

FY 2021 Budget Questions - Group 6
March 10, 2020

Questions #1-9 were submitted by School Board Member Adele Jackson.

1. Are there teachers, who have taught longer than individuals who switched careers, but are paid less due to the step freeze?

Response: Teachers that come to PWCS from another division or brand new teachers with no teaching experience are placed on the appropriate step relative to their years of teaching experience and would be placed on the same step as a PWCS teacher with the same number of years of teaching experience. However, there can be exceptions for awarding creditable service as outlined in Regulation 524-3 Attachment A, as specified in 8VAC20-410-10. For example, a vocational teacher may be awarded a prorated amount of credit for work experience related to their teaching area (i.e., a nursing teacher may be awarded prorated service credit for work experience as a registered nurse).

As a rule, we cap years of credited experience for placement on the salary scale at 16 years of experience. This capping practice results in teachers coming from other divisions with greater experience making less than a teacher who has only worked at PWCS.

2. Do we have a plan for those students who rely on schools to feed them if we are closed for an extended period of time?

Response: Yes. Currently the USDA is working with the Virginia Department of Education (and other states) to allow each the ability to apply for waivers which would allow schools with greater than 50% free/reduced to operate as a food distribution centers when closed for 3 consecutive days. One condition of the waiver is that food cannot be served congregate-style (large groups) and must be distributed individually to students. Based upon the state's acceptance of the USDA waiver, our school nutrition team "stands ready" to assist in providing healthy meals to its students during an extended closure.

3. I have gotten numerous emails in response to *supporting* the \$4.1 expenditure for Brentsville High School renovations/turf field. Many reasons were given to support this expense including the flexibility the turf practice field would have on practice schedules and the age of Brentsville High School. Could you please explain if other schools have turf fields and the justification behind the practice turf field?

Response:

Knowing that Brentsville HS has a longstanding natural turf program offered through CTE, it has been our intent to install a lighted synthetic turf practice field in lieu of one on its stadium field. This will allow the turf program to continue maintaining the grass field as part of its instructional program, while still providing an artificial field which will allow the school greater flexibility with back-to-back practices and being able to compete in wet conditions. Below is the listing of existing turf fields and the scheduled construction of turf fields.

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High School	Stadium Turf Field Number	Stadium Turf Field Year Built	Practice Turf Field Number	Comments
Patriot HS	1	2011	1	Turf practice field shared with T. Clay Wood ES
Potomac HS	1	2013		
Colgan HS	1	2016	1	
Freedom HS	1	2017	1	Freedom HS has only one practice field, so turf allows for continuous use
Stonewall Jackson HS	1	2019		
Woodbridge HS	1	2019		
Battlefield HS		2020		
Forest Park HS		2020		
Brentsville HS		2021		Plan to turf practice field only, not stadium field
Hylton HS		2021		
Gar-Field HS		2022		
Osborn Park HS		2022		

4. **Pg 11 Wall follow-up and follow-up from budget work session:** How are the funds for social workers being allocated? I have reviewed the questions but am still unclear where the additional social workers are being placed. I observed that one of the answers to allocation of social workers was to provide “more coverage.” What does more coverage look like and what is the plan to “boost” support for schools?

Response: Additional social worker “days” will be allocated to those schools that have the greatest need. In most cases, this will mean an extra day, or two, of service in our middle and elementary schools which currently have 2.5 or 3 days of service.

5. Could you please provide a written explanation for the reasons against removing lunch debt responsibility from schools?

Response:

The Code of Federal Regulations (Section 200.426 of Subpart E, attached) does not allow federally funded School Nutrition departments to carry bad debts. “Bad debts”, in this instance, are PAID meal balance deficits on student accounts. PWCS reconciles this by “selling” our bad debt to the site-based budgets at the close of each fiscal year. The FY19 total was \$380,000, nearly doubling the previous two fiscal years. The Superintendent’s FY 2021 Proposed Budget includes \$500,000 centrally to free-up school budgets from having to cover these expenses and then be able to use these funds for other school based priorities.

Please note this would be a change in practice that we do not have data on, and the potential financial impact is hard to quantify.

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If there is a reason against removing bad debt from the schools, it could be having a budgeted amount may encourage families to not pay or apply for Free/Reduced benefits. A recent analogue to this issue - publicly budgeting planned land acquisition expenditures has increased our costs.

6. **Follow-up to question 27 page 10 Jessie:** I understand the additional attorney could be considered for the School Board, based on the answer. However, *would* the additional attorney be considered for the School Board or is the position intended for another need?

Response:

As per the Division Counsel's proposed Five-Year Plan as requested by the School Board:

Objective: To create a multi-level legal team within the Office of Division Counsel capable of meeting the diverse and growing legal needs of a growing "world-class" school division in the most cost-efficient manner possible.

