

Westbrook School Department



**FY 2025
SCHOOL BUDGET PROPOSAL**



March 2024

WESTBROOK SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

117 Stroudwater Street, Westbrook, Maine 04092

207-854-0800 www.westbrookschoools.org

One Promise: The Best Education for All, for Life.



March 6, 2024

Dear friends,

The annual school budget is an opportunity to demonstrate the district's commitment to our mission, vision, values, and goals. With students at the center, the Westbrook School Department FY2025 budget addresses the needs of all learners. It acknowledges the unique identity of our district and the rich tapestry of students we serve. It supports the many abilities, backgrounds, strengths, and needs of our students and the committed educators who care for and teach them every day in multiple ways. The budget recognizes the evolving nature of education, the changes in our community, and the needs for us to develop students who are citizens of a global community. The budget makes a bold statement about the importance of people - our students and staff - and outlines how we continue to work toward and demonstrate our commitment to our mission, vision, values, and priorities as we fulfill our *One Promise: The best education for all, for life.*

THE FY 2025 school budget proposal totals \$51,949,800.24. This is an increase of \$4,158,210.24, or 8.89%, from FY2024. Factors in the increase include several reserve accounts that have been established for contract negotiations and experience increases, costs of health insurance, the new Maine Family Leave, capital improvement, technology repair, new positions in targeted instructional programs, and additional tuition in out-of-district special purpose programs.

This document, along with the 2024 *State of the Schools* report presented in February, offers a context for the FY2025 Budget Proposal. Copies of budget proposals are on the *Proposed FY25 Budget* page of the school department website. Public meetings to review every line and every cost center will be held at WHS Room 114 and on Zoom and Facebook Live throughout the month of March. Please participate in the budget process.

We look forward to working with the community and School Committee to complete a budget that will support all students and will help us tell even greater stories of the Westbrook Schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Peter Lancia, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brian Mazjanis, Director of School Finance
Dr. Kim O'Donnell, Assistant Superintendent

Our Core Beliefs

Mission

ONE PROMISE: THE BEST EDUCATION FOR ALL, FOR LIFE

Vision

The Westbrook School Department believes that education is a partnership among students, staff, families, and the community.

We encourage self-directed learning and individual excellence through student centered activities and interdisciplinary connections.

Within a framework of high expectations, the school environment allows for a variety of opportunities for students to demonstrate what they have learned.

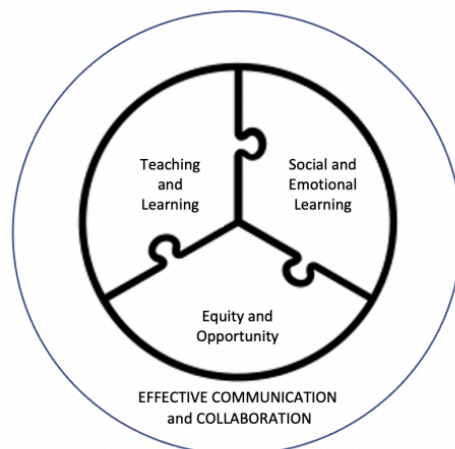
As partners in learning, we all share the responsibility to make this vision a reality in a changing world.

Values

Strong, Innovative Leadership
Intentional, Learner-Centered Teaching
Meaningful, Personalized Learning
Inclusive Culture and Community
Intentional Facilities and Finance

Priorities

Equity and Opportunity
Teaching and Learning
Social and Emotional Learning
Effective Communication and Collaboration



