

**From:** [Jacquelin McCoy](#)  
**To:** [Bill Barnes](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: [External] Is the Blueprint focused on the wrong things?  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 25, 2024 9:44:35 AM

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Hello Bill,

I would love to get your take on what was shared here. Worth a read. See below.

Be well,

**Jacky McCoy**

Educator

[Howard County Board of Education](#) (At-Large County 1)

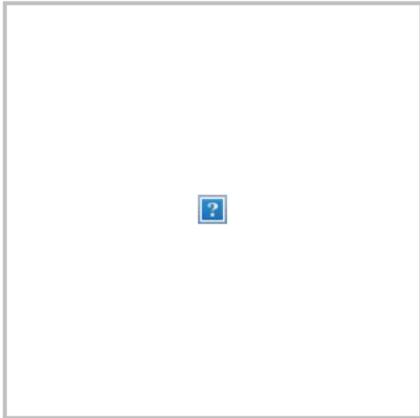
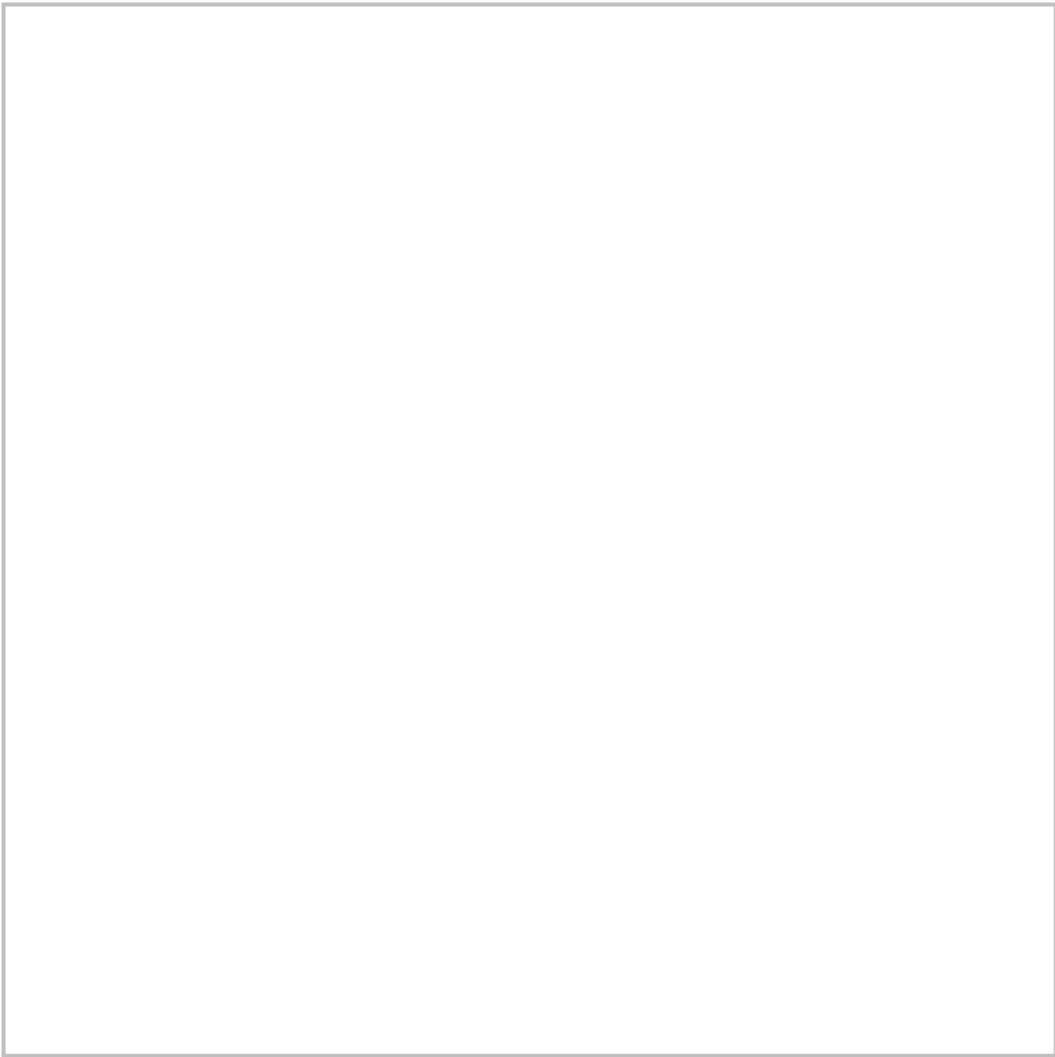
Pronouns: she, her, hers

*Real Education, Real Access, Real Family Engagement*

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**From:** Trent Kittleman <trentkittleman-verizon.net@shared1.ccsend.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 24, 2024 10:30 AM  
**To:** Jacquelin McCoy <Jacquelin\_McCoy@hcpss.org>  
**Subject:** [External] Is the Blueprint focused on the wrong things?

**! CAUTION: This email originated from outside of HCPSS. Do not click links or open attachments, unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.**



***CONTENTS***

- *Why is the HCPSS Budget not meeting our needs?*
- *Is the Blueprint focused on the wrong things?*



## *Why does HCPSS need more money amid falling enrollment?*

### **ASK THE MARYLAND LEGISLATURE!**

During my eight years in the Maryland House of Delegates, I opposed a number of bills that attempted to regulate the local school systems. As I now focus intently on HCPSS, I am seeing, first-hand, the unhappy impact many of those bills are having on our school system.

A year ago, like many of us, I was skeptical as to why HCPSS budgets needed constant increases over general inflation when student enrollment was flat. Over the last year, I have learned the primary reason for these needed increases is that every year, more UNFUNDED MANDATES impose new requirements that must be funded. Each year, the school system must reorganize its processes, curriculum, and staffing to include more and different obligations. Here are just a few of the changes that will affect the budget.

