HOOD RIVER COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT
*Excellence. Every student. Every day.*

**FY 2026-27 Proposed Budget Questions**
**Updated May 1, 2026**

This document clarifies specific line items, staffing allocations, and procedural questions regarding the FY 2026-27 Proposed Budget.

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1. Within the budget message on page 5, could you clarify the reported increases and reductions? The percentages seem to offset one another, yet the dollar amounts differ significantly. Is this data accurate?

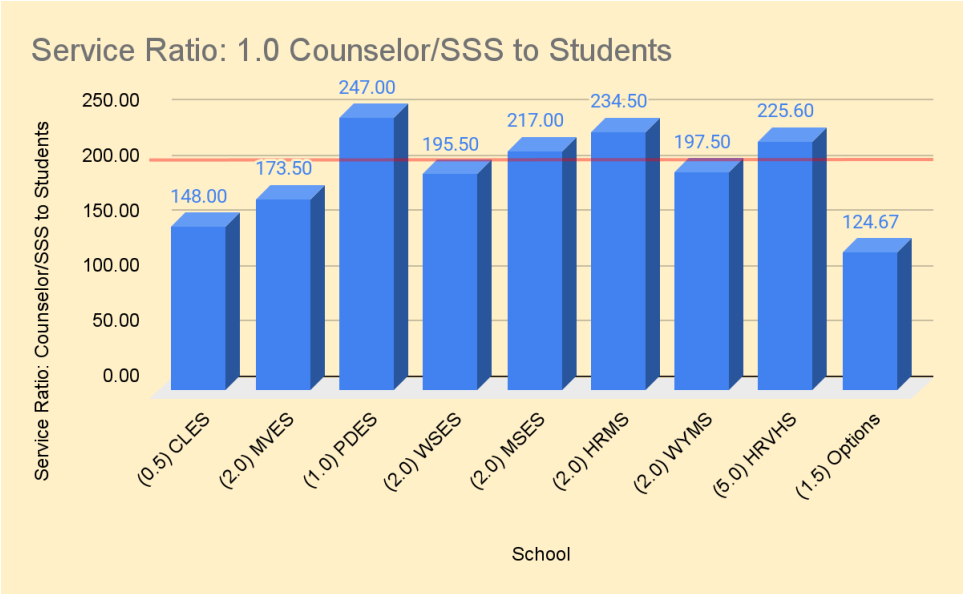
   The percentages and dollar amounts refer to different funding pools. The "Title Funding Change %" specifically applies to changes in Title grants (housed within the Special Revenue Fund), whereas other dollar amounts may refer to the General Fund. They are not intended to be direct offsets.

2. The budget presentation mentioned an 11% increase for English Language Learners (ELL), but the documents show a reduction of approximately 7.0 FTE in ELL positions. Can you clarify this discrepancy?

   There are no significant cuts to ESL/ELL funding or staffing overall. The perceived reduction in the General Fund is due to a shift in how these positions are funded. The overall headcount across both the General Fund and Grant Funds is expected to remain stable.

3. Can you provide school counselor/Student Success Site (SSS) to student ratios for each location? Additionally, page 5 indicates a reduction of 5.0 FTE in school counseling; where were these cuts made?

   There is no global reduction in the number of counseling staff. The 5.0 FTE shift represents a change in payroll allocations, moving the funding source from the General Fund to the Student Investment Account (SIA) and High School Success (HSS) grants.




4. Regarding school nursing, there appears to be an addition of 1.0 FTE. Is this in addition to our existing contract with the High Desert/Columbia Gorge ESD?

   The school district continues to receive nursing services through the Local Service Plan (LSP). This 1.0 FTE "nursing" addition actually reflects the Athletic Trainer position. This role was previously funded by external support from Providence, which has ended; the District is now absorbing this position to maintain student-athlete safety.

5. On page 17, it indicates that materials increased by 0% in relation to inflation. Is that correct?

   Yes. Non-labor accounts were not adjusted for inflation this year. In a high-inflation environment, a 0% increase effectively serves as a budgetary cut, allowing the District to prioritize targeted increases for essential services such as facilities, transportation, and nutrition.

6. On page 25, the math for enrollment reductions seems inconsistent. If the Middle School reduction is 1.5 FTE and the Math Intervention reduction is 3.0 FTE, why isn't the dollar amount for the intervention double the middle school amount?

   You are correct; there is a formatting error in that table. The Math Intervention reduction of $327,482 is a service-level change and should not have been categorized as an "enrollment-based" change. When that line is isolated, the Elementary, Middle, and High School enrollment adjustments correctly total $951,227.

7. Page 47 shows a Middle School increase of ~2.5 FTE, while other sections suggest a reduction. Furthermore, page 50 shows a licensed staff increase of 4.0 FTE. Can you explain these figures?

