

Cincinnati Public Schools

Program Name:	Student-Based Budgeting
Implemented:	1999-2000 School Year
Program Type:	District-Wide
Legal Authorization:	School Board Policy

School Empowerment Benchmarks		
1.	School budgets based on students not staffing	yes
2.	Charge schools actual versus average salaries	no
3.	School choice and open enrollment policies	yes
4.	Principal autonomy over budgets	yes
5.	Principal autonomy over hiring	no
6.	Principal training and school-level management support	yes
7.	Published transparent school-level budgets	yes
8.	Published transparent school-level outcomes	yes
9.	Explicit accountability goals	yes
10.	Collective bargaining relief—flat contracts, etc.	no
Cincinnati met 7 out of 10 school empowerment benchmarks.		



I. Program Overview

Cincinnati public schools serve about 34,790 students in preschool through 12th grade. Student demographics in the Cincinnati public schools include 71 percent African-American, 23 percent White, 4 percent multi-racial and 1.5 percent Hispanic. In Cincinnati 66 percent of students are qualified for the free or reduced price lunch program and less than 3 percent are English language learners.

Cincinnati public schools are among only a few school districts nationwide to pioneer the use of student-based budgeting. After three years of discussion and development, student-based budgeting—a new way of distributing resources—took effect in the 1999-2000 school year.¹

Unlike the previous centrally controlled allocation system that resulted in wide swings in funding levels from school to school, dollars follow the student under student-based budgeting. A key premise of student-based budgeting is that all students with the same level of need receive the same level of funding within school categories. Money to schools follows the students—meaning a school's budget is tied to its enrollment in each student category—and schools determine how allotted money is spent.

The bottom line is greater equity for students and schools. By equalizing the per-pupil funding amounts within major student categories, the district took an important step toward closing the equity gap that existed among schools.

The primary focus is improving student achievement to help all students meet or exceed standards. The district is now funding the student, not the school, so that every student with the same educational

need receives the same dollars, even if that student moves to another school. Before student-based budgeting, the district funded staff that were deployed to schools to teach.

Besides being a fairer system of funding schools, student-based budgeting is designed to motivate schools to keep current students and attract additional ones. Enrollment is measured three times a year, with budgets adjusted accordingly. Revenue is adjusted for decreases as well as increases in enrollment. Student-based budgeting ties a school's funding to its enrollment. As a result, the majority of each school's funding—75 to 80 percent—is distributed through student-based allocations.

II. Student-Based Budgeting Formula

The bulk of each school's funding is allocated on a per-student basis. These funds are used to pay for essential personnel for classrooms and educational support and for administrative, clerical and maintenance positions as well as routine instructional and administrative goods and services. Students at different grade levels are given different weights. Some groups of students such as gifted, students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, low income or vocational, receive higher weights because of higher educational costs.

The base weight for K-12 students is 1.0 with K-3 students and grades 9-12 getting an additional .2 weight.² In addition, the district will provide incremental weights for 2009-2010 for students with disabilities, English language learners, gifted students, poorer students and students in career path participation. Cincinnati public schools

had suspended the student-based budgeting process for fiscal year 2009 in order to centrally manage a large budget deficit. The district is reinstating student-based budgeting for the 2009-2010 school year.

III. Autonomy

In Cincinnati, about 60 percent of the school district's operational budget is spent at the school level. Through the student-based budgeting portion of the school-level budget principals control close to 80 percent of school resources.³

In Cincinnati public schools principals do not have complete discretion over staffing and hiring practices. The union contract stipulates hiring regulations that include placing teachers in positions based on tenure.

IV. School-Level Management Support

Cincinnati public schools contract out school leadership development through the Mayerson Academy which provides the district training for teachers, principals and the school site councils. The Mayerson Academy organizes professional development based on the Ohio standards for principals, including:

Standard 1:	Continuous Improvement
Standard 2:	Instruction
Standard 3:	School Operations, Resources and Learning Environment
Standard 4:	Collaboration
Standard 5:	Parents and Community Engagement

V. School Site Council

Each school has a Local School Decision Making Committee (LSDMC) that is responsible for offering suggestions on the school's budget, helping to set school goals and sometimes selecting a new principal. The Board of Education has adopted a policy outlining the function of LSDMCs. Their role includes:

- adopting bylaws, including the school's mission and vision
- setting measurable school goals, based on a needs assessment
- developing a broad plan (OnePlan) to implement those goals
- completing mid-year and end-of-year goal progress reports
- making recommendations and approving the school's budget
- participating in the selection of the principal, when a vacancy exists
- approving locally initiated changes in the school's program or focus
- making recommendations to the principal regarding other school issues
- seeking grants to support the school's programs (optional)

Membership is composed of four major constituencies, with a minimum of 12 members. The groups include:

- three parents
- three community members
- three teachers
- three non-teaching staff, including the principal

At least one annual meeting is required to review the purpose of the LSDMC and the OnePlan. However, it is recommended

that the LSDMC meet monthly during the school year. All meetings are held at the school and are open to the public.

