

**Portland Public Schools
CBRC Annual Budget Review
FY 2021-22**

Background and Purpose of the Community Budget Review Committee (CBRC)

The Community Budget Review Committee (CBRC) reviews, evaluates and makes recommendations to the Portland Public School Board of Education (Board) regarding the Superintendent's Proposed Budget and any other budgetary issues the CBRC or the Board identify. The CBRC also monitors and advises the Board on the allocation and expenditure of Local Option Levy funds, which will be completed under separate cover.

Context Setting and Special Considerations

The FY21-22 budget review process has been challenging for both PPS finance staff and the CBRC. Physical distancing requirements related to COVID-19 continued to disrupt the usual budget review process and meeting schedule, while continual funding stream changes made for a moving target for staff analysis and planning.

There are significant limitations around our ability to provide a comprehensive report and recommendations to the Board. The continued uncertainty around how schools will reopen this fall—despite Superintendent Guerrero's commitment to a full, five-day per week in-person return—makes it very difficult to evaluate whether the proposed budget will ultimately be responsive to the new reality we face. Regardless, we feel all parties have worked more diligently and closely together than any year prior, and we are optimistic about future collaboration as we welcome Chief Financial Officer Nolberto Delgadillo to the district.

Budget Observations

Focus of Review: Four Board Goals

The primary focus of the CBRC's review is tied to the four goals articulated by the Board as the result of a comprehensive visioning process completed in 2019. Those goals being: third-grade reading, fifth-grade mathematics, eighth-grade Snapshot of Graduate performance, and postsecondary readiness/ready for college and career. Of the four goals, we believe the fifth-grade math goal is most at risk for not being met. The MAP testing done this winter shows math growth is lagging, especially for our fifth, seventh, and eighth-graders.

Observations

1. We believe the budget demonstrates substantial support for the four Board goals. This budget, however, rests upon several assumptions, including a return to full-time in-person attendance and a student population projection at the same levels of 2019-2020. If these assumptions hold, then the flat staffing model from 2019-2020 should provide adequate levels of

service that previously saw increases towards the specified board goals. If those assumptions are incorrect or the limited MAP testing in the past year did not catch the full extent of declines in academic progress, then we may see further regression. We further note that we continue to lack direct measures of the goals set for eighth-grade Snapshot of Graduate performance and postsecondary readiness.

2. We believe the Superintendent and Board are deeply committed to racial equity and social justice and that the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) lens has improved the District's focus on historically underserved students. This year's addition of a critical analysis from staff of budget changes with the specific lens of the RESJ process makes substantial progress in helping the community understand the intended impact of budget changes. We have also seen a concerted effort to reflect the diversity of our community in the makeup of central office staff and believe that these efforts are critical to implementing the RESJ lens district-wide.

3. We also believe the Board and Superintendent have overall crafted a budget that is squarely focused on investing in historically underserved students, and specifically Black and Native students. In addition to the continued allocation of equity funds and Student Success Act funds, the proposal to target federal relief funds to summer acceleration programs focused on the highest needs population is welcome.

4. The equity allocation of 8% of the staffing model at targeted schools has held steady since FY16- 17. We continue to support this investment and approach and note that the visibility in the Budget Book, Volume Two, is a valuable tool to demonstrate transparency to the community. However, only providing school-level staff allocation lacks the transparency into intended uses and accountable outcomes that we wish to see.

5. We acknowledge that the district faces significant challenges created by the pandemic and its lingering effects on enrollment, facilities, academic, and social-emotional needs of students, and urge the district to take a "do now, build toward" approach which can help the district emerge stronger and healthier than it was prior to the pandemic. In the "do now" category, we want to underscore the need for one-time federal funds to be immediately used for equity-focused activities such as high-dosage tutoring, small group instruction, extended core instructional time in specific grades and subjects, and mentoring and other social-emotional supports. In the "build toward" category, we urge the district to invest in more learning time via extended days or years, "intersessions," and ongoing high-intensity tutoring; smaller class sizes in priority grades and subjects where needs are greatest, offset by larger class sizes elsewhere; integrated learning systems across live and asynchronous platforms; and specialized and advanced high school classes offered online to maximize access and free teachers for more individualized instruction. In sum, we urge the Board and district to use all resources at its disposal to not just fill holes, but plant seeds for long-term change.

6. We continue to believe cuts, now reaching \$3 million, to central services may be unwise and unsustainable, as they may result in essential services and support to schools being carried out poorly or, in some cases, not at all. While we understand and appreciate the emphasis on

ensuring ample funding is set aside for schools, we believe that the district is underinvesting in centralized positions designed to ensure schools and students are supported.

7. Lastly, we appreciate that PPS maintained the winter administration of the MAP assessment and strongly encourage the district to resume administration in the fall. We are cautiously optimistic about some of the results, particularly in reading. However, we want to fully acknowledge the limitations of this administration, namely lower participation rates, especially among BIPOC students, resulting in overrepresentation of white students. We want to further emphasize that MAP testing measures reading and mathematics and acknowledge the importance of a suite of assessment instruments that help paint a complete picture of students' social, emotional, and academic well-being.

