PGCPS

Business Management Services
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FY 2026 Superintendent's PROPOSED Budget Q & A

Budget Work Session – February 6, 2025

Divisions:
Accountability
Business & Management Services
Chief of Staff
General Counsel
Human Resources
Information Technology
Superintendent

Contents: Division Questions

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Accountability

1. **Brown:** Do you provide Absenteeism data? (general)

   Yes. Schools and central offices have access to real-time data through various dashboards and other reporting. The public can access monthly attendance related data (along with other performance related data), on the district's Critical Success Indicator Dashboard which can be found within the PGCPS website or by clicking here.

2. **Moss:** Why is $1.7 million in contractual services for instruction being charged to Strategic Initiatives, and what is the scope of this work? (Not indicated)

   The Strategic Initiatives Office was tasked with managing the partnership established under the Transforming Neighborhood Schools Initiative. The partnership consists of 2 MOUs, in which the funding did not increase from FY25 to FY26:
   1) Latin American Youth Center/Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection ($1.3M) has partnered with five (5) high schools to provide college and career readiness training, mentoring, tutoring, and other academic, social, and emotional support for approximately 340 students. The core services are available to students beginning in middle school and continue until the student graduates high school. Latin American Youth Center offers support to approximately 150 students across five (5) high schools. Participating students receive guidance with staying on track for graduation, enrolling in post-secondary education, obtaining long-term employment, and other life skills, and

   2) La Clínica del Pueblo (La Clínica) ($458K) is a nonprofit community-based health center delivering high-quality health services to low-income, Limited English Proficient Latino immigrants in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area.
   Our mission is "to build a healthy Latino community through culturally appropriate health services, focusing on
   those most in need." Founded by Salvadoran refugees in 1983 to meet the healthcare needs of Central Americans fleeing war and natural disasters, La Clínica has grown over the past 39 years from a volunteer-based clinic into a Federally Qualified Health Center operating four sites across DC and Prince George's County, Maryland. We provide comprehensive primary care, mental health and substance misuse services, medical interpretation, and community health outreach/education. Since 2015, we have partnered with Prince George's County Public Schools to provide mental health services for Latinx students and professional development for teachers and other student support staff.
   Once these contracts end, the services rendered within this partnership will be made available through the Community Schools program.

3. **Moss:** What is the role of the Strategic Initiatives Office? It appears to duplicate services provided by other offices. Currently, there are four FTEs in this office. (Not indicated)

   With the exception of the word "Strategic" within the titles of these two offices, there is currently no redundancy in responsibilities. The Strategic Planning and Resource Management Office has a long history within the district with the focus on grant funding acquisition and the development and progress monitoring of the district's strategic plan. The Strategic Initiatives (SI) Office was established as a result of the pandemic as a compliance and reporting office responsible for the state required pandemic related Reopening Plan and all other pandemic related reporting. The office then grew to address the needs for specific programs including the Maryland Blueprint followed by ESSER I, II and III reporting. The Maryland Leads grant was added to the office as well as the partnerships established through the Transforming Neighborhood Initiatives program.

4. **Moss:** How does the Office of Strategic Planning & Resource Management differ from the Office of Strategic Initiatives? Could these offices be consolidated to avoid overlapping? (Not indicated)

   There is interest in combining these two offices at some point in the future. The district's current Transformation 2026 strategic plan ends at the end of the 2026 school year. The Maryland Blueprint also requires a new plan to be drafted starting the 2026-2027 school year. With the sunsetting of many of the programs managed by the Strategic Initiatives Office (i.e. ESSER I, II, and IIII, the Maryland Leads grant, and the Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative) and with the need for greater continuity between the district's new strategic plan and Maryland Blueprint, there is interest in merging the two offices at some point in the future. This will more than likely be a budget neutral reorganization.