VI. School Choice Component

Students are assigned to neighborhood elementary schools according to residential addresses. The district determines the boundaries for each neighborhood school. Elementary students may also choose between 19 magnet elementary schools offering programs such as the arts, foreign language and Montessori, attracting students throughout the district who are interested in these specific areas. Magnet programs are offered either to students living anywhere in the district (citywide) or to students living in a specific area (quadrant).

There are no school assignments based on address at the high school level. Instead, students select from 16 high-school programs with special focuses leading students into careers and higher education. Cincinnati public schools host school fairs and open houses to allow students to learn about their elementary and high school choices.

VII. Accountability

The main mechanism for accountability is school-level transparency. The district offers parents a financial and academic report of every school in the district through an online “dashboard” that displays various district performance indicators. In addition, every parent in the district has access to an online program called Parent-Connect that offers real-time access to their student’s progress including assignments and grades. Each classroom maintains a computer with

Parent-Connect to allow parents access at the school level.

In addition, in fall of 2009 Cincinnati is beginning a new initiative where schools will be grouped according to performance, with a progression of services provided according to need. High-performing schools will receive coaching only by request, improving schools will receive part-time coaching and schools in need of academic intervention will receive intensive, prescriptive coaching. The district will create three Turnaround Teams, each consisting of a principal and two lead teachers, to work with the district’s 16 lowest-performing elementary schools.

VIII. Performance Outcomes

Cincinnati public schools (CPS) continue to make gains in student achievement. The state of Ohio uses the Performance Index (PI) to provide an overall indication of how well students perform on its standardized tests each year.

The PI scores are based upon how well each student does on all tested subjects in grades three through eight and 10. Schools and districts earn anywhere from 1.2 points for each student scoring at the advanced level to zero points for each untested student.

The Performance Index ranges between 0 and 120, with 100 as the state-wide goal for all students.

Cincinnati Performance Index Trends
82 (2008)
81 (2007)
82 (2006)
75 (2005)

Source: OH Dept. of Education, 2007-2008

- The district raised the Performance Index score of overall gains in all tests in all subjects from 80.7 in 2007 to 81.9 in 2008.
- The district raised the graduation rate in 2007 from 80 percent to 82 percent in 2008.
- The district increased the percentage of schools rated “excellent” or “effective” from 20 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2008.

Cincinnati continues to be one of the leaders among Ohio’s urban school districts in performance. The district is tops among these urban city school systems in the number of report card indicators earned (nine versus the next highest urban school system, Columbus, with six) and is second only to Akron in its Performance Index Score.

XI. Lessons Learned

1. The Cincinnati Public School District demonstrates that districts can use technology to provide parents with online access to student information including grades, assignments, attendance and behavior.
2. The district provides a good example of a system to provide schools with differentiated levels of support based on school performance. Higher-performing schools need minimal support while lower-performing schools need more intense support and intervention.
3. The district demonstrates that transparency for a variety of school- and district-level indicators is one of the most useful kinds of accountability. The bottom line is that parents need

to easily access information about the performance level of district schools.

Resources

Cincinnati Public Schools: Making Progress, Report to the Community, March 11, 2009, <http://www.cps-k12.org/administration/CommRptMar1109.pdf>.

Student-Based Budgeting Fiscal Year 2009-2010, Cincinnati Public Schools, December 3, 2008. <http://www.cps-k12.org/general/finances/StudBaseBdgt/SBBDec0308PPT.pdf>

School Level Budgets are available here: https://dashboard.cps-k12.org/dashboard/public/financial_detail.aspx?line_description=School%20Budgets.

Contact Information

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Endnotes

1. *Student-Based Budgeting, Cincinnati Public Schools*, <http://www.cps-k12.org/general/finances/StudBaseBdgt/StudBaseBdgt.htm>.
2. *Student-Based Budgeting Fiscal Year 2009-2010, Cincinnati Public Schools*, December 3, 2008. <http://www.cps-k12.org/general/finances/StudBaseBdgt/SBBDec0308PPT.pdf>
3. Ibid.