**\$** Mandated decrease in teacher teaching time. The Blueprint requires that teachers on the career ladder only teach 60% of the day, using 40% of their time working with students individually and collaborating with other teachers. Currently, teachers teach seven classes; implementing this requirement would decrease those teachers' teaching time to just four classes per day.

**\$** Mandated, full-day preschool. The Blueprint requires the local school systems to provide full-day preschool for 3- and 4-year olds, with a staged implementation plan. While the state provides some funding for operating this mandate, not so much for the capital side of the issue. Where will jurisdictions such as Howard County, find space to house this new batch of young students when it doesn't have enough space to house its current student population even with over 240 relocatables.

**\$** Failure of federal government to abide by its commitment to fund 40% of the Special Education mandated under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

The importance of providing education to every student and the success of so many disabled students heretofore not given the opportunity to obtain an education, is obvious. Unfortunately, on several accounts, the number of students with disabilities has continued to grow, and the unique and varied services needed to provide an adequate education to every student has created costs not previously part of a school system's budget. Neither the federal nor the state government has stepped up its share of the increased costs. For instance, the state provides a flat rate of \$1,000 per special education student for transportation. Yet the actual cost per student for this transportation for HCPSS in FY2024 was \$7,400.

**\$** Transportation. The State allocation for general education transportation is based on an old formula for annual increases that are woefully out of tune with reality. For FY2025, HCPSS will receive \$24.3 million from state sources; the cost to HCPSS is \$64.1 million – and Howard County *still* underspends all other large counties in per-pupil spending.

**\$\$** State Mandated: Transporting Special Education Students to non-public MANSEF schools all across the state. In order to provide the best educational opportunity for special education students, HCPSS has maximized its use of the state-supported nonpublic MANSEF schools, with the number of students referred to these schools growing to 322 with many more still on a waiting list. Although the state pays the tuition for these schools, HCPSS must pay to transport each student to these schools -- which are located across the state, and few of which are in Howard County.

**\$\$** Federal Mandate: Transporting homeless youths "to and from their school of origin." This means that a student who is temporarily sheltered in Howard County must be transported to the school he or she last attended when they were permanently housed, *even when in another school district or another County.* In addition, HCPSS must provide transportation for these students that allows for full participation in school activities such as extracurriculars. Currently, there are 624 such youths with that number growing particularly as the COVID-era rental agreements end.

**\$** State Mandate to supply all schools with feminine hygiene products. While very few females would disagree with the goal of this mandate, the rules are sent by state mandate, *without meaningful funding*. In 2023, HCPSS spent \$102,818 for the dispensers and supplies—with supplies costing more and requiring annual resupplying. As small as this amount may seem in a multi-million-dollar budget, HCPSS has no flexibility to. Modify the program when it finds out, for example, that “products are used for other purposes than intended in student bathrooms.”

**\$** Mandated Staff Positions. There is legislation that restricts school ability to manage budgets by mandating specific staff positions.

**\$** Mandates to create ongoing programs through one-time grant funding. One example is the Maryland Leads grant that allowed 25 HCPSS students to participate in the Apprenticeship Maryland Academy as paid teacher and health room assistants. When the grant ended post-COVID, HCPSS can afford to fund only 11 students to take advantage of this program.

Although some of these costs may seem trivial, they all add up – and these are only a small number of “extra” expenses that are over and above the traditional expenses budgeted for a school system 20-30 years ago, when many parents were in school. Moreover, as the legislature encroaches more and more into directing and mandating educational requirements, local school boards such as Howard County lose more and more control of their budgets and are forced into a one-size-fits all mold that costs more, and, in Howard County, undermines years of successfully educating our students.



## *Is the Blueprint focused on the wrong things?*

There is a school in Maryland located in a blue-collar town that has a higher poverty rate than Baltimore City. One hundred percent of its students live in poverty. And yet, a few years ago, this school's 5th grade class outperformed the state averages in English and math testing.

In June, this school -- Salem Elementary Academy -- was awarded 2024 Model School status by the Center for Model Schools. It was ***one of only 28 schools in the nation to receive this honor.***

How did this school rise above the belief that such students can't learn unless they are provided all the services and benefits that parents have been thought to provide? It starts with Principal Garner's expectation that, "I don't want there to be reasons why kids can't be successful," and is backed up by an expectation that these students will achieve. "I'm a firm believer that you can't feel sorry for anyone. Feeling sorry for someone never has made them

stronger."

They begin the day by reciting the Salem Pledge which goes:

*"I'm a Salem Saber and it's up to me  
to treat others with respect and show responsibility.  
I try my best every day as you can see,  
the one, three, two, three is the place to be."*

(1323 Salem Ave, is the school's address.) This is their mantra, says the school's lead teacher, and students wear the Pledge tee shirt with pride.

A second notable difference at Salem Academy is that "any extra money goes to books, and over the summer, those books go home with the students."

Perhaps the most unusual practice of the school is called the Blitz. One week before school starts each year, every Salem teacher visits their students at their homes so that teachers can see firsthand how their students live. Building those relationships with students and their families makes the students feel valued and important, and allows the parents to know they are a valuable part of the team. [READ MORE.](#)

*"Maryland public school with 100% student poverty named national 'Model school'," by Chris Papst, Fox 45 News, August 21, 2024*

## *What the Blueprint Doesn't Do:* OPINION

The Blueprint doesn't address simple issues such as these. It believes that you "give" students self-confidence so they can learn. Salem's approach is the opposite: you help kids learn so that they will develop self-confidence.

The Blueprint doesn't mention simple, inexpensive ideas for academics, like using extra money to buy books and letting the kids take them home over the summer. Howard County understands the importance of programs like this with our Battle of the Books program that has grown dramatically over the years.

The Blueprint ignores the importance of building relationships with the families of students or consider simple, inexpensive ideas like having teachers go to the students' homes to know exactly where they come from.