5. Walker: Any knowledge on why the kindergarten enrollment declined so much from FY23 (9/30/23) to FY24 (9/30/24) (Page14)

    Two primary data points help explain the decline in kindergarten enrollment:
    - Falling birth rate. There were 459 fewer births in Prince George's County in 2019 than in 2018. And births have declined further following the pandemic. In 2021, births hit their lowest level in over 20 years. Data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirm the birth decline is most likely due to a combination of the pandemic and lower birth rates.
    - A lower percentage of 5-year-olds enrolled in public school. The Maryland Department of Planning has confirmed that private school enrollment and homeschooling have increased post-pandemic. This has led to a lower ratio of births to public school enrollment five years later.
    The enrollment projection expectations are outlined in Section III of the FY 2025 Educational Facilities Master Plan based on the impact of these factors which are expected to continue in the near term.

6. Briggs: How is it that we are getting less money for Title I when it appears that we've had increases in student need? Also, what is going to be done to ensure that families that may be fearful of their immigration status continue to complete FRPL forms? (Page 24)

    The amount of the Title I grant varies from year to year and is defined by the federal government. The monies are then passed down through MSDE to PGCPS and allocated within PGCPS on a per pupil basis.

7. Briggs: How many Title I schools are in the county? (Page 24)

    For SY2024-2025 there are 107 Title I schools. The count of Title I schools for SY2025-2026 will be determined this spring, February of 2025.

8. Briggs: How many competitive grants were applied for in the past 3 years? *(Not Indicated)

    70

9. Briggs: How many competitive grants have been won in the past 3 years? * (Not Indicated)

    65

10. Briggs: How much COVID money was obtained for the school system since 2020? (Not Indicated)

    $524,583,018 as per the allocation listed in the JCR report located here.

11. Briggs: How much has been spent and how much is remaining, preferably broken down by funding stream (e.g. ESSER I, ESSER II, ESSER III)? (Not Indicated)

    All ESSER I and ESSER II funds were spent. ESSER III funding will be spent by December 2025. The ESSER funding reports as well as the summaries of ESSER projects are located on the Strategic Initiatives Office website which can be accessed by clicking here.

12. Briggs: Are there any grants you would have liked to have pursued but were unable to? (Not Indicated)

    Not to our knowledge.

13. Briggs: How do you ensure you are obtaining all the funding that is available? (Not Indicated)

    To discuss during the work session in order to seek clarity on the question.

14. **Briggs:** What challenges have you encountered in pursuing funding opportunities? (Not Indicated)

There are several challenges encountered. A few are as follows:
Staff capacity: Program staff have workloads that do not always allow for immersion into responding to content-specific areas that require SME's.
Turnaround time: Many grants have very short windows for response, which is not always feasible.
Intense Competition: Many organizations and individuals apply for the same funding, making it difficult to secure grants or investments.
Complex Application Processes: Lengthy, detailed proposals with strict requirements can be time-consuming and resource intensive.
Limited Funding Availability: Some grants or investment opportunities have restricted budgets, limiting the amount awarded.
Meeting Eligibility Criteria: Certain funding opportunities have rigid qualifications that may exclude potential applicants.

15. **Goins-McCants:** Is one of your teams handling program evaluation of PGCPS programs and initiatives or is that contracted out/the responsibility of each individual division? (General)

The Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation does conduct evaluations on district initiatives, programs, interventions, charter schools, etc. on a requested basis.

Budget & Management Services

16. **Moss:** If the district moves into a new furnished building, could the furniture line items for every division/chief be removed for one year to achieve cost savings? (Not indicated)

Across divisions, office furniture generally is not a recurring budget line item. When replacements are needed funds are usually identified from within the existing base budget. On average, PGCPS has spent less than $80K annually over the last three years. If we move into a new location, costs will only be incurred where required. However, it will be within our existing base budget.

17. **Moss:** In 2024, $7,500 was spent on moving expenses in the Chief of Staff/Chief of Communications Office. Did this expenditure align with the board policy for relocation expenses? (Not indicated)

There is not a Board Policy governing relocation expenses, specifically. This is offered at the discretion of the Superintendent. However, the reimbursement of these expenses is processed in accordance with our employee reimbursement standard operating procedures.

18. **Moss:** Is there an organization-wide policy for relocation expenses? If so, what is budgeted for relocation expenses this year? (Not indicated)

Relocation expense is not a recurring budget line item and is not included in the FY25 Budget or proposed FY26 budget.