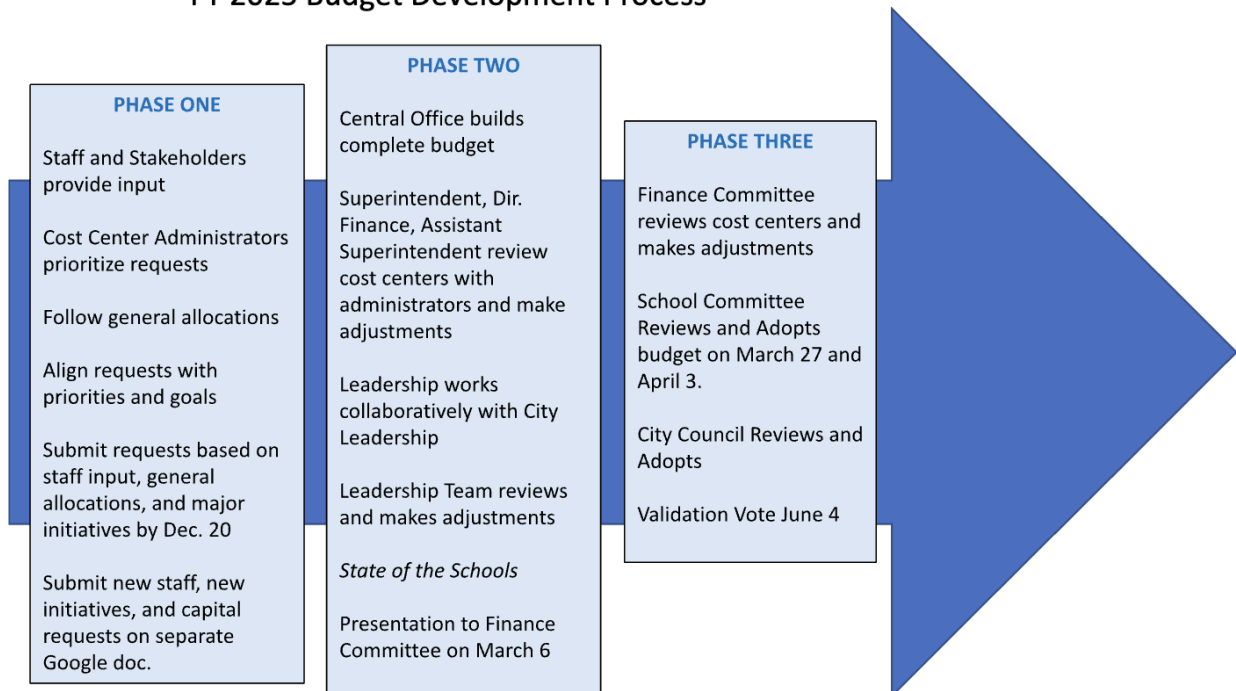
Budget Development Process

The Westbrook School Department's Leadership Team of school principals, department directors, coordinators, and district leaders established the following norms throughout the process.

- 1) We keep students at the center of our discussions and decisions.
- 2) We value all of our employees and the work that they do.
- 3) We follow our mission, vision, values, and priorities in our work.
- 4) We are collaborative and work as a team. We cannot work as isolated buildings, departments, or programs.
- 5) We communicate with each other - principals, directors, district leadership - and collaborate about requests. We are united on plans that involve schools and departments.
- 6) We build consensus and share common messages. *The budget we will create is our budget.*

The timeline for the process was carried out through the end of Phase Two and the proposal as presented.

FY 2025 Budget Development Process



Guidance for budget development was provided to all administrators, including common metrics for funding key areas such as curriculum materials, library books, consumable supplies, and field trips. Some adjustments were made throughout the process, but this served as a beginning step in setting funding levels equitably.

Collaborative Development

Our lengthy budget development process is lengthy, thoughtful, transparent, and collaborative and involves a collaboration with faculty, staff, and school leaders. In November, district staff were sent a survey asking for input and were asked to respond to two questions:

1. What are the greatest needs of the school department and top priorities in developing the budget?
2. What ideas do you have that could help the school department save money, use funds differently, or become more efficient?

70 surveys were submitted, a return of approximately 14%. The Leadership Team analyzed the results of the survey and summarized responses. Priorities included maintaining all staff, the need for market wages and pay for teachers and support staff, the importance of expanding special education and multilingual staffing to meet the increasingly complex needs of our students, revising curriculum areas, and maintaining our renewed commitment to facilities and maintenance. Suggestions for savings and efficiencies included shifting and reorganizing staff, reassigning responsibilities and positions, exploring efficiencies in utilities and facilities, maximizing grant funding, and evaluating the effectiveness of expensive ongoing initiatives.

Additionally, administrators were asked to seek input from their buildings and department staff, helping them prioritize needs in each cost center (school and department) as they developed their individual budgets. While each cost center had unique needs and requests specific to their site or program, similar suggestions emerged and were aligned with the district's beliefs. They became our collective priorities as the budget began to develop as a whole. A system is most effective when its priorities are aligned at all levels of the organization.