The blueprint failed to take notice of any of the schools within the HCPSS that stood out as exceptional to see if they could learn from those schools. In addition to the Salem Elementary Academy, there is another Howard County school that achieved exceptional results a number of years ago. Harpers Choice Middle School was rated the worst in the County at the time a new principal took over. In just four years, this new principal, Steve Wallis, turned the school around so dramatically that it received national recognition. Mr. Wallis later detailed exactly what he had done to improve this school in a book called *Dead Last*. Like Salem Elementary, Harpers Choice Middle School was improved by instituting a culture of responsibility, civility, and high expectations. It is amazing how student attitudes change when they know that the

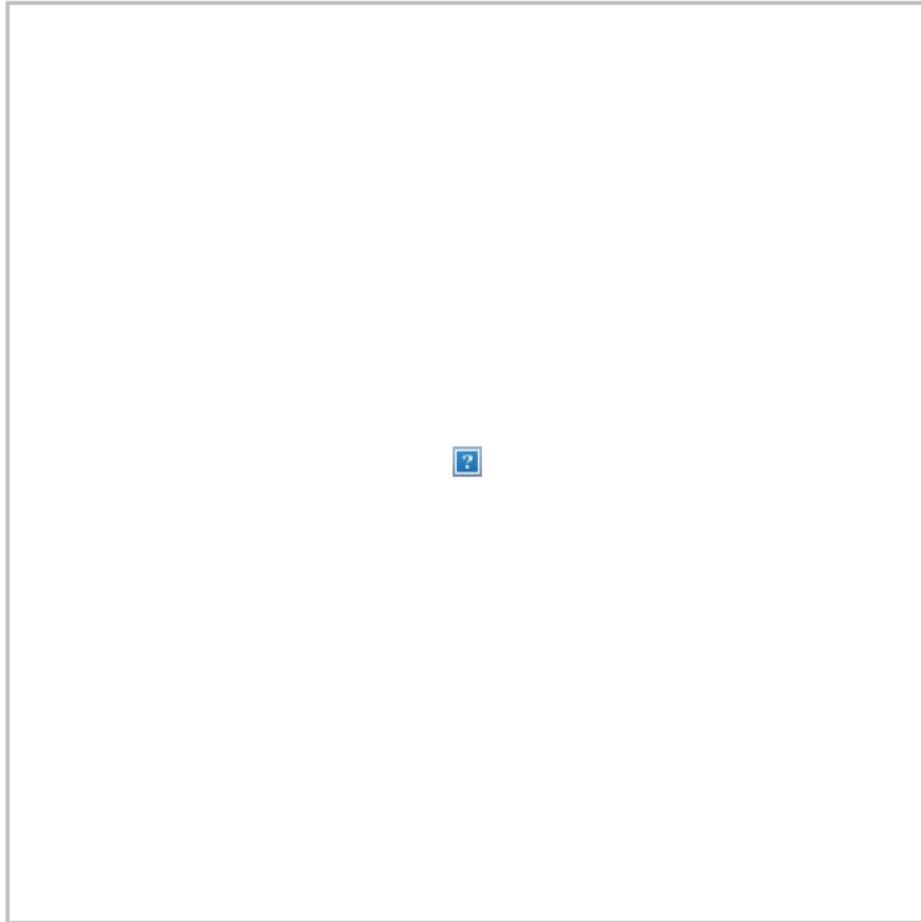


faculty actually *believes* that they can earn high grades and *expects* them to.

The blueprint is pumping millions of dollars into the public education system along with stringent requirements. What it does not do is change the culture of low expectations. We'll have to wait and see if the Blueprint approach works.

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Friends of Trent Kittleman | 3000 Kittleman Lane | West Friendship, MD 21794 US

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Constant Contact

**From:** [Karalee Turner-Little](#)  
**To:** [Brian W. Bassett](#)  
**Subject:** RE: complaint about campaigning on school property  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 5:50:35 AM

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It is a combination of Communications (you and me), Legal (Stephen), and Partnerships (James). I believe Pat has already communicated since he had already had some conversations with her. Let's talk more.  
K

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**From:** Brian W. Bassett <[Brian\\_Bassett@hcpss.org](mailto:Brian_Bassett@hcpss.org)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 22, 2024 8:38 PM  
**To:** Karalee Turner-Little <[Karalee\\_TurnerLittle@hcpss.org](mailto:Karalee_TurnerLittle@hcpss.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: complaint about campaigning on school property

Karalee,

Following up on this...This is not something the communications team has handled in the past. I believe it fell to Jahantab but perhaps Stephen was involved. With the reorganization, who is handling relations with elected leaders and candidates?

**Brian Bassett**

Director of Communications & Engagement  
Howard County Public School System

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**From:** Karalee Turner-Little <[Karalee\\_TurnerLittle@hcpss.org](mailto:Karalee_TurnerLittle@hcpss.org)>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 20, 2024 9:56 AM  
**To:** Brian W. Bassett <[Brian\\_Bassett@hcpss.org](mailto:Brian_Bassett@hcpss.org)>; Alison Cuomo <[Alison\\_Cuomo@hcpss.org](mailto:Alison_Cuomo@hcpss.org)>; Allison Whitney <[Allison\\_Whitney@hcpss.org](mailto:Allison_Whitney@hcpss.org)>; Emily Bahhar <[Emily\\_Bahhar@hcpss.org](mailto:Emily_Bahhar@hcpss.org)>  
**Cc:** Patrick Arnone <[Patrick\\_Arnone@hcpss.org](mailto:Patrick_Arnone@hcpss.org)>; Jen Robinson <[Jen\\_Robinson@hcpss.org](mailto:Jen_Robinson@hcpss.org)>  
**Subject:** complaint about campaigning on school property

Team,

We were informed this morning by Pat Arnone (copied on this email) that Trent Kittleman was campaigning on school property at Manor Woods ES.

We have a process for reminding candidates about this.

Can you confirm who will be connecting with her on this?