19. **Moss:** How many FTE positions were unfilled in the last fiscal year compared to the number budgeted for? (Not indicated)

For fiscal year 2024, we budgeted for 20,831.03 authorized FTE. Of course, the on-hand employee headcount fluctuates throughout the year, but we ended fiscal year 2024 with 2,409.67 vacancies (these counts include both Operating and Non-Operating).

20. **Moss:** There have been reported challenges with payroll communication. Does the Payroll Office have sufficient FTEs to meet the district's needs? Could additional FTEs improve service? (Not indicated)

The payroll recently went through a period of being understaffed due to employees being on extended leave, being promoted, or being transferred to other departments. We have completed our hiring processes and we will be fully staffed by March 2025.

21. Briggs: What is the annual budget of the grants function? *(Not indicated)

The total FY 2026 proposed budget for the Grants Financial Management Office is $2,568,334. See page 168 of the FY26 Proposed Budget book.

22. Briggs: How many FTEs are employed by the grants function? *(Not indicated)

There are 14.0 FTEs assigned to the Grants Financial Management Office. See page 168 of the FY26 Proposed Budget Book.

23. Briggs: What are their titles or roles? *(Not indicated)

The Grants Financial Management Office is comprised of the following positions: 1.0 Director; 1.0 Secretary; 1.0 Grants Admin Specialist; 2.0 Supervisors; 4.0 Grants Accountants; and 5.0 Budget Analysts. This office ensures that resources awarded as grant funded programs accomplish the mission and vision of our school district staying in compliance with statutory regulations and grantor requirements as it relates to spending, reporting, and project implementation. See pages 166-168 of the FY26 Proposed Budget Book.

24. Briggs: What is the annual total of grants managed by the grants function? * (Not indicated)

The FY2026 proposed total grants budget is $302,168,855 as referenced on page 26 of the FY2026 Proposed Budget Book.

25. Briggs: Please provide a list of those grants and the dollar amounts of each. * (Not indicated)

The listing of grants are located in the FY2026 Proposed Budget Book on pages 26-28..

26. Briggs: What are the goals of your department for 2025? Please list both financial and operational. (Not indicated)

The goals for my division since assuming this position have been around process improvement/efficiencies, investment in people and developing our talent, as well investment in tools/resources to streamline our work.

27. Briggs: What would you need to be operating at peak efficiency? (Not indicated)

Continued investments in people and developing talent, as well as an investment in a new ERP system is essential.

28. Goins-McCants: There seems to be pretty large (percentage wise) increases in the Budget category "Other operating expenses" in several areas of your division, especially in the line item "Other Miscellaneous Expense". Can you explain what this category is used for and what is driving the increase? (General)

Overall, the BMS FY26 Proposed budget is decreasing approximately $132K (see page 12 of the FY26 Proposed Budget Book). While there may be an increase in Other Operating Expenses, these were self-funded through decreases in other expense categories. See attached link for more details on the increases in Other Operating Expenses for each area. For a complete overview of what is changing in the budget year over year, please review pages 11-13 of the FY26 Proposed Budget. Other Operating Expense Variance Analysis

29. Brown: Why are legal and administrative expenses increasing (up $2.2M for Administration, $7.4M for Mid-level Administration) while cuts are made to essential student services? Recommendation: Freeze or

reduce administrative budget growth and reallocate savings to critical areas like transportation and instructional materials. (Legal Services)

FY26 Legal Fees Budget is flat to FY25 Budget and approximately 10K less than FY24 actuals (see page 68 of FY26 Proposed Budget Book). School-based resources are not being cut. The FY26 Budget is actually increasing nearly $82M (see page 32 of the FY26 Proposed Budget Book). For a complete overview of what is changing in the budget year over year, please review pages 11-13 of the FY26 Proposed Budget Book. Also, see linked attachment for additional analysis around the Administration Function. Administration Function Variance Analysis

30. Brown: How will the $27.5M for capital outlay address overcrowding, aging facilities, and the reliance on temporary classrooms for over 12,500 students (9.5%)? Recommendation: Increase transparency by publishing a list of capital projects and prioritize investments in permanent facilities to reduce overcrowding and improve learning environments (Not indicated)

The FY26 Proposed Budget in the Capital Outlay Function includes the $15M availability payment funded by the County for phase I of the P3 schools' construction (see note 2 at the bottom of the 5 Year History of the County Contribution Calculation table on page 23 of the FY26 Proposed Budget Book). The remaining $12M is reserve funding earmarked for various facility needs which may arise during the year including deferred maintenance, swing space, temporary modulars and emergency repairs.