Priorities in this Budget

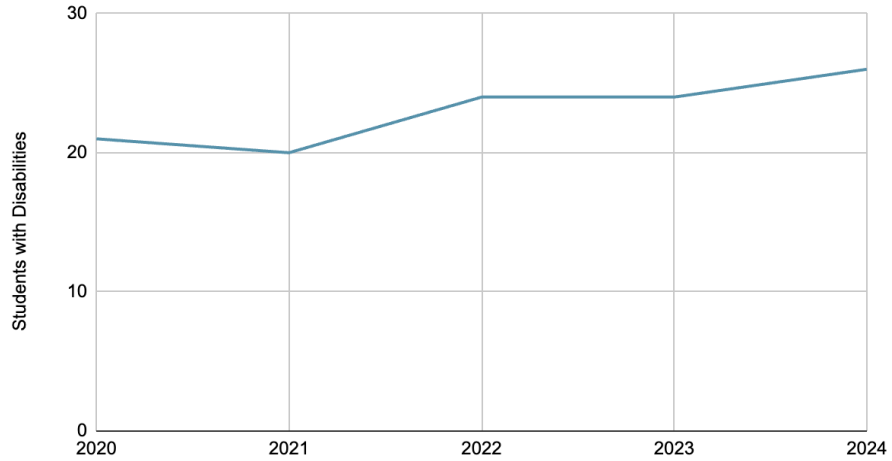
As we present the FY25 Budget proposal, we are aligned in the following three priorities:

- Instruction and Learning for all Students
- Support for our Employees
- Facilities and Safety

Instruction and Learning for All Students. As reported in the *State of the Schools* in February 2024, the needs of our students are becoming increasingly complex. 26% of our students have disabilities and are served in district special education programs. This percentage has increased

steadily in the last five years, and in fact grew in the month since the *State of the Schools* was published.

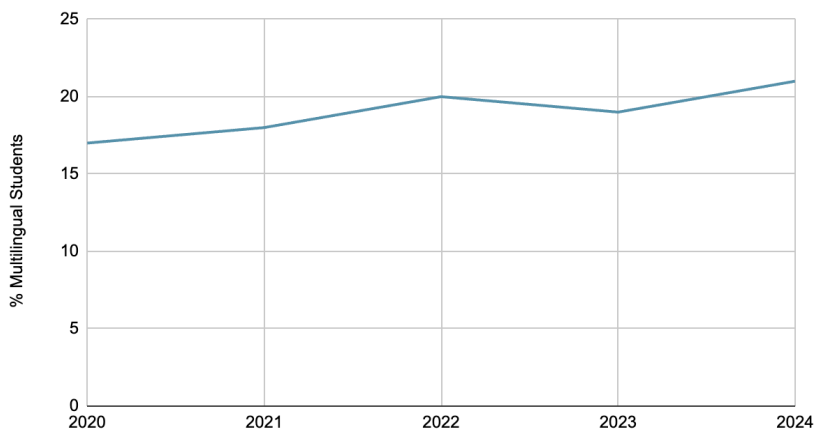
Students with Disabilities



A growing number of students require highly specialized instruction and support from adults. Additionally, 27 students attend special purpose programs outside of the district for which we are obligated to pay tuition.

Our Multilingual population has grown to include over 500 students, to 22% of our total population, the majority of whom have developing English proficiency and require considerable support especially when they attend general education classes.

Multilingual Students



Our academic achievement has increased but is still below average on state assessments in reading and math and our students show gaps in learning. We are in the second year of a new instructional program in math which is beginning to show positive results. We are addressing needed changes to our English Language Arts curriculum, especially in the elementary grades. Ongoing expenses in providing updated curriculum materials, books, and technology, plus the increased costs of consumable supplies, are essential in teaching and learning. While 23% of our high school students are engaged in Early College courses, our graduation rate is strong at 82% in four years and 88% in six years, and 75% percent of our students pursue higher education, many students are credit deficient and lack the executive functioning skills required to complete high school course work independently. Programs in social and emotional learning, namely BARR and PBIS, are providing us with a consistent curriculum and are helping us develop systems for monitoring the progress of students. Still, targeted instruction and intervention is needed to support all students.

The budget includes requests for an Intervention Teacher at WMS, an Intervention Teacher at WHS, a Multilingual Ed Tech at WMS, and 7 Special Education Ed Techs. Other positions were requested but not included in the budget proposal. The ones that were included represent the priorities of the district to meet the needs of special education and monolingual learners and those students who have gaps in instruction. In addition, \$571,296 has been allocated to support our growing population of students in need of out of district programming. Some requests for staff, technology, and materials have been allocated to grant funded sources.