Rationale: It remains a challenge for the Office of Division Counsel, which transitioned in 2018 from one attorney and executive assistant, to two attorneys and two executive assistants, to meet the significant legal needs of PWCS. (In contrast, the Office of the County Attorney has over 16 attorneys, multiple paralegals, and extensive secretarial/executive assistant support, although PWCS is the largest employer in the County with over 11,000 employees, 100 schools/sites, and 90,000 students). As the second largest school division in Virginia, the Division's legal needs continue to increase in complexity and volume over time. In order to reduce reliance on outside counsel and related legal fees, and to expedite legal services and minimize liability, it is imperative that the Office of Division Counsel evolve over the next five years to:

- (1) Employ in-house attorneys with the requisite expertise to handle one or more of the following specialties:
 - (a) contracts, finance, procurement, copyright, technology and business matters;
 - (b) the increasing variety and volume of issues in the area of employment law; and
 - (c) property, real estate, and construction law; and
- (2) Utilize support staff more effectively in a paralegal and management role, in addition to administrative/clerical functions.

FY 2020-21 Recommendations:

As part of the annual budget process, it is recommended that the School Board:

- Retain a third attorney, preferably with expertise in contracts, finance, procurement, technology and related business matters
- Initiate a reclassification of the Office's most experienced executive assistant to that of an administrative coordinator/paralegal in order to perform paralegal tasks currently provided by outside legal firms (at significantly higher hourly

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rates), and to reflect the management and supervisory role which this assistant currently plays, and which continues to expand (i.e., support of outside counsel; training of executive assistants; supervision and training of law clerks and legal interns; financial record-keeping, which includes budget management and preparation; assistance in the preparation of legal training and presentations for PWCS staff, i.e., Title IX, FERPA, FLSA, Non-discrimination and harassment laws, FOIA, etc.).

- Assuming the reclassification of the executive assistant to Division Counsel to an administrative coordinator/paralegal, retain another clerical assistant to perform the clerical duties previously performed by the executive assistant to Division Counsel and to support a third attorney and outside counsel. This position would also provide clerical support for all three attorneys and manage and coordinate their calendars and work responsibilities.

7. I am concerned about the new positions being created vs. more funding for staff in the schools. Please explain the plan and purpose of hiring additional Superintendent's Staff for a combined total of \$856,062.

Response: The addition of two Associate Superintendents (one each for middle and high schools) was not only suggested by several School Board members, but it also will provide equity in the number of students and staff served and supervised by the Elementary, Middle, and High School Level Associates. Under our current organization, the Elementary School Associates' average includes 21 schools, 13,939 students, and 43 administrators, while the Middle School Associate includes 18 schools, 21,032 students, and 63 administrators and the High School Associate includes 13 schools, 27,890 students, and 99 administrators.

8. Regarding funding from the state -- does PWCS have to spend funds on specific incentives and if so which areas of funding will be covered from the state?

Response:

There are funding streams that the Division receives from the state that are referred to as "categorical". These categorical funds are earmarked for specific purposes and cannot be spent on expenditures not specified. If the conversation during mark-up on the 11th involves any of these amounts, staff will notify the Board.

9. Could you please explain the difference between transportation services dispatchers, transportation scheduling technicians, and transportation customer service advocate?

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Response:

Transportation Scheduling Technicians (Computer Scheduling Technicians)

- Plans, organizes, coordinates, and assesses the safety and efficiency of school bus routes and schedules while assuring the safe and efficient transportation of PWCS students.
- This person is responsible for generating bus routes and driver schedules and any necessary adjustments.
- Maintains and ensures a student database and mapping information system that is up-to-date for assisting the Supervisor of School Bus Operations, Bus Dispatchers, Supervisor of Transportation Planning, Transportation Coordinators, Route Managers, etc.

Transportation Services Dispatchers (Bus Dispatcher)

- Responsible for daily operations; assigning and covering all route buses.
- Provides information to stakeholders regarding bus operations and receives and resolves inquiries and complaints.
- Responsible for a high volume of radio and telephone communications work for the Office of Transportation Services. Responsible for controlling a radio net and for providing guidance and direction to bus drivers/attendants in the assigned geographical area.
- Receives, interprets, and relays information between school bus operations, school administration, and the general public. Dispatchers assist with resolving emergencies and routine inquiries.

Transportation Customer Service Advocate (Customer Service Coordinator)

- Responsible for supervising Dispatch.
- Serves as the customer service point of contact for the Office of Transportation Services (customers include: Administrative staff; clerical staff; School Board members; students; parents; teachers; staff from county, state, and federal offices; legislators; and the general public).
- Defines the problem, identifies desired results, and resolves the issue through coordination with the appropriate offices within the Office of Transportation Services, other School Division offices, and external offices and agencies.
- Prepares and develops training seminars within the Office of Transportation Services.