



Financial & Operational Information

Cincinnati Public Schools

Fall 2009

What is on the Nov. 3, 2009, ballot for Cincinnati Public Schools?

CPS is seeking a renewal of an operating levy that was first approved in 1980 and now accounts for \$65 million annually of district revenue. It will not raise taxes but must be renewed by voters' approval every five years.

How will the money be spent?

The money raised by this renewal – almost 14 percent of the district's total operating budget – is used to pay the expenses of operating the district (teachers' and other staff salaries, utilities, student transportation costs, textbook purchases, and so on).

Why is CPS on the ballot again so soon after its last request in 2008?

This renewal levy on the November ballot expires Dec. 31, 2010. State law allows districts to seek renewals within 18 months of a levy's expiration; it is best practice for school systems to place these measures on the ballot at the first opportunity and at subsequent opportunities were it not to pass. This does not alter the beginning of the collection date for the renewal, which is January 2011.

The CPS budget planning cycle for the 2010-11 school year begins in December 2009. It is fiscally responsible for the district to seek a renewal at the first opportunity to avert potential disruptions to the budgeting process. Prudent planning requires that the district determine available funds as soon as possible, due to state deadlines for notification of employees who may be subject to layoffs as a result of loss of revenue.

How did the state's budget impact CPS for this school year?

CPS' funding from the state was cut by \$6 million for 2009-10. Conservative budgeting practices allowed the district to produce a balanced budget of \$467,005,155 for 2009-10.

Isn't it true that CPS added positions in its latest budget vs. the 2008-09 budget?

Yes, after years of downsizing due to declining enrollment, the district's enrollment has stabilized and even could experience an increase this school

year. This has required additional positions in schools. Fifty-five school-based positions were added to the 2009-10 budget as a result of this higher-than-projected enrollment trend.

How has CPS been helped by federal stimulus money?

Federal stimulus money has been used to help implement innovative pilot programs targeted to improve academic achievement – programs that have earned recent national recognition. One example is the Fifth Quarter Summer Learning Program that extended the school year for a month at 13 of the district's lowest-achieving elementary schools. Fifth Quarter provided math and language arts instruction targeted to students' individual needs in the morning, supplemented by enrichment activities in the afternoon offered by the schools' Community Learning Center partners. Stimulus money also supported the complete redesign of three struggling elementary schools, with new staffs, strengthened curriculum, technology enhancements, cutting-edge professional development and adding an additional two weeks of instructional time at the beginning of the 2009-10 school year.

What else is CPS doing to Improve Academic Achievement?

Superintendent Mary Ronan is creating an Office of Innovation to research and implement successful school models that raise academic achievement and are attractive to families. She added a curriculum team to ensure that the academic content taught in schools is appropriate and rigorous. She opened STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) elementary and high schools and is expanding foreign language offerings to better prepare students for the demands of the 21st century global economy. This school year, all district 11th graders will take the American College Test (ACT), to enhance college access and help identify areas of needed improvement.

In collaboration with corporate and community partners and teacher union leadership, the district administration is strengthening teacher quality and instructional practices. Initiatives include Learning Teams, a school-based professional development strategy that adds structured time for teachers to discuss and improve instruction; the Vermont Mathematics Initiative providing teachers with professional development to build content knowledge; and The New Teachers Project partnership to identify potential procedural and contractual changes to increase teacher and principal effectiveness.

What has CPS done to reduce costs and improve operating efficiencies?

The district has worked aggressively to cut both non-personnel and personnel costs. Over the past eight years, CPS has eliminated more than 1,100 positions to bring staffing in line with student enrollment. District enrollment now is beginning to rise, making it necessary to hire additional teachers.

Following recommendations from multiple external reviews (McKinsey, the State Auditor's Office and private business), money-saving and effectiveness measures have been implemented, including:

- A single-source contract for yellow-bus service that will result in an \$8-million savings over five years.
- All CPS bargaining groups reaching a mutual decision to forgo wage and benefit increases in 2009.
- Hiring an internal auditor to examine efficiency opportunities and provide oversight.
- Training in Six Sigma and other process improvement strategies for district administrators.
- Reorganization of human resources, facilities and technology functions to improve organizational effectiveness.
- Improved performance management functions leading to principal evaluations that include student achievement progress.

What has CPS done to increase communication and transparency with the public?

Superintendent Mary Ronan has emphasized improved communication and transparency as priorities for CPS. In addition to quarterly "community conversations" throughout the district, she presents public progress reports, distributes monthly e-newsletters to parents and community members, and sends weekly staff messages to keep employees informed.

In October 2008, the district introduced the Building Futures Dashboard on the CPS Website (www.cps-k12.org) Much like the dashboard on a car, this dashboard allows members of the public to easily access and monitor a host of financial, demographic and financial data about the district and individual schools, with just a few clicks of a computer mouse.

Two additional data dashboards are under development in 2009-10: A student dashboard that will enable students to monitor their own progress on academic standards and link to resources to help them improve; and a partners dashboard that will help teachers better inform community partners about specific students' learning needs and, in turn, help teachers understand what services partners offer to support students.

Why is CPS continuing to build new schools if money is tight?

In 2003, voters recognized the need to upgrade CPS' buildings — among the worst in the state — and approved a bond issue to complete funding for the district's \$1-billion Facilities Master Plan. By law, this bond money can be used only for construction costs, not for the district's day-to-day operating expenses. The district cannot borrow from construction money to supplement its general fund.