There is a separate budget book which covers the Capital Projects budget in detail. See link at the bottom of page 18 of the FY26 Proposed Operating Budget Book which redirects to the FY26 Requested Capital Budget Book.

31. Goins-McCants: Can the board be provided with a full organizational chart, inclusive of all teams, divisions and FTEs? (General)

See page 7 in the FY26 Proposed Budget Book for the Systemic Organizational Chart. Also, see pages 34-35 in the FY26 Proposed Budget Book which outlines FTEs by Division for all organizations..

Chief of Staff

32. Briggs: Can you provide details of PGCPS' expenditures of PGCPS' attorneys/staff in appeals/litigation for SY2023 and SY2024? (Not indicated)

The Office of Appeals currently has 7 FTE to support student discipline hearings, student appeals (e.g., transfers, residency, lottery and grades) and certain employee appeals and other such duties as assigned by the Superintendent. Additionally, there is $26,000 in contracted services to support temporary hearing officers as needed. (The book currently says $72,000 but this is a typo) Litigation is handled by the Office of General Counsel not the Office of Appeals.

33. Briggs: Can you provide details of the total settlement costs incurred in SY2023 and SY2024? (Not indicated)

Seeking clarification from the Board.

34. Goins-McCants: Can you explain what the line item "instructional Contracted Services" covers for your office? (Page71)

These funds are to support the MOU providing academic instruction and support for the College Track program at the Kevin Durant Center. This program serves 230 students each year throughout the and is slated to end on June 30, 2027.

35. Briggs: Please explain the difference/overlap between the partnerships office and the foundation. Please provide an org chart of each office and the functions of each role. Which of these comes out of the Board's budget? Is the foundation office a different budget? Please share the rationale behind the partnerships office reporting to communications rather than academics or COS. This information will be used to inform budget decisions. As such, please provide before the 2/6 Budget meeting.? (Not indicated)

The Community Partnerships Office falls under the direction of the Communications and Community Engagement department. That office reports directly to the Superintendent, while the Excellence in Education Foundation reports to the Chief of Staff division. Both the Foundation and the Partnerships team manage charitable giving for Prince George's County Public Schools under different guidelines and thresholds.

To review the organizational chart for the office and the functions of each role, please refer to the Proposed FY26 Superintendent's Operating Budget book. On page 79, you'll find the Division of Communications and Community Engagement. The partnerships office focuses on the facilitation of partnerships from community groups and organizations to support schools through monetary and non-monetary donations. The partnerships office engages the foundation following donor receipts exceeding $50K to execute a distribution, etc.

Under the direction of the Chief of Staff, the Director of the Excellence in Education Foundation oversees all aspects of project management, development and fundraising received from a diverse range of sources including foundations, government, organizations, businesses, major donors, individuals, grants and events. The Excellence in Education Foundation for PGCPS, Inc., 'operates independently from Prince George's County Public Schools as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization governed by a volunteer board of directors.' The Board of Directors is linked for your review, which both the Superintendent and Chief of Staff are part of.

The partnerships office currently reports to the Associate Superintendent of Communications and Community Engagement at the direction of the Superintendent. See link here.

General Counsel

36. Not Indicated: Can you provide details of PGCPS' expenditures to contract attorneys for SY2023 and SY2024?

Answer: During SY 2023, the Office of General Counsel expended approximately $592,985.21 on external counsel fees, which includes litigation support as well as support to the Equity Assurance Office on complex Title IX and PGCPS staff investigations.

During SY 2024, the Office of General Counsel expended approximately $1,014,614.13 on external counsel fees, which included representation in several complex federal employment litigation matters and extensive support to the Equity Assurance Office to address staffing shortages with the Office.

