

**Portland Public Schools  
CBRC Annual Budget Review  
Fiscal Year 2022-23  
May 13, 2022**

**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.

Oregon Revised Statutes [ORS] establish required formats for budgets. Given the size and scope of the Portland Public Schools (PPS) budget, it is necessarily big and complex. In order to make it less arduous for public consumption, CBRC pledges to continue to work with District staff in developing an explanatory document to increase understanding of PPS' educational funding.

Emphasized in ORS is the concept of community involvement. CBRC attempts to fulfill this objective as an advisory group comprised of volunteer community and student members. As the committee provides a link between the district and neighborhood school students and families, the Board may want to consider additional opportunities to further engage with CBRC in the future.

**Context Setting and Special Considerations**

The FY22-23 budget review process has continued to be challenging for both PPS finance staff and CBRC. Recruitment of new members to the committee proved to be difficult, resulting in fewer members than in previous years and postponement of an initial kick off meeting to January 2022. Subsequently, the time allotted for CBRC to fulfill its review and comment role this year has been unusually compressed making the task even more demanding. Additionally, the CBRC has continued to meet virtually throughout the FY22-23 budget cycle.

There are significant limitations around our ability to provide a comprehensive report and recommendations to the Board. While the District reopened with in-person instruction and a virtual classroom option for the 2021-22 school year, the uncertainty around the long term impacts of COVID on students' academic, mental and social well being—make it very difficult to evaluate whether the proposed budget will ultimately be responsive to these added complexities and the ever pressing needs of PPS students. Regardless, we feel all parties have worked diligently and closely together this year, and we appreciate the collaborative efforts of Chief Financial Officer Nolberto Delgadillo and his Team.

## **Budget Observations**

### Focus of Review: Four Board Goals

The primary focus of the CBRC's review is tied to the four performance goals established for all Portland Public School students as 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.

Based on the Winter 2022 MAP testing data, PPS fell short of achieving the four goals across all grade levels. While elementary and high school students who participated in the MAP were closer to achieving 50% growth in mathematics and reading, PPS performance overall is lower now than prior to the pandemic. In order to improve at all grade levels with an added focus on middle school, Native and Black students, it is imperative that the Board adopt the proposed strategic investments of Student Investment Account (SIA), Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund grant funds (ESSER), and Summer State dollars to increase learning opportunities for every student, provide wraparound supports, expand tutoring, enhance summer learning, and provide professional development for staff. With this strategy in place, CBRC endorses the Board's decision to continue the MAP's goal of 50% for the FY22-23 budget year.

## **Observations**

1. We believe the budget demonstrates substantial support for the four Board goals for PPS. With the projected reductions in enrollment and associated funding allocations in FY22-23, we acknowledge the Board's commitment to continue previous targeted investments, improve class sizes in K-8, and reduce the impact on schools experiencing large K-5 enrollment losses. This enhanced programming will be accomplished through the use of all available funds in the General Fund, SIA, and ESSER grant funds to ensure that all PPS students continue on a path of growth and acceleration.

2. This year's application of a critical analysis from staff of budget changes with the specific lens of the Racial Equity Social Justice (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 although this is great, it is not the only component to make the systemic changes needed. We commend PPS for collaborating with a number of Community Based Organizations (CBO) that specialize in serving Black, Native and people of color communities. However, we are concerned that PPS lost so many Black teachers and administrators due to retirement, seeking employment in other districts in and out of the state and/or leaving the education profession last year. We need more detailed information on teacher and administrator demographics across

fiscal years to better understand these losses and to identify opportunities to not only maintain but increase the number of teachers and administrators of color throughout the district.

3. We also believe the Board and Superintendent have attempted to craft a budget that is focused on investing in historically and presently oppressed students— 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. However, the summer program cannot fully address the growing needs of students that include an increase in social and emotional supports for PPS students experiencing trauma. According to a recently published report, “Consequences of Remote and Hybrid Instruction During the Pandemic” by the Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard University, “Multiple reports have highlighted large declines in students’ math and reading achievement as well as widening gaps by race and school poverty” since the beginning of the pandemic (2022, 6). Additionally, “High poverty schools were more likely to be remote in all four groups of states, but the gaps were largest in those states with higher rates of remote instruction overall”. Oregon was listed as one of the states with higher rates of remote instruction. It is clear that PPS was unable to address all the needs of PPS students last year due to the pandemic, especially Black, Native, Brown, Special Education, English Language Learning students, and students experiencing low socio-economic living conditions. We need to direct additional money to support PPS students in FY22-23 in order to make significant headway toward academic recovery.

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 continues to face 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 continue 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 support the use of one-time federal funds to be used in FY22-23 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 support. 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. The proposed reductions to Central Services are concerning and unsustainable given the current state of our schools. The proposed FY22-23 budget proposes to cut \$7 million in services including 13 custodial positions. It is unclear as to where or why these positions are being cut. The district has been short of custodians and maintenance positions for at least five years. As stated last year, CBRC believes the district is under-investing in centralized positions that are designed to ensure schools and students are supported. Additionally, these cuts may run counter to promises made to voters at bond elections. To reduce the strain on valuable resources, the district may want to consider adaptive reuse of currently vacant PPS owned buildings through partnerships with the City and County and as a potential revenue source.

7. While the MAP assessments provide one measure of the district's academic success or failure, CBRC acknowledges the importance of a suite of assessment instruments that help paint a complete picture of students' social, emotional, and academic well-being. Such assessments should be conducted in balance with periodic review of grade level curriculum and varied approaches to ensure PPS is reaching all students and abilities. While committee members had differing opinions on the frequency of the MAP testing and its accuracy in measuring academic performance, we all agree that the primary focus of the district's efforts should remain on the students.