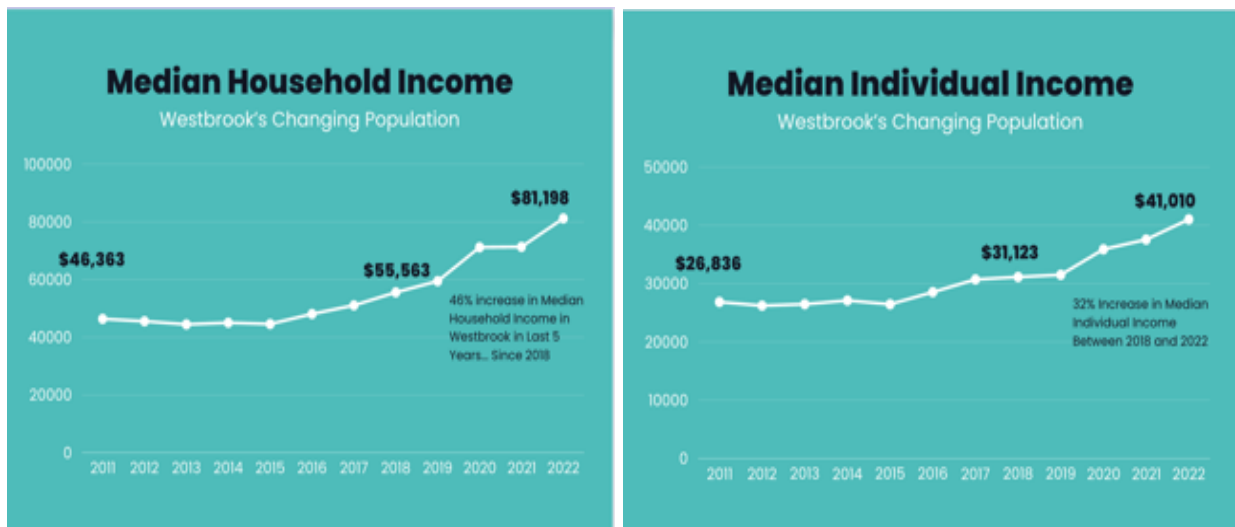
Additionally, ongoing instructional expenses have increased, including the cost of repairs to technology for which the district has now assumed responsibility rather than charging families for insurance.

Support for Employees. We have 509 employees, all of whom are essential in supporting the needs of all children. Contracts for all teachers and support staff (Ed Techs, School Nutrition staff, Custodians, Transportation Staff, and Administrative Assistants), as well as most Central Office and District-Wide Staff working agreements are expiring. This represents all but 18 employees. Salaries and wages in the budget have been included to include anticipated experience step or lane change for our employees. However no cost of living increases have been included as that is under negotiation with the Westbrook Education Association. Negotiations are underway with teachers and will begin soon with the other bargaining unit and individuals. As part of negotiations, we review and compare the salaries and pay rates for comparable positions in our market, Cumberland County. Westbrook salaries and wages are below those of other schools in our market. This is impacting our ability to hire and retain educators who can make a higher salary in a neighboring district.

The following chart compares beginning salaries to area school communities:

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| | Teacher Beginning BA | Bus Driver | Beginning | Cook | Beginning |
| Yarmouth | 48,738 | Yarmouth | 24.55 | Yarmouth | 21.84 |
| Falmouth | 48,159 | Brubnswick | 26.5 | Brunswick | 20.69 |
| Cape Elizabeth | 48,088 | Bonny Eagle | 23.55 | Freeport | 19.02 |
| Brunswick | 47,000 | Freeport | 21.89 | Portland | 18.77 |
| Scarborough | 46,774 | AVERAGE | 21.8 | AVERAGE | 18.63 |
| GNG (SAD 15) | 45,000 | Cape | 22.45 | Cape | 19.31 |
| AVERAGE | 44,848 | So Portland | 22.3 | Scarbnorough | 17.95 |
| Portland | 44,498 | Gorham | 22.13 | So Portland | 18.36 |
| So Portland | 44,386 | Falmouth | 20.9 | Gorham | 18.59 |
| Windham (RSU14) | 43,839 | Scarborough | 21.37 | Westbrook | 15.43 |
| Freeport (RSU 5) | 43,771 | GNG | 20.41 | Bonny Eagle | 16.37 |
| Gorham | 43,556 | Westbrook | 18.33 | | |
| Westbrook | 43,440 | Portland | 17.27 | | |
| Bonny Eagle (SAD 6) | 41,451 | | | | |
| Ed Tech III | Beginning | Admin Asst | Beginning | Lead Custodian | Beginning |
| Brunswick | 22.8 | Brunswick | 27.24 | Brunswick | 24.34 |
| Freeport | 19.77 | So Portland | 24.92 | Yarmouth | 23.99 |
| Yarmouth | 20.47 | Yarmouth | 24.11 | Gorham | 20.06 |
| Gorham | 20.18 | Freeport | 20.14 | Scarborough | 22.39 |
| Westbrook | 19.79 | Portland | 22.36 | Cape | 21.42 |
| AVERAGE | 19.77 | AVERAGE | 21.24 | AVERAGE | 20.59 |
| Scarborough | 19.59 | Gorham | 20.18 | Bonny Eagle | 20.18 |
| Bonny Eagle | 19.07 | Scarborough | 19.8 | Freeport | 20.77 |
| GNG | 18.96 | Falmouth | 19.73 | So Portland | 20.34 |
| Portland | 18.94 | Westbrook | 19.11 | Portland | 19.42 |
| Falmouth | 20.24 | Bonny Eagle | 19 | Westbrook | 18.24 |
| So Portland | 17.73 | GNG | 17.14 | Yarmouth | 18.15 |
| | | | | GNG | 17.78 |

