1. Can we include the estimated tuition savings for families due to dual credit programs in the budget discussion?

Yes. The board's investment in dual credit programs since 2021 has resulted in an estimated $30.6 million in tuition savings for students and their families. This calculation is based on the average cost of in-state college tuition and reflects the significant financial benefit of providing students

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2. Do we have data showing how student safety costs have shifted from the safety tax to the general fund over time?

Yes. For the FY25 school year, the safety tax generated $18,620,110. However, the total cost to implement the 10-point safety plan is $27,728,902. This leaves a remaining $9,108,792 that must be covered by the general fund. This demonstrates an increasing reliance on the general fund to support safety initiatives beyond what the dedicated tax provides.

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3. What cost-saving initiatives have been implemented at JDP, and how do our district administrative costs compare to peer districts?

For FY25, Fayette County Public Schools' district administration costs total an estimated $8,193,615, representing approximately 1.2% of the district's overall budget. In the FY26 budget, we are proposing a 20% reduction in non-campus-based administrative budgets, and are restructuring, combining several positions through attrition, which will result in further cost savings. By comparison, FY24 administrative cost percentages for other districts are:

- Boone County: 2.6%
- Jefferson County: .7%
- Scott County: 3.2%
- Warren County: 1.5%

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4. What will the average teacher salary be if the 1% raise and step increase are approved?

If the proposed 1% raise and step increase are implemented, the average teacher salary for FY26 will be approximately $73,586, up from the current average of $70,813. This would place FCPS above the national average starting teacher salary and national average teacher salary.

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5. Since the legislature stopped funding professional development in 2018, what has this cost the district?

Prior to 2018, the district received state funding for professional development, with annual amounts varying based on the legislative budgeting process. From 2014 to 2017, the district received an average of approximately $285,000 per year, with some years reaching nearly $1 million. The state eliminated this funding six years ago despite continued mandates requiring educators to complete at least 24 hours of annual training.

To meet these requirements and ensure ongoing professional growth, the district has absorbed the full cost of professional learning and development, totaling $985,176 in FY25 alone. High-quality professional learning remains a cornerstone of our district's success, equipping staff with the tools, strategies, and knowledge to meet the evolving needs of our students. It is a high-impact investment that consistently yields strong returns in student achievement and overall school improvement.

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6. Has the board ever opted to take the compensating tax rate instead of an increase? If so, what was the long-term impact?

Yes. In 2010, the board chose the compensating rate. Had they instead opted to increase the rate to include 4% additional revenue that year, FCPS would have an estimated additional $103 million in its current budget. This is quite a conservative number considering it excludes the impact of property value appreciation since then.

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7. How does FCPS compare to other districts facing the end of grant-funded services?

Like many school districts across Kentucky and the nation, we are navigating the financial challenges brought on by the expiration of federal relief funds. However, thanks to proactive planning and sound fiscal management, FCPS remains in a stronger financial position than many of our peers.

For example, Jefferson County Public Schools are reportedly facing significant strain, with over $114 million in strategic cuts proposed for the upcoming school year. Warren County is working to close a $1.6 million budget gap, while Covington Independent Schools is trying to balance increasing operational costs and inflation, all while attempting to fund long-overdue facility improvements.

Berea Independent Schools is eliminating over 30 staff positions across all school levels including reductions in special education services, and the discontinuation of certain programs. These examples reflect a broader trend across the state and the country, as districts confront difficult decisions in the absence of temporary federal funding and overall inflation.

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8. Will the district continue funding a full-time McKinney-Vento Coordinator to support students experiencing homelessness?

There will be one full-time and two part-time positions dedicated to McKinney-Vento support. These team members will be part of the Student Support Team and will provide a range of services to meet the unique needs of our students and families who are experiences homelessness and/or housing insecurity.

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9. Will the district maintain the $30 million in discretionary staffing allocations despite the cancellation of Summer Ignite?

Yes. Staffing formulas for campuses have not changed, and the $30 million in discretionary staffing remains in the budget. However, no increases to these allocations are being recommended at this time.