Thanks so much,

K

*Karalee Turner-Little, Ph.D.* (she/her)

Deputy Superintendent  
Howard County Public School System

10920 Clarksville Pike  
Ellicott City, MD 21042  
Office: 410.313.8951



**From:** [Kelli L. Jenkins](#)  
**To:** [Patrick Arnone](#); [Allison Whitney](#); [David K. Lerner](#); [Jonathan E. Davis](#); [Brian W. Bassett](#); [Joy Smith](#)  
**Subject:** Re: BOE Campaigning ~ Manor Woods ES  
**Date:** Friday, September 20, 2024 11:02:24 AM

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Thank you!

Kelli Jenkins  
Principal  
Manor Woods Elementary  
410-313-7165  
kelli\_jenkins@hcpss.org

***Includer ~ Communication ~ Individualization ~ Woo ~ Harmony***

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**From:** Patrick Arnone <Patrick\_Arnone@hcpss.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:36 AM  
**To:** Kelli L. Jenkins <Kelli\_Jenkins@hcpss.org>; Allison Whitney <Allison\_Whitney@hcpss.org>; David K. Lerner <David\_Lerner@hcpss.org>; Jonathan E. Davis <Jonathan\_Davis@hcpss.org>; Brian W. Bassett <Brian\_Bassett@hcpss.org>; Joy Smith <Joy\_Smith@hcpss.org>  
**Subject:** Re: BOE Campaigning ~ Manor Woods ES

Mike Rudinski and I will be out this afternoon at your school and will show you those property lines. Better to do it in person.

---

**From:** Kelli L. Jenkins <Kelli\_Jenkins@hcpss.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:34 AM  
**To:** Allison Whitney <Allison\_Whitney@hcpss.org>; David K. Lerner <David\_Lerner@hcpss.org>; Jonathan E. Davis <Jonathan\_Davis@hcpss.org>; Brian W. Bassett <Brian\_Bassett@hcpss.org>; Joy Smith <Joy\_Smith@hcpss.org>  
**Cc:** Patrick Arnone <Patrick\_Arnone@hcpss.org>  
**Subject:** Re: BOE Campaigning ~ Manor Woods ES

Thank you, Alli.

Pat, I would like to connect with you as I would appreciate learning more about the boundary lines/school property.

Thank you!

Kelli Jenkins  
Principal  
Manor Woods Elementary  
410-313-7165  
kelli\_jenkins@hcpss.org

***Includer ~ Communication ~ Individualization ~ Woo ~ Harmony***

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**From:** Allison Whitney <Allison\_Whitney@hcpss.org>

**Sent:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:09 AM

**To:** Kelli L. Jenkins <Kelli\_Jenkins@hcpss.org>; David K. Larner <David\_Larner@hcpss.org>; Jonathan E. Davis <Jonathan\_Davis@hcpss.org>; Brian W. Bassett <Brian\_Bassett@hcpss.org>; Joy Smith <Joy\_Smith@hcpss.org>

**Cc:** Patrick Arnone <Patrick\_Arnone@hcpss.org>

**Subject:** Re: BOE Campaigning ~ Manor Woods ES

Hi Kelli,

Since our conversation, we have been in touch with the security team. I CC'd Pat Arnone on this email as he is aware of the issue and has determined Trent Kittleman was not on school property though I can certainly understand why parents would be confused by that. Pat can talk to you about your school boundaries and will handle any follow-up with Trent.

Thank you for alerting everyone,  
Alli

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**Allison Whitney**

**410.313.6679**

*Community and Workforce Engagement Specialist*

Office of Communications and Engagement

[Employee Well-Being](#) | [Peer-to-Peer Certificates](#)

---

**From:** Kelli L. Jenkins <Kelli\_Jenkins@hcpss.org>

**Date:** Friday, September 20, 2024 at 10:02 AM

**To:** David K. Larner <David\_Larner@hcpss.org>, Jonathan E. Davis <Jonathan\_Davis@hcpss.org>, Brian W. Bassett <Brian\_Bassett@hcpss.org>, Allison Whitney <Allison\_Whitney@hcpss.org>, Joy Smith <Joy\_Smith@hcpss.org>

**Subject:** BOE Campaigning ~ Manor Woods ES

Good morning,

I wanted to make you all aware that apparently Trent Kittleman, running for BOE District 5, was campaigning at the end of our school lane this morning during arrival. According to a parent who made us aware, they placed signage starting at the curve in the lane coming into MWES and then out to the Manor Woods sign along Frederick Road. Ms. Kittleman (and whoever was with her) had signage and were waving to parents, guardians, families during our arrival this morning. We were not aware of this as they positioned themselves in a place that they knew staff could not see from the school. It is impossible to see that far out with the curve in the lane and to the exit. It wasn't until a parent dropping off their child mentioned this happening that we were made aware.

I also wanted to let you know that I was attending a virtual IEP meeting this morning that started at 8:00. Our arrival begins at 8:30 AM and I was still attending the IEP

meeting at this time. Apparently, Ms. Kittleman came into the front office AFTER campaigning (at the end of arrival) and asked to talk to me. Our teacher's secretary came into my meeting and shared that a visitor was here to see me and it was someone running for a political office. I worked to remove myself from the IEP meeting to see what was going on, but she left our building before I could speak with her. This is when I was made aware of the campaigning that had taken place.

Since, I have walked the drive into Manor Woods and there is no signage, etc. Everything is gone.

To say this is frustrating is an understatement. I believe Ms. Kittleman knows she cannot campaign on school grounds but did so anyway AND in a way that the school could not see or be aware.

I did talk with Allison Whitney as a parent called Central Office before I had a chance to notify all of you. Thank you, Allison, for talking with me.

Please let me know if I need to do any additional follow-up.

Thank you!

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kelli\_jenkins@hcpss.org

***Includer ~ Communication ~ Individualization ~ Woo ~ Harmony***

**From:** [Brian W. Bassett](#)  
**To:** [Allison Whitney](#)  
**Subject:** Re: BOE Campaigning ~ Manor Woods ES  
**Date:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:47:06 AM

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Thank you Alli.

