

EMPOWER YOUR VOICE

Speaker Remarks & Transcripts

Tuesday, October 13, 2026

FULL TOWN HALL RECORDING

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THE REMARKS

Speaker Transcripts

State Representative LaTyna Humphrey

OPENING REMARKS

VIDEO START 7:45

All right, well, good evening.

No, I think y'all could do better than that. I said, good evening.

All right, that sounds good.

As stated, I am state representative Latina M. Humphrey. I have the current pleasure of representing Ohio's 2nd House District, majority East Columbus, South Columbus, the entire city of Whitehall, and then some of those surrounding cities.

But listen, you all, I have got to say, I am excited to be here with you all today. anytime, Our board members call anytime our superintendent calls me to be a part of these conversations or to be present. I take it as an honor.

And the reason why I take it as an honor is because I am a graduate of the Columbus East High School Class of 2010. And so, super excited to be here with you all today.

Now, listen, I know that you all are about to break out, have some conversations about what's going on in the district, what you would like to see, what's in front of you, et cetera.

The reason why I'm here is because I get to kind of set the groundwork, the the floor, uh, the basis of why we're hearing some of why we are in uh, the position that we are in and the reason why lots of you all are going to have to come together to make, uh, some hard decisions, essentially.

And so I say all that to say, how many of you all know that it is not just or not the Columbus City School Board that funds our schools? Raise your hands. Did you know that?

Only I ain't seen a whole bunch of hands. I'm seeing some teachers with some hands, but I ain't seeing a whole bunch of hands.

Okay. Well, I wanted to stop by to let you all know that the Ohio legislature funds our schools.

And so when you see \$50 million cuts in the budget and \$50 million cuts to Columbus City schools, I need you to understand that that is the Ohio legislature. It's not necessarily them. They're dealing with what we have presented them with.

And I've got to be honest, and this ain't always the easiest thing to say, and I know sometimes we want to have happy, cheery conversations, but I want to be candid about even what is coming before you, possibly in the future.

Right now, then, having conversations about how do we ensure that Columbus City schools gets more funding and not flat-funded in the future? Because in less than three, 4 months, we have to go through another budget. And then my colleagues, who are in the majority, will make another decision for our schools about how much funding Columbus City schools will get.

And the frustrating thing about unconstitutionally funded schools and how my legislature operates is that the reality is, is that the Ohio legislature and my colleagues on the other side have never been inside of Columbus City schools.

They've never been in Fort Hayes, never been in East High School, never been in a Linda McKinley, never been in a South High School. Yet they make decisions about our schools based upon what they think they see on TV. That's what they do.

And so I'm really here to level set for you all, but I need you to understand. And I don't know if this is right, but I'm going to do it.

I need you all to understand that going forward, you have a say. And what happens to Columbus City schools. And you get to make that say, heard, your voice heard, now until November 3rd.

Reality is, is if we do not show up for our babies, and clearly, I can see that you care about our babies, 'cause you could have been anywhere on a Monday at 5:30, 5:45, but you decided to be here in the town hall.

If you care about our babies, then that means you're gonna show up in the booth.

Now, I ain't here to tell you who to vote for, but I'm telling you that it is a consequential election, and if things don't pan out, the way that I would like for them to pan out. You think \$50 million is bad. You think \$50 million is bad, and I need you to understand that there are plans for more.

And I'm not just talking out the side of my neck. I'm telling you what I know based upon what I see and the hearings and the conversations that I have.

So, I'm glad that you all are here together, but I need you to understand that there are some real decisions that you all are going to have to make. And they're gonna have to be strategic.

And I know we all got emotions, and I know we all got feelings, and I know we all want things to go the way we want them to go. But I need you to understand that it is a consequential election coming up.

So sometimes you got to remove your feelings and think strategically.

Oh, y'all don't like that, but that's how I said it.

Listen, I need you all to think strategically and understand what's at stake, because the stakes are high.

So, with all that being said, as you meet, please be willing to work with one another.

But then again, from now into November 3rd, you have the opportunity to make your voices heard. And I hate to venture on to say you get to show how

much you care about your babies. How much you care about your community, how much you care about your surroundings.

Now, that's on you.

Again, I am state representative Latina M. Humphrey. I love you all, and there's nothing you can do about it.

Thank you so much and God bless you. Peace!

Board President Dr. Antoinette Miranda

BOARD PRESIDENT REMARKS

VIDEO START 13:30

Thank you for breaking that down. I couldn't say it any better.

Good evening, CCS. Welcome to Empower Your Voice.

Thank you to our student ambassadors for helping us kick off the event evening. Lisa Kamara and Fallon Hancock. Excellent students and great representatives at Columbus City schools.

Thank you, Representative Latyna Humphrey, for joining us and sharing that update. Very inspirational.

Also want to thank Principal Erica Dodson for walking us to the historic Fort Hayes campus.

And I must give a shout-out to our Columbus downtown high school culinary arts students who prepared the delicious appetizers and snack we enjoyed on the way in. Give them a big round of applause.

You can safely say our culinary students understood the assignment.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my colleagues on the Board of Education if they would please stand up. Dr. Jermaine Kennedy, Vice President

Sarah Ingalls, Mr. Katsumeyer, and if I missed anybody, did I miss anybody? It's dark, so I can't see. just...

And Jennifer Adair, of course, 'cause she's gonna be speaking with you soon.

Also want to recognize any elected officials in attendance. Please stand to be recognized.

I also want to thank, um, Columbus City Council President Shannon Harden. He was here with us with his Columbus City student, his son. Thank you for your partnership.