Recommendations

1. We recommend additional investment in K-3 literacy. While all students have been affected by the limitations of distance learning, younger students, in particular, have a more difficult time self-directing. Reductions in learning progress were not as severe as feared; however, we are still far from meeting the Board adopted goal of having 60% of third-graders reading proficiently by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. Targeted investments of one-time Federal money may increase progress towards this goal. This investment must also be paired with a plan to reduce the achievement disparities within historically underserved groups.

2. We recommend that PPS continue to advocate for protecting and increasing the K-12 budget for Oregon school districts. Class sizes, even net of Student Success Act investments, remain unacceptably high, and in particular additional state funding could be used to make strategic reductions to class size in certain grades and subjects that demonstrate the greatest need. The Oregon Department of Education Quality Education Model recommended funding level has still not been achieved. While the Student Success Act was a big step in the right direction, the overall investment in Oregon's students is still not adequate. The state legislature's proposal to reduce state funding for education on account of the federal money received by schools is an unacceptable disinvestment in our schools.

3. We recognize that the current budget makes assumptions about the state of school attendance in the fall and beyond, including full-time in-person attendance of all students with opt-outs moving to an online "virtual academy" disassociated from their neighborhood school. Given the volatility of the situation we have witnessed over the past year, we recommend that the district take a proactive approach and develop contingency plans, with public participation, that center vulnerable populations, such as special education students, to address eventualities. This work should happen now, rather than toward the middle and end of the summer which will impact families' and students' ability to plan for their return to school.

4. We recommend increased investment in recruiting, supporting, and retaining teachers of color even as the district faces budget constraints. We cannot afford to lose ground on the early progress we've made; to be clear, our Black and Native students will stand to lose the most if

we back off on our commitments. Making a deliberate investment in supporting teachers of color, who are essential to supporting students and ensuring equity, will go a long way toward improving school climate and creating better schools for the future. We recognize that there have been some budget allocation towards this, but we still lack measures of the work being done in this area, whether it is likely to achieve the outcomes we desire, and whether the investment is adequate. We also have concerns about staff burnout and demoralization that may affect the district's ability to address bringing students back up to level and supporting students as we move out of the pandemic.

5. We note that the State formula for Alternative/CBO (community-based organizations) schools, servicing some of the District's most historically underserved students, provides for funding at 80% of the funding levels provided to students at other schools. We recommend that the Board urge the Legislature to raise the formula to 100% while also increasing the funding by at least 10% over State funding in this budget regardless.

6. The budget process continues to be opaque to people who are not well versed in governmental budgeting. We recommend continued work on developing summaries and focused explanations of budgetary decisions, the intended effects, and the accountable outcomes for general audiences.

7. We recommend targeting federal funds towards partnership with CBOs to provide a more culturally responsive approach to engaging students, closing achievement gaps, and making up for learning loss. Partnerships with CBOs can also provide culturally responsive approaches to preparing high schoolers to be successful post-high school and transition out of high school. These investments would represent movement on several of the Board's articulated goals.

8. We recommend that School Improvement Plans be made publicly available for each school. Equity allocations are provided to almost all schools, with plans being made to utilize those allocations to achieve desired improvements. However, those plans, and the accountability for tracking outcomes, are not shared externally; this undermines our stated commitments to being transparent and making data-driven decisions. We must commit to measuring our progress in quantitative (MAP testing) and qualitative (school climate surveys) ways and enter into honest, direct conversation with school communities about how we will continue to improve. For several years now, including in the current proposed budget, PPS invests \$140,000 in a contract with Panorama to administer school climate surveys, the results of which, for at least the past four years the current co-chairs have served on the CBRC, have not been made available until well after the budget is adopted. We must collect a richer array of information and ensure it is available and used to inform planning and budgeting.

9. Custodial, Grounds, and Maintenance staff has historically been acknowledged as an area that was inadequately funded. The current budget has made targeted investments to improve that. However, we lack data and standards to understand whether the investments are adequate to support our district in the near term or to protect the substantial work being done to rebuild our aging schools. Therefore, we recommend that the district identify industry standards for

staffing and investment needs and establish a plan to achieve a sustainable level of required work.

Closing Remarks

CBRC is deeply appreciative of Superintendent Guerrero's leadership, and in particular, his commitment to ensuring the needs of our district's most historically underserved students are prioritized during this challenging time. The fact is, we have substantial work to do to meet our goals, including work to undo decades of inequitable investments and systems that have served to protect white privilege at the expense of Black and Native students and families. We call on the Board to adopt a budget that reflects these commitments and keeps us on an urgent, focused path toward a more equitable and excellent system of schools. Even in the face of uncertainty or delays to our planned timeline, our students cannot afford anything less.

CBRC respectfully submits this report to the PPS Board of Education:

Sara Kerr, Co-Chair

Judah McAuley, Co-Chair

Parker Myrus, Co-Vice Chair and Student Representative

Irina Phillips, Co-Vice Chair

Tastonga Davis

Roger Kirchner

Brad Nelson

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Lisa Selman

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