

The Pittsburgh Public School Budget: What You Can Do

A+ Schools believes a budget is a statement of priority. We want Pittsburgh Public Schools to know that our priority is to provide **every student** with the resources needed to prepare for college and careers. **Now is the time to restructure school spending** — fairly allocated and equitably distributed — to provide quality teaching and opportunities for all students.

Please join A+ Schools, Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN) and our partners in demanding a budget that will provide equitable access to art, music, advanced courses, foreign languages, librarians, counselors, athletics, and career and technical education for **all students**, regardless of the school they attend.

Take a Stand for Equity

TEXT: APLUS to 77007

To add your name to our petition demanding an equitable investment in **every student's** preparation for college or a career. A+ Schools will keep you updated on what's happening via text message.

JOIN US:

- **On Tuesday, Oct. 25** at 5:30 p.m. at Pittsburgh CAPA when A+ Schools and PPS host a meeting to provide the district's response to the community's request for additional information on courses and programs.
- **On Thursday, Nov. 3** at 7:00 p.m. at Rodef Shalom when PIIN holds a public meeting to ask Dr. Lane to commit to a budget providing every student with opportunities for a well-rounded, high-quality education.

LEARN MORE:

Get the facts you need about the district's budget situation. Read our overview, **What You Need to Know**, inside this document.

PPS Budget Overview: What You Need to Know

Room for Belt-tightening

Like most of us, the Pittsburgh Public School district is facing “too much month at the end of the money.” Less state funding, the elimination of federal stimulus money and increased expenses created a projected 2011 shortfall of nearly \$54 million, or 10 percent of the district’s \$540 million budget. It’s like taking a pay cut while rent, gas and grocery costs climb. Sound familiar?

Thankfully, PPS is in a better position to withstand these changes than most districts. Currently, PPS is one of the highest spending districts in Pennsylvania, spending more than \$21,000 per student. That’s a sharp contrast to the \$13,000 per student spending in Philadelphia or \$12,000 in Scranton — districts with similar student populations. In fact, PPS spends more on just about every aspect of running schools than other similar districts: teaching, debt, administration and student supports.

There are areas in the PPS budget that can be cut without sacrificing what we do for our students. The Pittsburgh Public School district also has a healthy savings account of approximately \$70 million dollars. However, the district’s savings account will disappear without swift action to reduce expenses.

Deep Cuts Already Made

By now you may have heard of some of the things PPS has done to cut costs:

- ✓ Reduced central office staff (\$11 million)
- ✓ Canceled big construction projects (\$6 million)
- ✓ Other spending cuts not involving employees (\$4 million)
- ✓ Proposed school closings (\$7 million)

Total Cuts: \$28 million

But even with these cuts, another \$38 million in annual expenses must be eliminated. If more steps aren’t taken to cut costs and PPS has to reach into its savings account to cover expenses, that savings account will shrink dramatically. If more cuts are not made, the district’s credit rating will be downgraded, making our future less secure.

Tough Cuts Remain

So far, most reductions have occurred outside of the classroom. Most of the remaining budget areas pay for things the district has little control over, like repaying loans, providing basic transportation, feeding students and providing administrators to oversee the work that’s in progress.

One of the highest costs — and the area where PPS has the most control — is in the budget area labeled “instruction and instructional support.” That covers teacher salaries and classroom materials. Currently, the average class size in each type of school is below the maximum allowed in the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers union. It’s also lower than most other districts. See following chart:

Type of School:	Current Average Class Size:	Maximum Class Size Allowed:	Savings if Class Sizes Are Increased to Maximums:
K-5	22	25	\$7.7 million
6-8	22	28	\$7.6 million
9-12	21	30	\$16.8 million

PPS has identified under-enrolled classes — particularly in high schools — as major contributors to high budget costs. PPS predicts that by filling these classes it can save as much as \$32.1 million. Even after cutting costs, PPS will *still* spend more per pupil than just about every school district in Pennsylvania, all of which are experiencing the same budgetary issues.

This past summer, A+ Schools and its community partners engaged about 400 Pittsburghers in discussions on the budget. The community’s response was clear. While people understand the budget challenges facing the district and that under-enrolled classes are contributing to high costs, community members expressed great uncertainty and resistance to reducing courses or programs without having detailed information about specific costs, course offerings, enrollment and effectiveness. Our community wants assurance — regardless of how much we spend — that all students have equitable access to courses and programs that best prepare them for college or career training after high school.

Take a Stand for Equity

A+ Schools believes the district can achieve a balanced, fair and equitable budget and still provide all students with a high quality education. The challenge is to make sure that the district’s budget, while less than we are used to, is allocated in a way that gives every student equitable opportunities.

Stand with A+ Schools and our partners to demand fairness for every student in the 2012 PPS Budget. When cuts are made to classes and extracurricular programs and activities, those cuts cannot be done randomly and the burden of cuts must be equitably shared. Most important, cuts must be made with an eye to protecting the quality of education offered by our schools.

TEXT: APLUS to 77007 to have your name added to a petition demanding the district equitably invest in every student’s preparation for college or a career. A+ Schools will keep you updated on what’s happening via text message.

Still Have Questions?

Visit our Web site www.aplusschools.org/find.shtml for a more detailed analysis of the PPS Budget, or call our office and we’ll talk! All of the information in this brief has been independently verified by a financial analyst hired by A+ Schools.