Brian Bassett  
Director of Communications and Engagement  
Howard County Public School System

On Sep 20, 2024, at 10:09 AM, Allison Whitney <[Allison\\_Whitney@hcpss.org](mailto:Allison_Whitney@hcpss.org)> wrote:

Hi Kelli,

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Thank you for alerting everyone,  
Alli

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**Allison Whitney**  
**410.313.6679**  
*Community and Workforce Engagement Specialist*  
Office of Communications and Engagement  
[Employee Well-Being](#) | [Peer-to-Peer Certificates](#)

---

**From:** Kelli L. Jenkins <[Kelli\\_Jenkins@hcpss.org](mailto:Kelli_Jenkins@hcpss.org)>  
**Date:** Friday, September 20, 2024 at 10:02 AM  
**To:** David K. Larner <[David\\_Larner@hcpss.org](mailto:David_Larner@hcpss.org)>, Jonathan E. Davis <[Jonathan\\_Davis@hcpss.org](mailto:Jonathan_Davis@hcpss.org)>, Brian W. Bassett <[Brian\\_Bassett@hcpss.org](mailto:Brian_Bassett@hcpss.org)>, Allison Whitney <[Allison\\_Whitney@hcpss.org](mailto:Allison_Whitney@hcpss.org)>, Joy Smith <[Joy\\_Smith@hcpss.org](mailto:Joy_Smith@hcpss.org)>  
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Thank you!

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**From:** [David K. Larner](#)  
**To:** [Patrick Arnone](#); [Kelli L. Jenkins](#); [Allison Whitney](#); [Jonathan E. Davis](#); [Brian W. Bassett](#); [Joy Smith](#)  
**Subject:** RE: BOE Campaigning ~ Manor Woods ES  
**Date:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:39:37 AM

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Thank you Pat and Mike.

Kelli – to clarify – if Ms. Kittleman placed signs on the driveway of the school that is school property and within the boundaries of the property.

Dave

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**From:** Patrick Arnone <[Patrick\\_Arnone@hcpss.org](mailto:Patrick_Arnone@hcpss.org)>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:37 AM  
**To:** Kelli L. Jenkins <[Kelli\\_Jenkins@hcpss.org](mailto:Kelli_Jenkins@hcpss.org)>; Allison Whitney <[Allison\\_Whitney@hcpss.org](mailto:Allison_Whitney@hcpss.org)>; David K. Larner <[David\\_Larner@hcpss.org](mailto:David_Larner@hcpss.org)>; Jonathan E. Davis <[Jonathan\\_Davis@hcpss.org](mailto:Jonathan_Davis@hcpss.org)>; Brian W. Bassett <[Brian\\_Bassett@hcpss.org](mailto:Brian_Bassett@hcpss.org)>; Joy Smith <[Joy\\_Smith@hcpss.org](mailto:Joy_Smith@hcpss.org)>  
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Office of Communications and Engagement

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**From:** [Patrick Arnone](#)  
**To:** [Emily Bahhar](#); [Karalee Turner-Little](#); [Brian W. Bassett](#); [Alison Cuomo](#); [Allison Whitney](#)  
**Cc:** [Jen Robinson](#)  
**Subject:** Re: complaint about campaigning on school property  
**Date:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:26:59 AM

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Yes, I will also have someone from my staff at the school today to make sure she is off school property and no signs placed on the property.

---

**From:** Emily Bahhar <Emily\_Bahhar@hcpss.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 20, 2024 10:03 AM  
**To:** Karalee Turner-Little <Karalee\_TurnerLittle@hcpss.org>; Brian W. Bassett <Brian\_Bassett@hcpss.org>; Alison Cuomo <Alison\_Cuomo@hcpss.org>; Allison Whitney <Allison\_Whitney@hcpss.org>; Patrick Arnone <Patrick\_Arnone@hcpss.org>  
**Cc:** Jen Robinson <Jen\_Robinson@hcpss.org>  
**Subject:** Re: complaint about campaigning on school property

Good morning all,

Pat and I just spoke about this. His team recently met with Ms. Kittleman. [@Patrick Arnone](#) are you/can you follow up with her about today?

Emily Bahhar (Bah-har)  
Director of Multimedia Communications  
410-313-1570 (O) I [REDACTED]  
[Staff Multimedia Request Form](#)

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**From:** Karalee Turner-Little <Karalee\_TurnerLittle@hcpss.org>  
**Date:** Friday, September 20, 2024 at 9:56 AM  
**To:** Brian W. Bassett <Brian\_Bassett@hcpss.org>, Alison Cuomo <Alison\_Cuomo@hcpss.org>, Allison Whitney <Allison\_Whitney@hcpss.org>, Emily Bahhar <Emily\_Bahhar@hcpss.org>  
**Cc:** Patrick Arnone <Patrick\_Arnone@hcpss.org>, Jen Robinson <Jen\_Robinson@hcpss.org>  
**Subject:** complaint about campaigning on school property

Team,

We were informed this morning by Pat Arnone (copied on this email) that Trent Kittleman was campaigning on school property at Manor Woods ES.

We have a process for reminding candidates about this.

Can you confirm who will be connecting with her on this?

Thanks so much,

K

*Karalee Turner-Little, Ph.D.* (she/her)

Deputy Superintendent

Howard County Public School System

10920 Clarksville Pike

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Office: 410.313.8951



**From:** [Trent Kittleman](#)  
**To:** [Bill Barnes](#)  
**Subject:** Re: [External] I'd like to schedule a meeting  
**Date:** Monday, June 24, 2024 5:16:56 PM

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You don't often get email from trentkittleman@verizon.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

Many thanks!

On Monday, June 24, 2024 at 02:44:17 PM EDT, Bill Barnes <bill\_barnes@hcpss.org> wrote:

Good afternoon,

Thanks so much for your kind note. I would certainly be happy and interested in meeting with you to answer questions and to learn more about what you would want to accomplish if elected. I've copied Ms. Johnson to ask that she find some time for us in Mid-July to touch base. Talk soon.

