in these challenging times. I urge you to participate by contacting your school's administrators or School Family Council. Additionally, please come out to learn more about the district's budget, priority initiatives, and school funding at a [series of meetings](#) being held across the city. Please note that the proposed budget for 2016-17 is scheduled to be voted on by the Board of School Commissioners on April 26, 2016.

I know this is a challenging time for the City Schools community. Thank you in advance for your support as we work together to ensure that we have the resources we need to support excellence and equity for all of our students. I will share additional information about our budget development with you in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

