

Woodrow Wilson High School Budget Cuts for FY17-18

3 consecutive years of cuts

Wilson is facing a total of \$1.3 million budget shortfall for FY 18. DC has a budget surplus and the Mayor's budget would provide \$100 million in tax cuts.

NOTE: DCPS may claim that the cut is only \$340,000. That ignores the increases in teacher and staff salaries. The nominal cut may be \$340,000, but it would require an additional \$1.3 million for Wilson to avoid staff cuts in the face of stable enrollment.

The Mayor claims in her budget: "This will be the 8th consecutive year of increased funding for our schools, with an additional \$25 million allocated in school budgets. In a press release on "Investments in Middle and High Schools," the Mayor notes she wants to "ensure that we are setting more students up for success."

But this is the third year in a row that Wilson has faced a shrinking budget in real terms. Indeed, it has faced this challenge in each of Mayor Bowser's budgets.

Wilson will have to cut 8.8 staffing positions for FY 18. This comes on top of 9 staff positions cut in FY 17 and 12 staff positions cut in FY 16.

An Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) task force examined education funding needs and called for a 3.5% increase in funding to maintain the buying power of education budgets. The Mayor implemented a 1.5% increase.

The Mayor thus allocated around \$18 million fewer dollars to DCPS than the OSSE task force suggested. This has led to shrunken budgets in real terms for a number of schools across the city, particularly large comprehensive high schools

As the largest comprehensive high school, Wilson was hit very hard.

Wilson receives the per pupil minimum -- \$9000 per student based on a projected enrollment of 1783 -- from DCPS. Over 1/3 of the funds generated by Wilson students for DCPS pursuant to the funding formula do not make it to Wilson.

The DCPS enrollment projections for Wilson (which drive budget allocations) are chronically incorrect.

- Wilson has grown by 158 students from FY11-12 to FY15-16.
- Wilson was projected at 1783 for the 16-17 school year, but has 1806 students.
- DCPS projects 1783 students for next year (a reduction of 23 students), not recognizing continued growth of class cohorts for 8th grade at Alice Deal (and the fact the actual census is 1806).
- The Wilson feeder area is experiencing record growth, hundreds of new condos/housing units are being built (and have been built).
- DCPS talks about "right-sizing" Wilson, but the truth is school enrollment is going to continue to grow as (a) new housing is built and (b) more and more families are sending their kids to DCPS through high school.

- After the school census, Wilson accepted a number of students who left charter schools, is educating those students but does not get funding for them.

Staffing reductions:

- Create a safety risk, in a school as large and crowded as Wilson;
- Pose special challenges as Wilson is piloting a move to *all honors classes*; for 9th Grade Biology and English; and
- Will adversely affect counseling, special education, and the arts program.

The specific impact of the budget cuts will mean:

- Wilson, with the fifth highest number of at risk kids, will have to cut a special education position, compromising the school's ability to support children most in need of learning supports.
- Cutting a freshmen Biology teacher (increasing class sizes for freshmen at a time when all classes are honors and some students will need additional support);
- Cutting an art teacher will result in fewer arts classes, jeopardizing students access to courses and credits needed for colleges, such as Pratt, Parsons and the Rhode Island School of Design, that historically have taken Wilson students.)
- Fewer classes generally will further squeeze educational opportunity at a time when Wilson has seniors who do not get a full day of school (some finish as early 11am, or don't have class until after 10:15) due to staff and space constraints.
- Wilson will have to cut a counselor position, despite the Mayor's touted (2/27) initiative to expand support for high school students to improve college and career support. That initiative apparently does not apply to Wilson.

Next steps?

Mayor Bowser has now submitted her proposed FY 2018 budget to the Council.

The Council will vote on a budget in June, and will have a number of hearings on the proposed funding levels in the next few months.

The Council has the authority to increase education funding, for example, to or close to the levels suggested by OSSE which would enable the city to fully fund Wilson's needs and the needs of other schools across the city that have seen cuts in real terms.

It will be critical for parents to make their concerns about Wilson's budget and the need to fully fund schools generally known to Councilmembers. Such advocacy can start today. Contact information for key Councilmembers and their staff is shown below.

We will also keep you apprised as citywide advocacy efforts take form so that the Wilson community can support and be supported by such efforts.

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