Bill

Bill Barnes (he/him/his)  
Acting Superintendent  
Howard County Public School System

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**From:** Trent Kittleman <trentkittleman@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 24, 2024 2:42 PM  
**To:** Bill Barnes <Bill\_Barnes@hcpss.org>  
**Subject:** [External] I'd like to schedule a meeting

You don't often get email from trentkittleman@verizon.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

**! CAUTION: This email originated from outside of HCPSS. Do not click links or open attachments, unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.**

Superintendent --

First, congratulations on your appointment as permanent Superintendent. The Board made a very wise choice. I would very much like to come in and spend some time talking with you about the Board. I've been watching the Board meetings since August and learning as much as I can. But there are so many things I don't know, and I would appreciate any information you think a potential board member should have and know.

Many thanks, and I look forward to meeting with you.

**From:** [Stephen Cowles](#)  
**To:** [Bill Barnes](#); [Karalee Turner-Little](#); [Jahantab Siddiqui](#)  
**Cc:** [Anna Rungfarsangaroon](#); [Amanda Kennison](#)  
**Subject:** Follow-up  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 4:01:45 PM

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The Office of General Counsel has advised the Elections Board of the concern regarding Ms. Kittleman. They confirm that unless the Board of Education (or Principal) has provided permission that she may not campaign on the school system property. The Elections Board office will mention it to her as they have to contact her about another issue.

The Office of General Counsel can follow-up with a letter on Friday if that is your direction. Or, we can wait to see if there any further incidents after the notification from the Elections Board. Just let our office know which you prefer. Thank you

*J. Stephen Cowles*  
*General Counsel*  
*Howard County Public School System*  
*10910 Clarksville Pike*  
*Ellicott City, MD 21042*  
*410-313-6605*

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The Office of General Counsel of the Howard County Public School System supports the school system's focus on student-centered practices, inclusive relationships, and responsive and efficient operations by providing high quality legal counsel, advice and representation to the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools, schools and offices.

**From:** [Alison Cuomo](#)  
**To:** [Brian W. Bassett](#); [Jahantab Siddiqui](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: [External] Fwd: Fw: School Budget Shortfalls Imminent!  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 16, 2024 10:46:28 AM

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Tim somehow got this email this morning. Sharing as an FYI in case you haven't seen it, but it puts some budget info out there that to my knowledge hadn't been made public.

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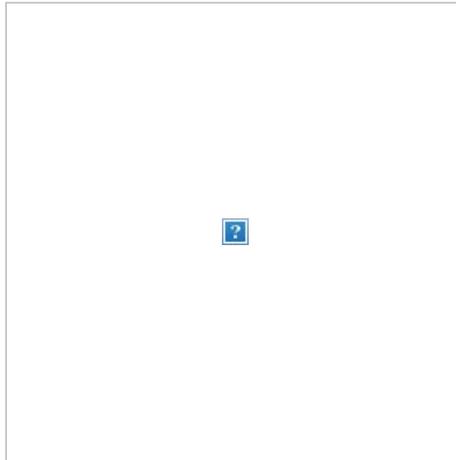
**From:** Alison Cuomo <[alisoncuomo@gmail.com](mailto:alisoncuomo@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 16, 2024 10:43 AM  
**To:** Alison Cuomo <[Alison\\_Cuomo@hcpss.org](mailto:Alison_Cuomo@hcpss.org)>  
**Subject:** [External] Fwd: Fw: School Budget Shortfalls Imminent!

**! CAUTION: This email originated from outside of HCPSS. Do not click links or open attachments, unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.**

Begin forwarded message:

On Tuesday, January 16, 2024, 5:05 AM, Trent Kittleman <[trentkittleman+verizon.net@ccsend.com](mailto:trentkittleman+verizon.net@ccsend.com)> wrote:

[VIEW AS WEBPAG](#)



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## **WARNING . . .**

*to parents of Dunloggin, Oakland Mills, & other schools that are in desperate need of maintenance*

### ***Budget Shortfalls Imminent***

This is NOT an overstatement. Many factors have contributed to the fact that Howard County will not be able to fund education to the extent expected and demanded by our residents. Not all of the problems are the fault of the County.

For example, the highly touted "BLUEPRINT" program the State enacted several years ago, promising that it would increase funding and improve schools, requires the counties to *match* the funds offered by the state. But the state funds are allocated for specific programs designed by the Blueprint, thus draining funds from the programs the County has chosen to provide.



Other issues contributing to the problem are highlighted by our new Interim Superintendent, Bill Barnes, in the article below. I would also mention:

- deferred maintenance allowed to accumulate for a number of years,
- the dramatic increase in the cost of maintenance and construction,
- Howard County being a magnet for disabled students,
- the end of the vast federal COVID subsidies,
- the slower growth of the county's tax revenue.
- additional, non-academic programs such as DEI (diversity, inclusion, and equity), and SEL (social, emotional learning).

## ***Budget Guidelines***

### ***A surprise from Interim Superintendent Bill Barnes***

Every year, HCPSS has proposed a budget far beyond what the county can afford. This has led to rushed, last-minute efforts to make million-dollar cuts.

This year, Mr. Barnes plans to avoid the last-minute rush with a promise to propose a budget that will be balanced rather than aspirational. This will be the first time that the HCPSS will actually propose cuts.

This may not be a pleasant surprise, but it seems to be a responsible one. Recognizing the full impact of the financial needs of HCPSS, Superintendent Barnes avoided the common political response of lobbying the County for *more money*.

This is not happy news, but it is good news when the budget process focuses on reality, and promises a much more thoughtful budget with input from all stakeholders.