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10. Can the board receive a list of ESSER/grant-funded positions and recommendations for continuation?

Yes. This can be provided but there are no ESSER-funded positions in the current budget (FY25) so there is no transition into the FY26 general fund. Most of these positions we cut after the FY23 budget.

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11. What is the contingency plan for the three new magnet programs if grant funding is reduced or eliminated?

Currently, there is no contingency plan to absorb the full cost of the new magnet programs if federal funding is lost. The loss of all federal funds would require a complete budget overhaul, as it would create a $57 million deficit that cannot be covered by the existing general fund. If that were to occur, those programs would have to be reconsidered as part of the district's instructional and magnet school offerings.

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12. How will the district evaluate the long-term sustainability of grant-funded programs, especially with new schools coming online?

Beginning in FY26, district leadership and the board will engage in ongoing conversations about long-term fiscal sustainability. Factors such as inflation, increased staffing costs due to higher years of experience, and new facility operations, amid flat enrollment, necessitate careful planning to ensure responsible budgeting and delivery of services both in the near and distant future.

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13. If Title II funding were lost, could the Grow Your Own program continue in the short term?

The Grow Your Own initiative is primarily supported through Title II funding, and at this time, the general fund does not have the capacity to absorb those costs. If Title II funding were to be discontinued, the district would make every effort to honor our commitment to employees already enrolled in the program for that semester. However, without an alternative funding source, we would likely be unable to continue or expand the program beyond those individuals or beyond the current semester. The program would ultimately have to be reimagined.

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14. Are there any recommended cuts to Grow Your Own, Dual Credit, or AVID programs?

No. At this point in the budgeting process, no cuts have been proposed for Grow Your Own, Dual Credit, or AVID. These remain priorities of the board, and therefore priorities of district administration.

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15. Will additional funds be included in the budget to cover unpaid school lunch balances due to loss of CEP eligibility and rising meal costs?

Yes, an additional $1 million has been allocated to the general fund to cover unpaid student meal balances and rising food costs. However, this approach is not sustainable long-term. As we continue discussions around fiscal sustainability, an increase in lunch prices and other options, will need to be part of that conversation.

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16. Does the proposed budget include funding for five additional SROs or cellular bi-directional amplifiers?

No, the current budget does not include funding for the five additional school resource officers. However, the purchase of a Bi-Directional Amplifier (BDA) for Paul Laurence Dunbar High School has been approved using Safety Tax funds and is scheduled for purchase on July 1, 2025. The estimated cost is $62,817.85, based on a quote from AMK Services.

We will once again request a waiver from the Kentucky Department of Education for not meeting the “one officer per campus” requirement, an unfunded mandate issued by the General Assembly.

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17. Will the $250 Classroom Support Initiative for teachers continue?

Yes. This initiative remains included in the current tentative budget.

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18. Are inflationary cost increases accounted for in the FY26 tentative budget?

Yes. Known and anticipated inflationary impacts have been factored into the FY26 budget. However, if unexpected cost increases arise, we will make necessary adjustments to the budget during the year.

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19. Is the district recommending the elimination of full-time building substitute positions at each school?

No. While this was previously explored as a potential cost-saving measure, we are establishing internal parameters and processes to ensure the initiative remains in the tentative budget as either cost-neutral or cost-saving. We will continue to fund permanent substitute positions for certified staff, though not for classified roles. This remains a highly valued program among principals and is a top priority for the Budget and Finance Committee, ranking just after teacher and staff raises and adjustments to the FRYSC salary schedule.

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20. Are there reductions proposed for staff travel (excluding student travel)?

Non-campus budgets have been reduced by approximately 20%, while campus budgets remain unchanged. Although no district-wide directive has been issued specifically limiting travel, we do anticipate a natural decrease in travel due to overall budget reductions. Departments are expected to prioritize spending and make necessary adjustments to support essential professional learning and compliance needs.

Professional learning remains a district priority, as it continues to demonstrate a strong return on investment in improving instructional practices and student outcomes.