37. Goins-McCants: The line item "Software License" is new for SY26, what software is being proposed and what impact are we expecting to see? (Page 68)

Although a new line item, this is not a totally new expense. The Office of General Counsel realigned the Soft Licensing line item so that it would correspond with the appropriate budget description. This includes fees for Filevine (case management system), LexisNexis (Legal research) National Business Institute (training and education for attorneys) and the EDiscovery Tool which is scheduled to be procured in the FY26. EDiscovery tools assist with the identification, collection, and processing of electronically stored information for legal matters including, but not limited to, litigation and public information act requests.

Human Resources

38. Boozer-Strother: This is an intersection of HR & Academics - what programs are being put in place for Special Education staff for retention and attraction? Are there incentives for potential new hires that are certified in Special Education to choose positions in Special Education? Are there other specialty shortages that the Board should be aware of, such as STEM teacher and/or language immersion vacancies? Will the hiring calendar be changed to solve the issue that the Board has been informed about for years that we recruit and make offers later than neighboring Counties, with the impact of a smaller pool of available candidates??(Page 95 section)

Human Resources and Special Education have a strong collaborative relationship for recruiting special education staff. Annually we work together to identify new talent and retain current teachers by employing both traditional and non-traditional recruitment strategies to include:

External Partnerships: PGCPS partners with industry leaders LinkedIn, Handshake, and CareerFair Plus to build brand awareness, host hiring events, interview candidates, target sourcing, and send InMail campaigns. Specific job campaigns and postings are created for Special Education Teachers.

Internal Partnerships: Collaboration with the Department of Special Education Content Supervisors for pre-screening interviews of candidates and school deployment recommendations. Professional development opportunities are available through the Office of Professional Learning and Leadership to support Special Education teachers.

Expanded 'Grow Your Own Programs: MSDE Maryland Leads Grant 'Grow Your Own' Program in partnership with Notre Dame of Maryland University has 17 participants that will be eligible for a Special Education license upon completion of their degree program in Spring 2025. PGCPS also has a Resident Teacher Program that offers an alternative certification program for those seeking dual certification in special education and elementary or secondary education. This alternative certification program is in partnership with Notre Dame of Maryland University. This is a two-year graduate-level program that results in professional certification and is three courses short of a Master's degree.

University Partnerships: Participates in job fairs at colleges and universities with special education or dual certified education majors (University of Pennsylvania, Gallaudet University, Penn State).
Marketing and Advertising: Expanded marketing and advertising efforts by posting vacancy announcements through multiple media platforms and job-wrapping services (PGCPS social media, Handshake, LinkedIn, Television Commercials and Radio Ads).
Differential Pay: Bargaining units have negotiated differentials for select positions under the special education umbrella.
The retention of teachers remains a priority for Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). It is a collective effort that spans across multiple offices to ensure that all teachers receive the resources and support needed to be successful as a PGCPS Special Educator.

University Partnership Program: The Office of Professional Learning and Leadership (OPLL) supports the Special Education recruitment and retention efforts through its University Partnership Development program. They work to establish ongoing opportunities for conditionally licensed teachers and paraprofessionals with at least an Associate's degree to become certified, or complete a tuition reduced Bachelor's degree in SPED/Elementary Education.

Mentoring Support: PGCPS Induction Coaches assist newly hired Special Education Teachers during their first year in an effort to train and retain. Induction Coaches can be requested by school administrators if additional support is needed beyond the first year.
Internal Resources: The Department of Special Education assigns Instructional Specialists to each school location to support special education teachers and programming. Full support and hands-on differentiated training are conducted regularly for special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Specialized training is offered to paraprofessionals working with our special needs students.

Other high needs areas for hiring are identified every year in alignment with the annual MSDE report on critical shortage areas. Each year, Human Resources performs a similar analysis to pinpoint high-needs areas within our classroom teacher

vacancies. High need areas include: Elementary, English Language Development (ELD), Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Science, and Special Education.

39. Brown: How were you all able to identify salary requirements for the new positions? (Page 13)

Upon receipt of a completed Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ), outlined in PGCPS administrative procedure 4101, the Office of Compensation and Classification determines the appropriate classification (i.e., bargaining unit, grade) of the proposed new position. The Office of Budget and Management Services uses the classification information to determine the average salary cost and fringe benefits associated with the position.

