

# Pittsburgh Public Schools Budget Hearing Talking Points

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## There is a Lack of Transparency and Accountability in the 2024 Preliminary Budget:

- Compare the PPS 2024 Budget to the [City of Pittsburgh 2024 Budget](#). The City budget is transparent and the PPS budget is not.
  - In the City Budget, each department has its section that includes an organization chart and a narrative that describes the department's mission and accomplishments for the year. The department budget includes a summary of each staff position, how many employees are in that position, and the budgeted amount.
  - **In the [PPS 2024 Budget](#), there are no number of employees and no narratives for each department. There is only a total amount for salaries and benefits for each department.**
  
- Employee numbers by department were transparent in previous budgets but were eliminated from the 2023 and 2024 Budgets.
  - How many teachers are in this budget?
  - How many counselors are in this budget?
  - How many school police are in this budget?
  
- There's not enough information in the 2024 Budget. The \$713.9 PPS budget is larger than the City's budget, yet PPS is giving the public less information about where the money is being spent.
  
- The Board hardly had any discussion at the Budget Workshops this week. It seemed like some Board members didn't even show up!
  
- Just want to close schools? Our communities cannot take any more school closures
- Staff Raises? How are we giving administrators raises if we are facing deficit
- Whats the Plan to get EIT- Act 47 reversed to receive funds back from the City of Pittsburgh
- What is the plan to fill in the budget gaps?



## The People's Budget: Recommendations

### The PPS Budget should be a PEOPLE's BUDGET:

- The Budget is an accounting of how you are going to spend our tax dollars equitably. It must be transparent so we can see where the money is spent.
- There is no interaction between the administration and the public, except for this public hearing when it's too late to impact the budget. The budget Workshops must happen earlier in the year. PPS should hold community meetings on the Budget the same way the City does.
- Community engagement in budget processes will help ensure that the community's values guide PPS towards a more moral budget. Community members' insights and input can lead to better, more equitable and innovative solutions. Participatory budgeting can strengthen communities by building positive relationships between officials and young people and community members.
- Unfortunately, Pittsburgh Public School district's current budgeting process effectively freezes out community engagement. Community members are only given a very small window between the budget release and the public hearing, during the holidays, and then the budget is finalized just nine days after the public hearing.<sup>57</sup>The public hearing is held on a Monday and is currently scheduled at noon, which prohibits young people who attend PPS schools, working parents, and teachers - all of whom have the most significant stake in the school district's budget - from participating.
- We suggest launching a participatory budgeting process in the 2024 school year which will bring together parents, young people, teachers, and community members along with the district and the School Board, well in advance of next year's budget approval deadlines to provide budget priorities. Community members, including PPS students, need to be able have a voice on aspects of the budget. An exploratory committee can be established in the spring to create a far more inclusive budgeting process for next year.
- Year after year we come and ask for:
  - Investments in school climate
  - Investments in equity and inclusion
  - Investments in Community Schools
  - Divestment in over policing
  - Improvements in outcomes for Black students and students with disabilities
- [2024 Budget](#): \$7.8 million is budgeted for school safety -- \$7 million of this is for security personnel salaries and benefits. This is the same as last year.
- You voted to give developers tax breaks to build non-affordable housing downtown. In 2022, you gave \$5.5 million away in tax breaks.

- Earned Income Tax diverted to the City in the 2024 Budget is \$23.8 million

**End the discriminatory and expensive system of policing young people:**

- **Phase out the 11 police officers** currently employed by the district<sup>58</sup> over the next two years through a combination of attrition and reassignments to different, non-police, roles (mediators, climate coordinators, etc.) both inside and outside of Pittsburgh Public Schools;
- **Cap the number of security aides** in the district at the current full-time number (66), and allow security to retire without replacing their positions;
- If there are furloughs or layoffs, **prioritize maintaining student support systems** such as teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, and social workers;
- **Eliminate metal detectors, surveillance equipment or similarly criminalizing equipment** over the next two years, prioritizing the elimination of those that require personnel to operate and those operating within an elementary school setting;
  - Until all metal detectors are eliminated, ensure students are not forced to wait outside in the cold and prohibit schools from marking students as late or otherwise punishing them because of this process;
- **Replace all ALICE trainings** with training that prioritizes trauma-informed care, behavioral and mental health awareness, and suicide and bullying prevention, consistent with Act 44 requirements;
- **Provide mandatory restorative justice and trauma informed training** to all security aides;
- **Evaluate current school police and security aide trainings** to prioritize accountability and ensure there is monthly oversight from the Superintendent; and,
- **Provide separate and detailed budgets accounting** for school police and security aids to have a complete understanding of how dollars are spent in each of those departments.

**Invest in critical supports and resources in schools:**

- **Utilize all School Safety Grants for proactive, restorative causes in schools** (hire more counselors, nurses, and social workers, invest in racial bias training, enact peer to peer counseling groups, etc.).
- **Reject school safety grants that require harmful criminalizing components**, such as metal detectors, wands, and other surveillance equipment be used on students;
- **Require all contractors for mental health services be trained** on racial bias, ableism, and culturally sensitive and appropriate care;
- **Create fifty-four (54) “School Climate Coordinator” full-time positions** (one for each school) dedicated to implementation of restorative justice programs throughout the school district;
- **Hire more paraprofessionals** to support student learning;
- **Ensure there is real Parent Engagement and training** by reinstating Parent

Engagement Specialists;

- **Increase the number of counselors, psychologists, and social workers** who serve children's needs to reach the recommended ratio for counselors of 1:100 in high needs schools and 1:250 in all other schools and 1:400 for social workers;
- **Coordinate services** provided by Student Services like restorative justice, mental health with the community schools department, office of equity, and special education teams to create a joint district wide strategic plan;

[ERN Report](#): In PPS's 2019 General Fund Budget, \$7.2 million was budgeted for school safety -- nearly \$6.5 million of this was for security personnel salaries and benefits (Board of Public Education, 2018).

[2024 Budget](#): \$7.8 million is budgeted for school safety -- \$7 million of this is for security personnel salaries and benefits. This is the same as last year, 2023 Budget.

[Public Source article from last year's 2023 budget hearing](#):

Angel Gober, executive director of 412 Justice, an organization that focuses on economic, environmental and educational justice issues, said the district should re-evaluate its public safety budget to prevent over-policing. "Invest into school climate and positive school culture practices," she said.

The 2023 budget proposes an increase of about \$226,500 in security services from the 2022 budget for a total of \$7.8 million.

Community members also recommended that the district allocate more funds for its students with disabilities. They recommended hiring more paraprofessionals, investing in social-emotional learning and supporting extended school year programs.

"They are invisible in the budget. By failing to include students with disabilities, the district is implying that it doesn't believe our students are part of a larger community," said Paulette Foster, the special education organizer at 412 Justice. "We can't allow any student to fall through the cracks. The students who are invisible in what you say will be invisible in what you do."

Emily Sawyer, a parent of five children in PPS, said the district needs to have an equitable budgeting process in which funds are allocated based on the concentration of needs.