



# DEB'S DISTRICT UPDATE

Deb Jung • District Four

Special Update: FY26 School Budget

## *Greetings*

For the second year in a row, our school system is facing budget cuts. There are fewer and fewer good options for trimming HCPSS' budget. I tried to increase funding by \$4.2 million through the budget amendment process but my amendments failed. I received thousands of emails from parents and educators concerned about underfunding HCPSS despite escalating costs and mandates. I do not understand why funding for the schools is a battle every year.



**Rally to Save Our Schools**

On June 6, I attended a rally in front of the George Howard Building organized by education advocates, teachers, and students to save 3rd grade strings, G/T teachers, and health assistants. At the rally, elementary orchestra students demonstrated their mastery of difficult instruments thanks to the current music program. Their ability to create beautiful music is in jeopardy because our County can't secure an additional \$1 million in funding. The elimination of music programs is often the so-called canary in the coal mine for public education.

On June 9, the County Council will meet with the Board of Education (BOE) to discuss their proposed budget cuts. I will share your concerns about the budget shortfall at the meeting and ask for alternative considerations from the BOE and the County Executive.

*Deb*

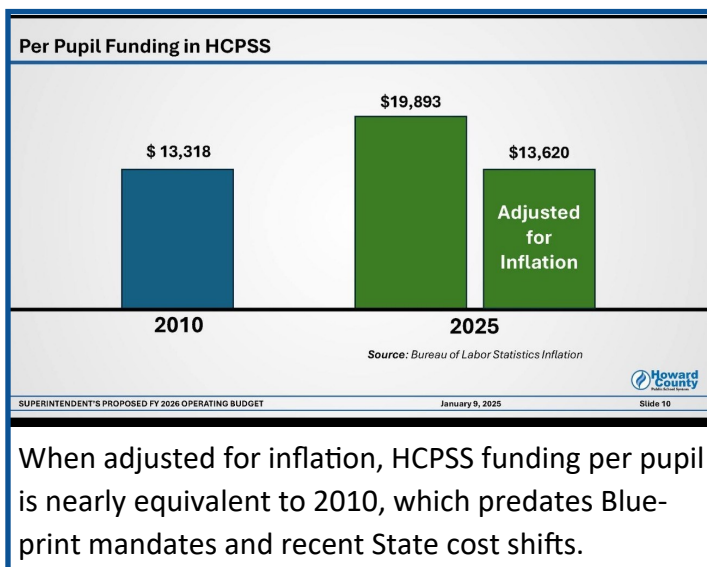
# HCPSS Updates

## Budget Approval Process

On March 4, the Board of Education (BOE) adopted a funding request of \$868 million to be presented to the County Executive. The BOE requested funding for current levels of operations, new programs required by the State's Blueprint mandates, and previously unfunded instructional needs and priorities.

The County Executive announced in April that HCPSS would receive \$800 million in County funds. HCPSS' total budget equals \$1.2 billion, which includes State and other funding sources.

On May 12, the County Executive filed emergency legislation to tap into excess surplus funds totaling an additional \$14.5 million for HCPSS' operating expenses. These are funds that were not previously appropriated into the County budget.



When adjusted for inflation, HCPSS funding per pupil is nearly equivalent to 2010, which predates Blueprint mandates and recent State cost shifts.

## My Education Budget Amendments

The County Council voted on the final FY26 Budget, including the HCPSS Operating Budget, on May 21. I sponsored several amendments to move an additional \$4.2 million to HCPSS. My amendments identified surgical cuts to internal County services that were over estimated; these cuts would have had no impact to the quality or delivery of services to our residents. I also included a modest reallocation of non-recurring, surplus funds that would have had little impact on the County's commitment to meeting future budget obligations. Unfortunately, three of my Council colleagues did not think that additional funds were needed by HCPSS and voted against my amendments.