#### ***Why the Deficit?***

Superintendent Barnes identified the following as major contributors to the large deficit:

- Blueprint mandates
- Student transportation needs



- Special education expansion where services are increasingly demanding.
- Employment compensation – to fully fund future compensation benefits

**What Does He Propose?**

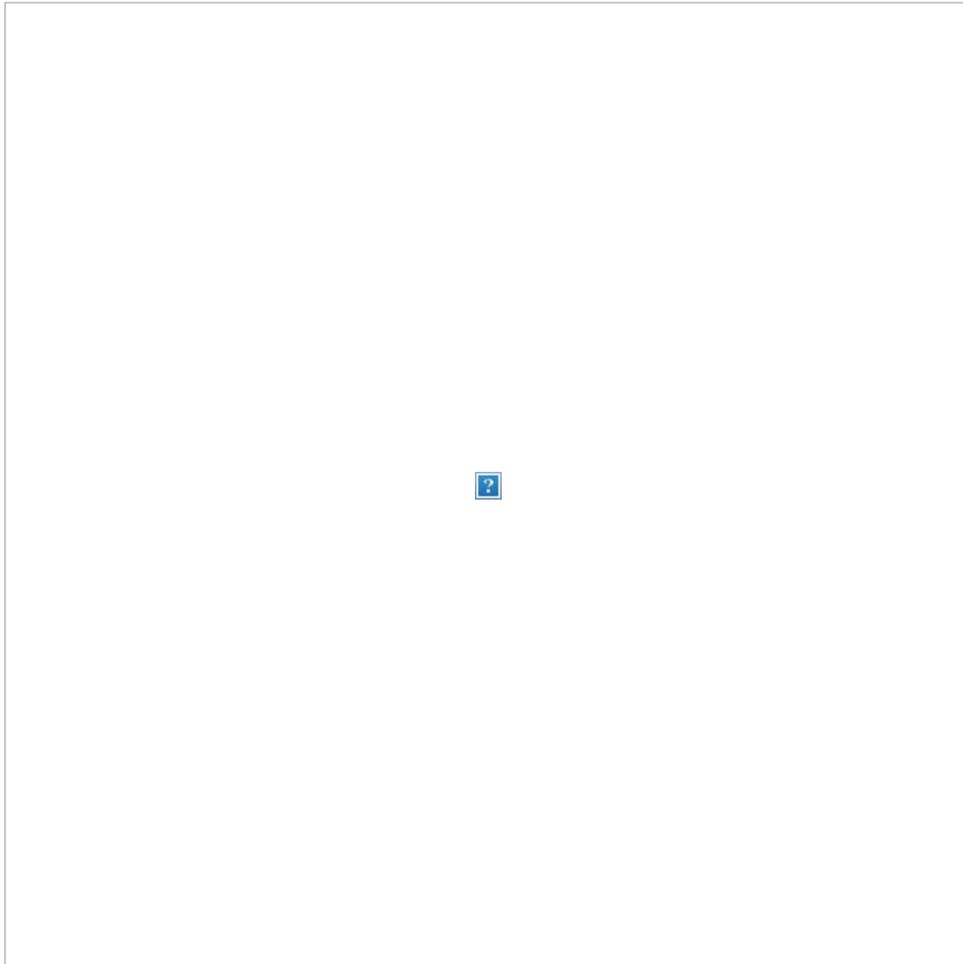
Superintendent Barnes has proposed budget cuts rather than having to reduce amount of budget increases. Non-mandated services cuts will reduce funding by \$46.6 million, which will counterbalance the \$47 million dollars of additional expense the system will incur automatically. Barnes clearly recognizes the full impact this budget will have on the community as well as staff. Nonetheless, it would be next to impossible to balance the budget without at least some painful cuts.

Last year, one of the last-minute proposals from Dr. Martirano was cuts to personnel. The Board rejected this alternative because no one wants to eliminate jobs. **Nonetheless wages and benefits comprise 84.6 percent of the HCPSS budget**, so there isn't much choice. Barnes approached this very sensitive topic with concern and expressed his hope that the tone and tenor of response to this process will be expressed with dignity and respect. Toward this end, he requested that the Board give him the authority to inform any staff that will be affected, now, to give them until June to explore other opportunities.

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***The following memo highlights some of the potential cuts of programs that are not "required" by state law.***

*Although the information contained therein is legitimate, the source of the memo has not been verified.*



# *What has gone wrong?? .*

**Transportation Cost Increases.** Most parents are aware of the problems and added expense of transporting students to school, occasioned primarily by the expanding student population, refusal to raise salaries for bus drivers thus leading to a severe shortage, and a botched effort to replace local drive companies with a large west coast company (ZUM). In order to save money, HCPSS designated over 3,000 additional students to be walkers and extended the distance for defining walkers. The youngest students (pre-K and Kindergarten) now have to walk up to a mile, often on roads without sidewalks and intersections without a crossing guard. This has to change.