The FTE counts on page 47 reflect the Adopted Budget totals from the prior year. Actual staffing levels often shift at the start of the school year based on real-time enrollment, with gaps covered by the "staffing contingency" fund. The reductions mentioned in the budget narrative refer to changes from our current service levels as we move into the new year.

8. Why is Fiscal Services proposing an increase from 4.0 to 5.0 FTE?

   This is a transparency adjustment rather than a "new" hire. The Controller position has been vacant for several years and has been performed by contracted consultants. We have moved this cost from "contracted services" to a formal FTE position to more accurately reflect department costs. Returning to an in-house Controller will allow the CFO to focus on long-term resource development.

9. Page 48 shows an administrator increase of 0.5 FTE, contradicting the 0.45 FTE reduction mentioned elsewhere. Which is correct?

   The 0.45 reduction is the accurate figure. An error occurred during the transition to the Tyler ERP system where a grant-funded portion of an employee's line item was omitted from the count. The current proposed budget corrects this data entry error.

10. Page 101 shows 1.5 FTE for IEP (Individualized Education Program) support, but 1.0 FTE is mentioned elsewhere. Can you clarify?

    This is a cumulative figure. A 0.5 FTE position was added during the current fiscal year (FY25-26) via the staffing contingency. An additional 1.0 FTE is being proposed for the upcoming year (FY26-27), bringing the total to 1.5 new FTE dedicated to IEP resources over the two-year period.

11. Why are Ex-Officio Members not considered voting positions on the Budget Committee?

    This is governed by Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 294.414, which prohibits employees or agents of a municipal corporation from serving as voting members of its budget committee to avoid conflicts of interest. This legal requirement is further outlined in Board Policy DBEA.

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Upcoming Discussion Items

Note: The following items will be addressed in depth during the Public Budget Meeting on Tuesday, May 5, 2026.

Pine Grove and Early Intervention (EI/ECSE)

- Historical Context: From public comment, community members who spoke out against the Pine Grove transition felt they were heavily involved in the initial transition but have not been privy to this new proposal. Do you have insight into how they were involved previously, and why this same process was not used this go-round?

- Operational Volume: Early Intervention is commonly conducted at preschools, daycares, and in the child's home. Do you have numbers on the number of kids actually seen on-site? Why is an entire building needed to run a program of (seemingly) equal or less volume than other clinics?
- Future of Pine Grove: What is the plan (or options) for the Pine Grove School once EI/ECSE is moved to Mid Valley? Will the building be sold or used for something else? Is it a liability at that point or an asset?
- Relocation Delays: Can the District delay the planned facilities move or reorganization? This includes considerations for EI/ECSE needs, architectural reviews, and necessary changes at Mid Valley Elementary School (MVES).

Cascade Locks Elementary School (CLES)

- Financial Analysis: Is there any financial analysis looking at the potential to close CLES now or in the immediate future, rather than a "death by a thousand cuts" approach?
- Consolidation Impact: What would be the cost impact of busing those kids to HR, and is there capacity at the remaining 4 elementary schools? Would the district as a whole be better off by simply saving the $1.21M now and moving forward?
- Operational Alternatives: Moving the school has been considered, as it is a very large building requiring a lot of resources for low student volume (e.g., two full-time custodians). Since closing the school is not on this year's agenda, would exploring other alternatives be useful?
- Decision Variables: What other variables affect the decision-making on CLES as a viable school in the district?
- Contingency Planning: What is the "Plan B" for budget areas facing reductions, specifically regarding Cascade Locks (CLES) SSS and Math Intervention?

General Fund & Reserve Strategies

- Nutrition Transfer: Is it possible to delay the planned fund transfer to the Nutrition department to free up immediate General Fund resources?
- Capital Reserves: Is it possible to delay the planned fund reserve for the turf field replacement?
- Contingency Fund Review: At what point in the school year does the contingency fund get tapped into? Is it just there to cover overruns at the end of the year, or is there a periodic review that might result in it being leveraged?
- Utility Projections: The proposed 26-27 fuel and natural gas budget appears exactly the same as the current year (with one exception). Should we assume available contingency funding is actually less than shown, as a portion will likely be needed for fuel/heating?

Transportation & Maintenance

- Protocol Compliance: There is concern about the maintenance of district vehicles; buses are regularly found with malfunctioning signals or headlights. While employees are working hard, it has been reported that pre-trip protocols are not being followed to ensure compliance.
- Budget Reallocation: One suggestion: could we use the money currently funding the (unused) routing software to focus on maintenance and training for bus drivers?

Student Programming

- Athletics Sustainability: Middle school sports are on the chopping block every year, and youth programming through [Hood River] Parks and Rec may cease to exist as well. Is there a long-term sustainability plan for these areas? Is there a "roadmap" for this?