## Budget Cuts to HCPSS

The BOE held work sessions on May 27 and June 4 to discuss funding scenarios to close the \$53.5 million budget gap. BOE members considered line-item eliminations of program and staff expansions, additional use of HCPSS fund balances, and cuts to existing programs. At the June 4 work session, the BOE selected scenario #7 as the preferred option.

The good news is that scenario #7 does not include across-the-board increases to class sizes. The bad news is that scenario #7 eliminates the 3rd grade strings program; reduces staffing for elementary G/T programs;

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# Budget Update

cuts staff increases for middle school assistant principals; and reduces health assistants, summer and evening school staff, as well as other reductions.

A total of 126.5 full time staff positions will be eliminated; nine of these are vacant positions and 118 of these are existing positions in local schools. Scenario #7 also includes increases for a total of 27 new reading and math coaches and athletic trainers.

## Scenario #7 Revenue Increases

Scenario #7 proposes to increase HCPSS' revenues by \$23.7 million. With these revenue changes, the remaining budget gap is \$30 million. Revenue increases include:

- \$14.5 million increase from the County over the original proposal by the County Executive
- \$250,000 increase in summer school tuition and reduced Medicaid credits
- \$8.5 million use of one-time funds (including \$5 million from the health and general fund balances and \$3.5 million from investment income and other sources)

## Scenario #7 Program Cuts

The following cuts will be made to existing services:

- \$200,000 for HCC tuition for Blueprint requirements
- \$1.9 million for summer and evening school

## Scenario #7 One-time Cuts

The following new initiatives or expansions will be eliminated from the FY26 Budget:

- \$5.3 million (140 full-time positions) for special education services
- \$1.3 million (20.8 full-time positions) for Instructional team leader planning time
- \$1 million (8 full-time positions) for middle school assistant principals
- \$899,160 (11.2 full-time positions) Innovative pathways, including summer, evening, and virtual school

## Scenario #7 Cuts to Existing School Staff

The following cuts will affect existing programs and staff:

- \$1 million (21 positions) for elementary school media paraeducators
- \$1 million (12 positions) for third-grade strings music program
- \$3.48 million (39 positions) for elementary Gifted & Talented programs
- \$1.9 million (33.5 positions) for health assistants; two new floating nurses will be added

## Upcoming Meetings

June 9, 9.45am — Joint County Council Board of Education Meeting. View the meeting on the Council's Watch Us [webpage](#).

June 12, 4-6.30pm & 7-10pm — BOE adoption of the FY26 Budget. View the meeting on the HCPSS Board [webpage](#).

Search for Legislation: click [here](#).

# HCPSS Update

## The True Cost of Cuts

For FY25, HCPSS was forced to cut 192 existing positions because of a budget shortfall. For FY26, another round of cuts is resulting in more job losses for current teachers, larger class sizes, elimination of academic enrichment, and less access to health services.

The Gifted and Talented (G/T) program in elementary schools provides accelerated math and enrichment opportunities in social studies. The proposed cut would leave each elementary school with a G/T Resource Teacher but classroom teachers would be required to take on more classes in accelerated mathematics and Curriculum Extension Units. Instructional Seminars will be revised to fit reduced staffing models.

For elementary students attending overcrowded schools, access to some G/T enrichment programs is already limited because of staffing restrictions. With these proposed changes, fewer kids will have the opportunity to participate in programs designed to suit their interests and different learning styles.

Currently, strings instruction begins in 3rd grade in all elementary schools. With this cut, strings would begin in 4th grade at the same time as band. One of the justifications for earlier strings instruction is that it often takes two years for students to learn basic instrument techniques, such as bowing and finger placement. It is not an expensive program and it is equitably accessible across the County.

The elimination of the additional eight middle school principals will impact the schools' efforts to safely and effectively manage adolescent students in our over-crowded and high-needs schools. Existing middle school assistant principals are tied to their walkie talkies and earn all of their steps. They could really use a few extra grown-ups.

School nurses deal with medical emergencies, deliver medications for chronic illnesses, and attend special education meetings. Health and safety of the students is dependent upon adequately staffed health rooms.



Rally to Save Our Schools