40. Moss: There are currently 18 FTEs at the Superintendent level. Can you provide insights into how this compares to other districts of similar size? (Non Indicated)

The PGCPS executive cabinet chief-level positions reporting to the superintendent are in alignment with our comparable Local Education Agency (LEA) peers. However, the positions above and below a chief do vary between the districts, which makes it a challenge to do an equal comparison after the chief level. For example, some districts have deputy superintendents and division chiefs while others have division chiefs with a second layer of lower-level chief positions, often titled an associate superintendent or executive director.

41. Moss: Has the district considered reorganizing to reduce the number of superintendent-level roles? (Non Indicated)

Yes, most recently the superintendent eliminated an officer and chief level position; and a few years ago, executive director level positions were eliminated to lower the number of high level positions.

42. Moss: What are the roles of the office assistant and officer positions within the Superintendent's budget? (Non Indicated)

Officer positions are allocated within the office of an assigned division Chief, including the superintendent's office, to support the programs/initiatives of the Chief. PGCPS does not currently have any authorized office assistant positions.

43. Moss: Can you explain the $50,000 in HR allocated to non-local travel expenses and how these funds are utilized?(Non Indicated)

In accordance with PGCPS AP 4134, each division chief has a budget line for non-local travel for all employees within the division. For the Human Resources division, there are 161 employees across 5 departments. This money is allocated to cover travel expenses and other costs to support the attendance at conferences, seminars, conventions or meetings which require the traveler to be in a travel status one or more nights outside of Prince George's County, and the surrounding Baltimore/Washington metropolitan area. The ability to invest in staff professional learning and development is critical to the recruitment and retention of staff.

44. Goins-McCants: Given the extent of the vacancies in our system, how would the proposed reductions to Talent Acquisition & Management Non local travel and registration fees line items affect our recruitment efforts? (Page 196)

As a result of the pandemic, the recruitment staffing budget decreased due to the number of virtual events that were offered through colleges, universities and other hiring venues. However, many, if not all, colleges, universities and recruitment venues, have resumed in-person events. To accommodate this shift, there was a realignment of funds to allow our recruiters including principals and content experts, to participate in these events to recruit and hire educators for school based positions (bilingual, Montessori, world language, immersion educators & administrators). We will also participate in industry conferences or events to attract candidates for central office positions (IT, finance, purchasing, CIP, transportation, etc.). In addition to the in-person events, there is also an increase in registration fees for the events.

45. Moss: Instructional Contracted Services is more than double, while Professional Contracted Services is being reduced by $100K. Can you provide insight into how these line items are different and what the expected impact of these changes will be? (Page 200)

Funds were realigned from several costing strings, including professional contract services, to increase funds in instructional contracted services to meet the Blueprint II induction expectations for all new and conditional educators. While PGCPS, HR departments of Operations & Staffing and Professional Learning and Leadership facilitate an onboarding program in the summer prior to the school year commencing, one is needed for those educators that join after the inaugural kick-off program. Therefore, funds were realigned to cover the cost to facilitate the induction program.)

46. Moss: Can you speak to the line item "Other Miscellaneous Expense " will be going towards in this department? (Page 200)

In accordance with Blueprint Pillar II mandates funds listed under "other miscellaneous expenses" are used to support staff in earning their national board certification, including the National Board Certification assessment. In this line item, we also realigned funds from other areas.

Information Technology

47. Boozer-Strother: Is PGCPS still 1:1 and capable of a virtual teaching/learning as in the Virtual Plan for Prolonged State of Emergency? Emergency-Education-Plan. Is returning ES and MS Chromebooks to carts extending the useful life and reducing broken Chromebooks? Do funding needs/projections keep up with HS replacement needs? Have we returned to pre-ESSER purchased Chromebook realities, are we in better shape than 2020? (Page 203 - IT section)