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21. When will the board receive a detailed list of budget reductions, including any central office realignments?

The Board received a detailed list of recommended reductions in the FY26 budget as part of the budget presentation. In addition, a revised organizational chart reflecting central office reductions will be published prior to the start of the new school year.

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22. Will the general fund include increased funding for building maintenance due to recent weather events and facility aging?

Despite increased public reporting and communication, maintenance needs have remained constant consistent with the district's size and aging facilities. With $650 million in unmet facility needs, the Board has been very intentional about addressing its aging infrastructure within its financial constraints. Since 2021-2022, general fund maintenance spending increased by 24% and general fund adjustments for inflation continue to be made. Funds from the third facility nickel have been used to replace HVAC systems at Booker T. Washington Elementary, Harrison Elementary, Lexington Traditional Middle, and Northern Elementary. As needed, additional recommendations will be made to the board to address deferred maintenance.

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23. Is there a proposal to increase funding for instrument maintenance?

No. The FY26 budget does not include any changes, either increases or decreases, to instrument maintenance funding.

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24. Can you share information about the change of the district-unity lead supplemental duty position and the district-student efficacy lead position? Are these roles being absorbed by other school-level roles/positions? Is this a part of the 20% JDP department reductions?

These reductions are in addition to the 20% budget cut. We found that many of these positions were also receiving supplementary pay for overlapping roles and responsibilities, such as serving as sponsors for GSA, BSU, and similar programs. Additionally, this was previously funded through ESSER, and with those funds now ending, it is no longer sustainable within the general fund.

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25. If the board accepts the recommendation to remove district-provided long-term disability insurance for the budget, will staff have an opportunity to add this benefit to their package during an open enrollment period?

Yes. Staff will be given the opportunity to add long-term disability coverage to their benefits package.

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26. What is the feedback from the Budget and Finance committee members, and how has it impacted this tentative budget draft?

Based on the feedback from the Budget and Finance Committee, the top three priorities are: staff raises, adjustments to the FRYSC salary schedule, and maintaining permanent substitute teachers at school campuses. To view the full list of committee feedback, click HERE

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27. Does this tentative budget draft include costs to continue the replacement/refresh cycles for student Chromebooks? (a) Will all schools/students remain 1-to-1 with Chromebooks, or is this at the school's discretion?

Yes, the tentative budget draft does include funding to support the replacement and refresh cycle for student Chromebooks; however, the allocation is not as robust as in previous budgets. Despite this, we are committed to maintaining a 1-to-1 student-to-Chromebook ratio as a districtwide initiative. This is not left to individual school discretion. Every school and student will continue to be supported under the district's one-to-one technology model.

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28. What are the primary factors that have led to the district's anticipated budget challenges, and who holds responsibility for the situation??

The anticipated budget situation for fiscal year 2026 is the result of several converging factors, rather than the actions of any one individual or group. Key contributors include extreme rising operational costs due to inflation, the expiration of federal ESSER (pandemic relief) funds, and state and federal funding that has not kept pace with the increasing demands placed on public schools.

Additionally, a growing number of unfunded mandates, requirements imposed by the state without corresponding funding, have placed added strain on our general fund. Another cause is the cost of safety measures from the 10-Point Safety Plan. While the district has a dedicated Safety Tax, many critical safety initiatives exceed what that revenue source can cover, and the overflow is being absorbed by the general budget.

Over the past few years, we've made intentional, student-centered investments, such as aligning staff salaries with market values, enhancing academic enrichment opportunities, and expanding student support services. These were the right decisions and have produced strong returns, including increased and, in many cases, historic levels of student achievement.

Ultimately, responsibility for the anticipated challenges lies with broader systemic funding structures at the state and federal levels, which have not kept pace with the rising demands placed on public education. Economic pressures, including record inflation, increased costs for goods and services, and revenue that has not kept pace with inflation, have further compounded these challenges.

As a district, we remain committed to transparency, strategic prioritization, and long-term financial sustainability, all while continuing to meet the evolving needs of our students, staff, and community.