We have also seen the household and individual income in Westbrook increase considerably since 2011.



We offer an outstanding benefits package, but rates continue to increase and are not announced at this time. Additionally, Governor Mills included a new Family Medical Leave benefit across the state which will become effective in January 2025. While this is a good benefit for employees, it is a challenge for employers who must allocate 1% of its annual budget for potential leave in what amounts to an unfunded payroll tax. In addition to wages, we have a responsibility to provide for continued education for our employees through professional development. This is provided through Choice Learning PLCs, workshops and training, college and graduate classes, and instructional coaching at all of our schools.

The budget includes requests for one intervention teacher at WHS, one intervention teacher at WMS, seven Ed Techs I and/or III in Special Education, and one Ed tech III in the Multilingual program. Additionally there are several reserve accounts associated with employees as final costs of wages and benefits are still undetermined due to ongoing negotiations: \$2.2 million for contract negotiations, \$309,234.80 for staff experience step increases, \$609,416, or an estimated 10%, for health insurance increases, and \$134,951, or .5% of payroll for half year of Maine's Family Leave Act which goes into effect on January 1, 2025.

Facilities and Maintenance. In 2021, Westbrook established a Capital Improvement Plan. This was an aggressive, prioritized plan that would address unanticipated and overdue maintenance projects as well as ongoing preventative work to enhance the quality and longevity of our facilities. This has been successful in completing overdue projects as well as unanticipated costs such as the 2021 WHS restoration project following a fire, security upgrades, and the 2023 WPAC mold remediation project. The schools participated in the 2023 city Capital Improvement Plan and bonded \$906,720 in projects. Additionally, a 2022 SRRF provided low

interest bonding for some projects, all of which have been included in debt service. Currently debt service is \$2,908,238 principal and \$1,093,095 interest for major capital and \$58,336 principal and \$69,599 for minor capital.

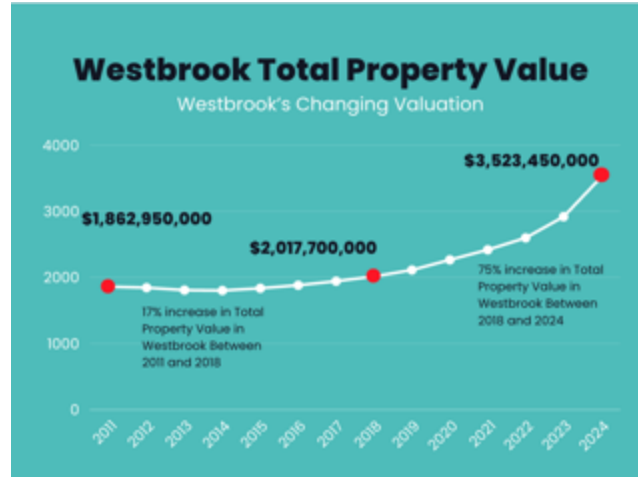
The budget includes 0.5% of the FY24 budget or \$234,000 for capital and general contingencies. These funds are set aside to address unanticipated needs such as we have seen over the last few years (i.e. fire at WHS, HVAC issues at WMS, and mold at WPAC or increased out of district placements in special education.)