1) Yes, PGCPS is still a 1:1 school district and fully capable of virtual learning under the PGCPS Virtual Plan for a Prolonged State of Emergency. The key difference between this year and last year is that 104 elementary and middle schools have transitioned to a cart-based model of Chromebook distribution, but there is still one Chromebook per student in these schools. If PGCPS were to need to implement the Virtual Plan for a Prolonged State of Emergency, then the Chromebook carts would be deconstructed and a take-home distribution plan established at each school site so that students would have their PGCPS issued devices for virtual learning at home. 2) So far, after half a year of implementing a cart-based model in 104 schools, we have seen a decrease in the trend number of broken devices. Last school year, over 25,000 Chromebooks were damaged in total throughout the year. This year, we have seen 5,942 devices damaged so far, which will amount to about a 50% reduction in the breakage rate if this trend continues. 3) Funding projections and our requested funding amount will ensure that PGCPS keeps pace with the needs to sustain a 1:1 student technology program. Pre-ESSER, PGCPS was able to achieve a 1:3 ratio of Chromebooks to students. With ESSER funding, we were able to move fully 1:1. ESSER funding expired on September 30, 2024, and the FY2026 PGCPS lease purchase funding request in the operating budget has increased to offset the loss of ESSER funding. To remain 1:1, PGCPS will need to purchase approximately 35,000 Chromebooks each year to replace a quarter of the Chromebook inventory that will be aging out every fiscal year.

48. Brown: What software do we use for cybersecurity? There had been a security breach before and didn't do anything that addressed "protection" for PGCPS. (General)

PGCPS utilizes a wide array of software tools to maintain our cybersecurity posture. These tools address critical cybersecurity features, such as endpoint protection, web content filtering, multi-factor authentication, data security posture management, and much more. Due to security concerns, we are not able to provide specific details about the tools and technologies in place here; however, PGCPS staff would be happy to brief the Board of Education on the specifics of our cybersecurity infrastructure and defenses against malicious actors in order to protect our students and staff.

49. Brown: What measurable student outcomes justify the $15.2M increase in technology spending (e.g., $8.4M for SaaS ERP, $4.7M for digital tools, $2.7M for Synergy)? How will these investments directly benefit students in the classroom? (Not Indicated)

The increases in technology spending are due to several factors: 1) ($8.4 million for ERP) The current Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system we use, Oracle, is reaching its end of life. This is the core business information system for PGCPS, and it needs to be upgraded. A new ERP system implementation is very expensive, but the risk of not upgrading the system is high, given the critical modules associated with it, including payroll, benefits, human resources, budget, etc. The budget request includes both cloud hosting and implementation expenses, and that post-implementation, the costs will decrease to reflect ongoing cloud hosting expenses only. 2) ($2.7 million for Synergy) Synergy is our student information system (SIS), and the annual licensing for it is also expensive. We need an SIS to manage all student data, including grading, attendance, etc. The pricing for our Synergy SIS per pupil is consistent with other districts who use Synergy, such as Montgomery, Howard, and Charles counties. 3) ($4.7 million for digital tools) The $4.7 million in software tools is needed to pay for the digital tools that were previously being provided for under the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER). These tools include critical classroom and administrative technologies, such as Canvas, Google for Education, Microsoft, Adobe, Hapara, and Zoom, all of which are now an essential part of our teaching and learning environment. Additional digital tools that teachers and students use to support creativity and engagement within their learning environment, such as Nearpod and Book Creator, are also included. For outcome data, we examine student and staff usage rate for these tools to determine which ones are adding value and to procure the appropriate licenses for each one.

50. Goins-McCants: Can you speak to the line item "Lease/Purchases - Non-Energy" and what it covers? (Page 205)

The lease purchase budget is where our technology refresh program is funded for essential hardware, including student and staff computers, as well as technology infrastructure, such as routers, access points, servers, etc. The lease purchase program establishes a financing timeline so that we can procure student and staff hardware (e.g. Chromebooks and laptops) on a scheduled refresh cycle of every four years, as well as address critical Wi-Fi infrastructure in schools and data centers.

