

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS ON THE FY 2009 BUDGET**

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Good evening.

For a number of reasons, including the apparent flux in this year's budget, the best way to formulate the FY 2009 budget would be to build it from the schools up, and then go back to this year's actual resource allocation to determine whether and how you can get from now to next year's draft plan. This second step is necessary because most personnel and some non-personnel carry over automatically by default.

I believe that the Common Practice studies done by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) can be helpful in this process. These studies build proto-typical elementary, middle and senior high schools from the bottom up, not to tell schools how to allocate their funding, but to try to determine the adequacy, or at least the purchasing power of the City's Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF). The attached tables, taken from the last study, show the assumptions used in building per student costs based on various benchmarks. At the end of the process these educational resources are costed-out. These were recommended resources only; the Mayor rejected the recommendations and used the previous UPSFF factors updated for inflation.

The table below compares the FY 2008 per student dollar amounts allocated by the UPSFF as recommended (but not accepted), the UPSFF as used by the Mayor, and DCPS' own budget allocation. It covers (1) local school -- Weighted Student Formula (WSF) -- staff and supplies and (2) utilities plus maintenance.

	Formulae			Per student differences			
	Recom- mended UPSFF	Actual UPSFF	DCPS	Recom'd UPSFF vs WSF	Actual UPSFF vs. WSF	Recom'd vs. Actual UPSFF	
Total local funds							
Per student base	\$ 8,846	\$ 8,322				\$ 524	
Average per student planned	\$ 9,563	\$ 9,036					
WSF functions general education only	Recom- mended UPSFF	Actual UPSFF	DCPS WSF				
UPSFF grade spans				WSF grade spans			
Pre-school	\$ 10,118	\$ 7,334	\$ 5,970	Pre-school	\$ 4,148	\$ 1,364	\$ 2,784
PreK/K	\$ 9,051	\$ 7,334	\$ 5,970	PreK/K	\$ 3,081	\$ 1,364	\$ 1,717
Grades 1-3	\$ 6,765	\$ 6,284	\$ 5,970	Grades 1-2	\$ 795	\$ 314	\$ 481
Grades 4-5	\$ 6,738	\$ 6,058	\$ 5,518	Grades 3-6	\$ 1,220	\$ 540	\$ 680
Grades 6-8	\$ 6,661	\$ 5,670	\$ 5,413	Grades 7-8	\$ 1,248	\$ 257	\$ 992
Grades 9-12	\$ 7,241	\$ 6,099	\$ 5,413	Grades 9-12	\$ 1,828	\$ 686	\$ 1,142
Average							
Other functions	Recom'd UPSFF	Actual UPSFF	DCPS Other				
Utilities							
Elementary	\$ 389	\$ 332					
Middle	\$ 441	\$ 376					
Senior high	\$ 519	\$ 442					
Average			\$ 921				
Maintenance							
Elementary	\$ 324	\$ 337					
Middle	\$ 384	\$ 400					
Senior high	\$ 472	\$ 491					
Average (FY 2007)			\$ 537				

Caveat: The table needs to be re-costed in order to

- Update average salary/benefits costs for staff with current data
- Align the resources with current educational and operations plans
- Account for service responsibilities shifted to other city agencies, such as the Office of the State Superintendent and the Office of Attorney General.

As to resources funded through the WSF, the UPSFF as recommended would have provided sufficient funding at each proto-typical school for:

- Average class sizes of 20 in grades 1-3, 22 in grades 4-8, and 18-32, depending on subject in high schools, covering new Carnegie unit graduation requirements
- Early childhood staffing meeting accreditation standards

- Substitute teachers paid at suburban rates
- A literacy and a math coach at each proto-typical school
- Art, music, PE for all students
- A librarian
- A counselor, social worker, or psychologist for each 200 elementary, 100 middle, and 200 senior high students
- Secondary school attendance counselors and computer lab coordinators
- Senior high academy coordinators
- Principal's office staff comparable to that of benchmark districts
- Supplies and materials spending comparable to those of benchmark districts
- A custodian for each 18,000 square feet but with square footage calculated on the basis of enrollment, not actual square footage, which is currently much larger

The basis for central office and centrally funded services is set forth briefly in the tables.

Findings and conclusions based on the comparisons:

- After updating for current costs, inflation and transfers to other agencies, DCPS should request at least the amount in the recommended UPSFF; there is nothing extravagant in it.
- Early childhood education: Both the actual FY 2008 UPSFF funding and DCPS WSF seriously underfund the staffing required by national accreditation standards. A summary of research on resource standards for early childhood classrooms is attached. Headstart funds fill the gap only in part.
- The UPSFF funds senior high school students at a higher rate than elementary or middle, based on the cost of reasonable class sizes for Carnegie unit requirements, the knowledge that a full senior high program inevitably requires some small classes, especially for advanced, remedial and vocational education courses, and widespread national practice. DCPS follows a different course, preferring to fund elementary grades at a higher per student rate than secondary.
- DCPS allocation of resources: the action FY 2008 UPSFF provides more funding for WSF general education functions than DCPS allocates for them. The gap in grades 1-12 ranges from \$257 to \$686 per student.
- At the same time, the actual FY 2008 UPSFF provides far less funding per student than DCPS allocates for facilities. The Formula provides \$332-\$442 per student for utilities, depending on grade level, while the DCPS budget is about \$921 per student. The Formula provides \$337-\$491 per student for maintenance compared to \$537 per student budgeted for last year. These gaps are a function of the large amount of excess space in DCPS facilities, compared to the square footage recommended in the old master facilities plan – which is the UPSFF assumption:

	Elementary	Middle	Senior high
UPSFF/MFP	150	170	200
Actual FY 2007	232	386	303

The rest of the DCPS budget subsidizes a gap of probably about \$40 million, or \$750 a pupil.

Two further notes: First, contrary to the assertions of some City officials, local schools are not over-staffed. The system has decreased school staff in line with enrollment decline; between FY 2003 and FY 2005 875 teacher jobs were eliminated.¹ Moreover, some schools sacrificed librarians, counselors, special subject teachers and other educational staff to have smaller classes. Second, I attach the latest update on a paper about per student costs – the factors to be considered in evaluating them, different bases for calculating them, and comparisons with our suburbs and school districts nationally. Again contrary to the assertions of some City officials, DCPS is not the highest spending district in the nation. Over 30 larger districts, including our neighbors Alexandria and Arlington, spent more per pupil in FY 2005 according to Census Bureau/NCES published figures. Nor is DC the highest spending state. Without geographic cost adjustments DC was #3, behind the average in New York and New Jersey; with geographic cost adjustments, DC was #9, behind states including Pennsylvania, Wyoming, and Montana.

I am available to answer questions and to work with you and your staff on budget matters at any time. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

¹ This calculation is based on Schedule A documents issued by the CFO's Office. These Schedule As were compiled by manual cross checking of employee names and positions in payroll, staffing plans, and other documents, and are the most accurate data available for the years in question.