State Subsidy and Enterprise Programs

While a school department does not generate considerable revenue aside from state subsidy, federal funding, special purpose grants, and occasional facility rental fees, as well as revenue from enterprise programs such as Adult Education, School Nutrition, and the Westbrook Performing Arts Center.

State Subsidy is calculated through the state's Essential Programs and Services model which Maine DoE defines as "the programs and resources that are essential for students to have an equitable opportunity to achieve Maine's Learning Results. The EPS formula determines both the state and local share of funding needed for each School Administrative Unit (SAU) to have Essential Programs and Services. The funding formula is designed to respond to student needs and is based on years of research and information gleaned from high-performing, cost-effective school units." It is reported on the ED 279 form. The state contribution to FY 2025, after adjustments for CTE, our participation in a local service center, and multilingual learner hardship and subtracting Mainecare seed funds for public and private schools, the state's contribution is \$19,579,784, or 48.97% of EPS. As a total contribution this is relatively flat from FY24 in which Westbrook received \$19,590,865 but as a percentage this is down from last year's state contribution of 51.11%. The local minimum EPS contribution has risen from 49.89% in FY 24 to 51.03% in FY25

Two factors influenced the calculation of subsidy. First, Westbrook property valuation has increased by \$239,233,334, about 10%, from FY 2024. This has caused the local contribution to increase.



Second, subsidies for students with special needs and multilingual learners has increased due to our increased number of students requiring specialized programming. The increased student need has balanced increased property value. Otherwise, the state subsidy would have been further decreased.

Additional funding sources contribute to our operations. These include:

- ESSERF, through September 30, 2024
- IDEA and Local Entitlement for Special Education
- ESSA for Title I, II, III, and IV
- Carl Perkins for CTE programming
- MDoE Literacy Grant to support literacy curriculum, professional development, books and materials
- MDoE SEL Grant to fund BARR initiative implementation
- Several MDoE, federal, and local grants to support Adult Education

We continue to identify and seek grants to provide funding for our programs, facilities, and student services.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

The FY 2025 budget proposal amounts to \$51,949,800.54. This is an increase of \$4,158,210.24, or 8.89%, from FY2024. While this is an increase, it represents the following:

- \$2,200,000 reserve for contract negotiations
- \$609,416 reserve for increases to costs of insurance
- \$234,000 reserve for capital projects and general contingency
- \$78,686 reserve for additional tuition to Out of District Special Ed programs
- \$80,000 reserve for laptop repair
- \$420,000 for new staff
- \$134,951 for Maine Family Leave

Without these additions (\$3,757,053), the increase would be approximately \$401,157, or less than a 1% increase

The Leadership Team has developed the budget according to its priorities and has already made reductions or have determined that some requests could be being funded by alternate sources, as noted.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|
| Intervention Teacher at WMS | \$70,000 | Reduction. Will be considered in FY26 |
| Social Studies Teacher at WHS | \$70,000 | Reduction. Will be considered in FY26 |
| Admin Assistant at WMS | \$50,000 | Reduction |
| Restorative Learning Teacher at WMS | \$70,000 | Reduction |
| Curriculum Coordinator | \$70,000 | Reduction. Will be considered in FY26 |
| Data and Information Manager | \$85,000 | Reduction. Will be considered in FY26 |

| | | |
|---|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 3 intervention Teachers (Congin, Canal, Sacc) | \$210,000 | Fund through Title I |
| Laptops for Grade 9 and Staff | \$89,055 | Fund through ESSERF |
| 1 Vacant Teaching Position | \$70,000 | Fund through Title I if needed |
| 2 Teaching Positions at Sacc | \$140,000 | Fund through Title i |
| Summer School Programming at WHS | \$20,000 | Fund through ESSERF |
| BARR Initiative | \$65,000 | Fund through MDoE SEL Grant |
| Literacy Materials and Guided Reading Books | \$5,000 | Fund through MDoE Literacy Grant |
| Materials for WRVC | \$25,000 | Fund through Perkins Grant |

Next Steps

This year, the Finance Committee will discuss the budget by school, district-wide costs, and enterprise programs. This is intended to reflect the total cost of each cost center that incorporates other departments and programs such as special education and multilingual programs or technology. Additionally, the Leadership Team will be present at budget review meetings to respond to questions and will research requests for additional information. We look forward to sharing our budget that supports the needs of our students.