51. Goins-McCants: What Software License(s) are we buying, what processes are being supported/replaced? It doesn't seem to be a 1 to 1 with the decrease in the software license line item in the restricted category. Are they related? Are we switching vendors? (Page 209)

In FY25, the restricted software license account in the Department of Technology Integration and Support totaled $6,267,629. This was ESSER funding, which was used to pay for critical classroom and administrative technologies, such as Canvas, Google for Education, Microsoft, Adobe, Hapara, and Zoom. The ESSER funding in this account also funded the Synergy student information system, which was approximately $2.2 million in FY25. As a result, approximately $4 million of the $6,267,629 of the FY25 ESSER account is now being requested to move to the Department of Technology Integration and Support's unrestricted software license account, while the remaining $2.2 million of the $6,267,629 will move to the Department of Technology Applications–Student Support unrestricted software license account to continue paying for the Synergy student information system.

52. Goins-McCants: We understand technology is expensive and the costs of everything are increasing. Can you speak to what exactly is driving the nearly $9million increase in "Contracted Services"? (Page 212)

The increase in this area, specifically, is related to the purchase and implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. Our current system, Oracle, is reaching its end of life. This is the core business information system for PGCPS, and it needs to be upgraded. A new ERP system implementation is very expensive, but the risk of not upgrading the system is high, given the critical modules associated with it, including payroll, benefits, human resources, budget, etc. The budget request includes both cloud hosting and implementation expenses, and that post-implementation, the costs will decrease to reflect ongoing cloud hosting expenses only.

53. Goins-McCants: Can you speak to what is driving the increase in the line item "Software License"? What software are we acquiring and what impact are we expecting to see? Are these multi-year licenses? (Page 215)

The increase in this line item from $650,071 to $2,881,463 is directly related to the annual licensing fee for our student information system (SIS), Synergy. Our previous system, SchoolMAX, had reached its end of life, and we replaced it this school year with a modern system, Synergy. Synergy is a more user-friendly system that provides a comprehensive platform for teachers, school and district administrators, students, and parents. To implement Synergy, we were able to utilize federal ESSER funds to cover the first year of licensing and implementation costs. However, with the expiration of the ESSER grant in September 2024, funding for Synergy will need to transition into the operating budget for FY2026. The Synergy licensing cost aligns with the per-pupil pricing seen in other districts (e.g., Montgomery, Howard, and Charles counties) that use Synergy.

54. Boozer-Strother: What software do we use for cybersecurity? There had been a security breach before and didn't do anything that addressed "protection" for PGCPS. (Page 203 - IT section)

Is PGCPS still 1:1 and capable of a virtual teaching/learning as in the Virtual Plan for Prolonged State of Emergency? https://www.pgcps.org/offices/information-technology/emergency-education-plan

Is returning ES and MS Chromebooks to carts extending the useful life and reducing broken Chromebooks?

Do funding needs/projections keep up with HS replacement needs? Have we returned to pre-ESSER purchased Chromebook realities, are we in better shape than 2020?

1) Yes, PGCPS is still a 1:1 school district and fully capable of virtual learning under the PGCPS Virtual Plan for a Prolonged State of Emergency. The key difference between this year and last year is that 104 elementary and middle schools have transitioned to a cart-based model of Chromebook distribution, but there is still one Chromebook per student in these schools. If PGCPS were to need to implement the Virtual Plan for a Prolonged State of Emergency, then the Chromebook carts would be deconstructed and a take-home distribution plan established at each school site so that students would have their PGCPS issued devices for virtual learning at home. 2) So far, after half a year of implementing a cart-based model in 104 schools, we have seen a decrease in the trend number of broken devices. Last school year, over 25,000 Chromebooks were damaged in total throughout the year. This year, we have seen 5,942 devices damaged so far, which will amount to about a 50% reduction in the breakage rate if this trend continues. 3) Funding projections and our requested funding amount will ensure that PGCPS keeps pace with the needs to sustain a 1:1 student technology program. Pre-ESSER, PGCPS was able to achieve a 1:3 ratio of Chromebooks to students. With ESSER funding, we were able to move fully 1:1. ESSER funding expired on September 30, 2024, and the FY2026 PGCPS lease purchase funding request in the operating budget has increased to offset the loss of ESSER funding. To remain 1:1, PGCPS will need to purchase approximately 35,000 Chromebooks each year to replace a quarter of the Chromebook inventory that will be aging out every fiscal year.