## **Recommendations**

1. We recommend additional investment in middle school mathematics, english language arts and other enhanced learning opportunities to ensure students are reaching high school and graduate readiness. While all students have been affected by the pandemic, the most impacted students were at the middle school level and among Black, Native and Latinx students based on the most recent MAP testing data. The proposed targeted investments of one-time Federal money may increase progress towards this goal. This investment must also be paired with a longer term plan and funding to reduce the achievement disparities within historically and presently oppressed students.

2. We recommend that PPS continue to advocate for protecting and increasing the K-12 budget for Oregon school districts by achieving the Quality Education Model [QEM]. Class sizes, even with 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 reduction of funding for education on account of the federal money received by schools is an unacceptable disinvestment in our schools. While each round of Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Funds [ESSER I,II,III] funding has and is helpful to eradicate gaps caused by the COVID pandemic, CBRC does not favor the practice of using one-time funds for on-going expenditures as tempting as that may be. We understand that because of the pandemic's impact on students these funds are absolutely crucial at this point

and we urge the Board to address systems that harm historically and presently oppressed students. We encourage PPS to do more community engagement regarding the ESSER funds to ensure that there is the ability for the community to impact which tactics the district chooses to invest in.

3. We recognize that the current budget makes assumptions about the state of school attendance in the fall and beyond, including the number of full-time in-person attendance of all students with potential increases in enrollment for students opting into PPS's online "virtual academy" disassociated from their neighborhood school. Given the volatility of the situation we have witnessed over the last two years, we commend the district for taking a proactive approach and developing contingency plans, with public participation, that center historically and presently on oppressed populations, such as special education students, to address eventualities.

4. We recommend continued investment in recruiting, supporting, and retaining student-facing employees of color. PPS needs more certified employees, especially social workers and psychologists throughout the district. Students in PPS are experiencing trauma rooted in systems exacerbated by the pandemic and a 0.5 social worker will not address the needs of the students in many schools. We also need more certified employees in Special Education and English Language Learning. Additionally, PPS needs more classified staff including educational assistants, paraprofessionals, security guards and hall monitors, which will help with the safety and well-being of students. We know the district faces budget constraints, but we cannot afford to lose ground on the early progress we've made. To be clear, 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 has been some budget allocation towards the mentoring of new teachers, 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 understand that a key component to making lasting systemic changes is diversification of the workforce. With that understanding, we want to recommend that PPS ensure that diversification of the district headquarters is not the end all be all. This has to come with systemic and structural change that uplifts both students and staff of color.

6. We note that the State formula for Alternative/CBO (community-based organizations) and charter schools, servicing some of the District's most historically and presently oppressed 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 as proposed in the FY22-23 budget.

7. The budget process continues to be inaccessible and non-transparent to people who are not well versed in governmental budgeting, which is the vast majority of people. We are encouraged to learn that district staff is already engaged in developing a Volume 3 of the FY22-23 budget that will develop summaries and focused explanations of budgetary decisions, the intended effects, and the accountable outcomes for general audiences.

8. CBRC is pleased to note that Kairos receives a 95% pass-through of State funds because of its student enrollment of 50% or more of students of color. We concur with the Board's action to pass-through to all other Charter Schools 85% of State funds in FY22-23 and 90% in FY23-24. As cited on page 289 of Volume I of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget, we are pleased to see that CBO schools will continue to receive 90% pass-through funds as was instituted in FY21-22.

9. 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 and qualitative 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 invested \$140,000 in a contract with Panorama to administer school climate surveys, the results of which, for at least the last several years, 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.

10. Custodial, Grounds, Maintenance, Classified and Nutritional staff have historically been acknowledged as an area that was inadequately funded. Current reports indicate that the district has 70 custodial vacancies and many more in maintenance areas. As stated before, many of these vacancies precede the pandemic. Remodeled high schools have never been allocated the custodial and maintenance levels promised voters, hence work orders accumulate and add to deferred maintenance now approaching \$1 billion for all district buildings. It is CBRC's understanding the district has reopened its collective bargaining with SEIU to address these ongoing difficulties. Additionally, there remains a shortage of school bus drivers in every category. PPS must provide competitive and livable wages for these critical workers. The current budget has made targeted investments to improve the disparity. 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. At the same time, a more equitable distribution of wages and work conditions should be pursued. Lastly, it is recognized that Nutritional staff are paid with federal reimbursement pass-through dollars. Board consideration should be given to supplementing their wages by a fixed percentage. Providing students with access to transportation, nutritional food, and clean & safe buildings is essential to their ability to arrive at school ready to learn.

11. We highly recommend the addition of student involvement in how the equity allocation of eight percent (8%) of the staffing model at targeted schools funds is used at the school level. It is our observation that administrations are determining how these funds are used and we recommend that in order to be transparent and ensure that these funds are allocated collaboratively with communities, students are given the opportunity to be involved.

### **Closing Remarks**

CBRC is appreciative of the district's effort to center the needs of historically and presently oppressed students during this challenging time. Notwithstanding the district has directed investments for several decades to address the varied needs of students, the fact is, we have substantial work to do to meet PPS goals, including work to undo decades of inequitable investments and systems that have served to protect and uplift white communities 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, the students cannot afford anything less.

CBRC wishes to express its deep gratitude to Nolberto Delgadillo, CFO, Jordan Cooper, Confidential Executive Assistant, and Alexandra Martin, Business Operations Analyst for their invaluable support.

The following CBRC members respectfully submit this report to the PPS Board of Education:

Roger Kirchner, Chair/Community Member

Renee Anderson, Community Member

Lisa Selman, Community Member

Elona Wilson, Community Member

Hobbs Waters, Student Member

Parker Myrus, Student Member