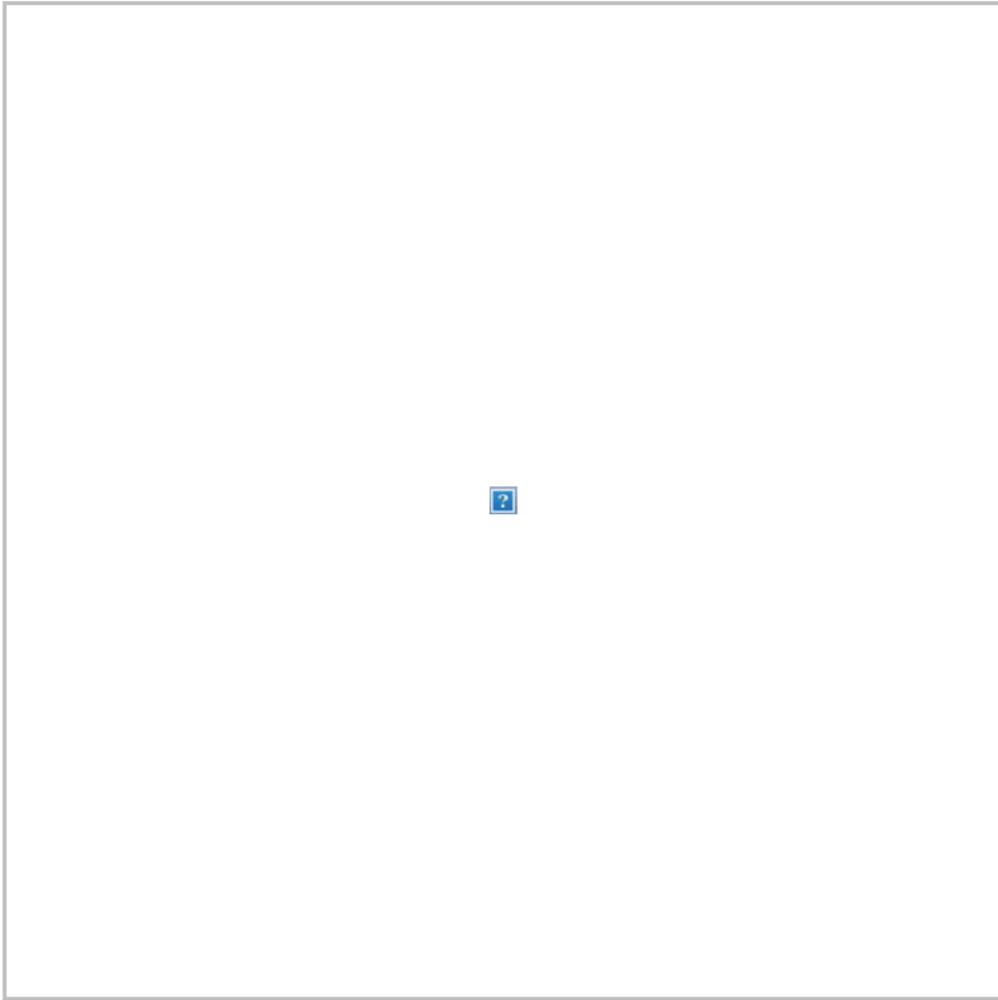
**Deferred Maintenance and Construction.** Parents of students attending Oakland Mills High School, Oakland Mills Middle School, Dunloggin Middle School, along with a number of others have seen maintenance and renovation needs postponed year after year. **Overcrowding is a way of life for over 50% of the Howard County school students** (39 of 77), and a significant number of students go to their classes in portable trailers.

*Why haven't we built needed new schools.* The Maryland legislature bears much of the fault. In the early 1970's, Howard County built a number of new schools, all of which are now 50 years old. The County could afford to build new schools because at that time, if the County contributed more than 25% of the cost of construction, the state would fund the rest, and *the project was NOT subject to the "prevailing wage law."* The Prevailing Wage Law requires union wages be paid to all project workers. ***This adds 20% to 30% more to the cost of the construction and provides no additional benefit.***

Today, thanks to the legislators' need to appease the unions, a county has to pay a full 75% of the cost in order to avoid the Prevailing Wage requirement.

## **Additional Cost of Special Ed**

*Howard County is a magnet for students with disabilities.* The high regard in which Howard County's original Special Education programs were held resulted in the County attracting a clear majority of special ed students. Although the comparative increase since 2014 has been more equal, Howard County still educates 19% of all special education students in the State. This growth has led to a decrease in the ability of Howard County to provide its touted, high-level service. In 2019, the Student:Teacher ratio in special ed climbed to 34.1, and may be even higher today. Special education teachers continue to experience frustration with the difficulty of providing top flight teaching while handling all of the paperwork, IEP meetings, 504 meetings, and every other duty folded into special education, and we are losing good teachers.



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*Special Education staffing includes many professional specialists along with teachers and paraeducators. The additional cost of special education begins with the additional positions that are necessary. In addition to special education teachers, the cost is expanded by all of the specialists necessary to provide everything needed to adequately serve our special need students. Below is a diagram of some of the positions and the number of staff filling those positions hired primarily for the Department of Special Ed*

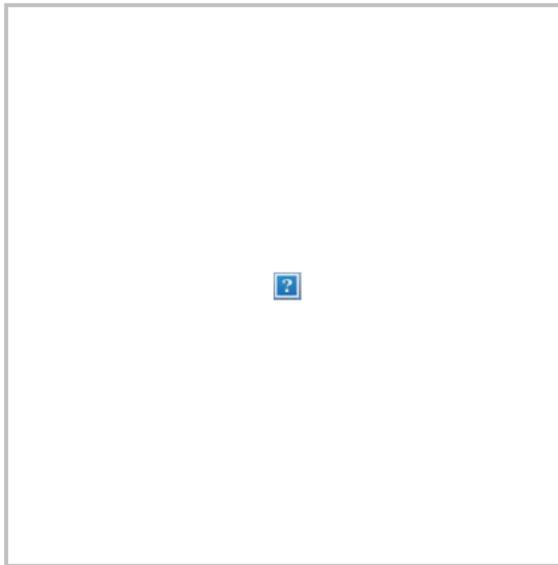


The primary lesson for us, however, is not how much special education costs; providing for every student is both necessary and moral. The issue is to realize how much "additional" spending the school system is *required* to do and is *told* how to do it by the Local, State and Federal governments.

The HCPSS Special Education "*budget is organized into State-mandated categories of expenditures including Administration, Mid-level Administration, Instructional Salaries, Textbooks and Instructional Supplies, Other Instructional Costs, Special Education, Student Personnel Services, Health Services, Student Transportation, Operation of Plant, Maintenance of Plant, Fixed Charges, Community Services, Capital Outlay, and Food Services.*" Expenditures cannot exceed the mandated spending in any category without the consent of the Local government. "*The objective of these budgetary controls is to ensure compliance with legal provisions.*"

Moreover, the salaries of non-teacher professionals almost always exceed those of teachers. For example, the average salary of the 122 psychologists is close to \$120,000. The average salary for teachers is just under \$89,000. Even after accounting for the 10-month (or sometimes 11-month) work year, teacher average salary is just over \$106,000. Teacher benefits may offset some of this difference, but it is discouraging to know that we have to pay much more for so many *indirect academic expenses* rather than for the most important *direct academic expense: teachers.*

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Friends of Trent Kittleman | 3000 Kittleman Lane, West Friendship, MD 21794

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