Tonight is called Empower Your Voice for a reason. We are here to share information and to get your feedback. Because we have serious challenges to deal with. And it's important that we face them together.

This town hall meeting is one part of a month of outreach meetings, including coffee meetings, board meetings, committee meetings, focus groups, and lunches with student groups.

We are all here tonight because we want to hear from you. We want to make the best decisions for the district as a whole, for the schools you love. And for every student.

Our vision is to put students first so they can learn in strong, modern schools, but the people and programs students need to thrive.

I wanna give you a clear picture of where Columbus City Schools stands today. Where we are making real progress and the difficult budget decisions that lie ahead.

The Post-it notes on the screen came from a recent meeting with almost 100 family ambassadors and parents. They had a lot to say.

Number one, they said they want more information, and here's stories about student successes.

Number two, they want to know how we do interventions with students to improve scores, graduation, and test results.

Number three, they want CCS to invest in whole-child programs and wrap around services at neighborhood schools.

Number four, parents want schools to be safe, welcoming, and supportive.

Number five, parents are concerned about school consolidation and transportation changes.

We will continue to collect input with meetings, surveys, which we're asking you to do tonight, and more, as the board goes into budget discussions.

I would now like to invite our superintendent, Dr. Angela Chapman, to the stage to highlight the progress we are making.

Dr. Chapman.

Superintendent/CEO Dr. Angela Chapman

OPENING COMMENTS

VIDEO START 17:40

Good evening, everyone.

Before we get into the budget discussion, I certainly would love to take the opportunity to tell you about the real progress being made here in Columbus City School.

As you all know, good things are happening across CCS. Our students are showing great progress and momentum, and I would love to brag on them for just a bit tonight.

We've been investing in our buildings. \$60 million this past summer. We're seeing improvements in math, literacy, and graduation. We've launched our Strive for Five, our attendance challenge.

Our college and career connected learning and our academies keep earning strong rankings. We are a gold star rated for our pre- our free pre-K programs across the district.

And I'm very proud that the Columbus Promise Program has doubled the number of students, going to Columbus State since launching just a few years ago.

And our latest Ohio School report card moved from two stars to two and a half stars overall. Our highest rating as a system, since the current star rating system was put in place.

And to make up that ranking, 45 schools across the district earn three stars or higher, 77 schools, 77 schools, where 3 stars, a higher, or higher in tracking progress metrics, which are critical to our total score.

Let's give it up to all of our schools. Exceeding the expectations.

And as a district, our college and career readiness ranking remains at 3 stars. Our CTE programs are knocking it out of the park at 4.5 stars. And as a system, we continue to add seats for these in demand job training courses and pathways.

Together, the rankings add up to our 2.5 stars, which is progress, but also we can see where we need to continue working.

Let's continue to recognize the 77 schools who show real progress on the state report card. So many schools we needed 2 slides.

We are also doing very well in post secondary readiness. Three stars, and here are the 45 schools that meet or exceed all of the state standards. Another round of applause for these rules.

Last but definitely not least. Here is our CTE rating. Four and a half stars is among the highest anywhere in the state of Ohio, and among the best in our region.

We are very proud of these programs. Many classes take place right here on the campus of Fort Hayes.

One thing that is not on this year's report card is our improvement in graduation, because the state tracks our graduation data, that data lacks a year in the rear.

But we have such good news that we have to share it.

Our class of 2026, that's our cohort that just graduated, reached an 84.6% four-year on-time graduation rate. And this is the highest graduation rate that our system has had in Columbus City Schools' history.

Let's give it up to our students, our scholars, our staff, our team members across the district, and our families for continuing to partner with us to achieve outstanding results.

This won't, this data, again, won't appear on the state report card until next year, but it's great news, and we need to keep focusing on helping students graduate.

Again, we are proud of the work that's happening in Columbus City schools. And proud to celebrate the progress and hard work of our schools, our staff, and our families across the community.

We are making progress because every part of the district is working with the whole child model. We are making interventions when we see students struggle.

One reason I'm so committed to pre-K is that it is one of the best ways to make sure our youngest students are ready to learn, read, write, and do math.

And if I haven't mentioned it before, in CCS, we have free Gold Star-rated pre-K programs across the district, provided, supported, and instructed by highly qualified educators.

It is also important that we stick to the curriculum across all grades and all schools. That fidelity to the program is working.

We believe that offering more hands-on programming is also helping increase our graduation rate by giving students more chances to make their own decisions about their future.

And finally, we are helping students navigate the many paths to graduation. It adds up, and we are seeing the results.

Another point of pride this year was our continued investment in neighborhood schools.

Over the past 3 years, we have invested nearly \$227 million in our facilities.

This summer alone, our teams worked on HVAC systems, roofs, building exteriors, fire alarms, parking lots, classrooms, restrooms, gyms, auditoriums, playgrounds, and athletic spaces across the district.

There were so many projects underway, a hard hat almost felt like part of the summer dress code.

With all of these projects, we are keeping our vision and investment centered on the needs of our students.

Our big 3 focus areas are on this graph. Maintaining existing schools, reusing old properties in ways that best serve the neighborhood, and planning where to build new schools in the very, very near future.

We've worked too long in aging buildings and need to start building new, safe, and modern tech-capable schools that our students and staff deserve. You'll hear more about that from Dr. Brown a bit later.

Here is a list of the major projects from last summer.

All of these improvements are visible, necessary, and possible because of you, our community, who invested in CCS.

147 million of the total investment came directly from the voted levy dollars.

Again, thank you to our community for supporting capital dollars that allow us to repair, modernize, and improve our school buildings for our students and staff.

I want to underline one point now because it will matter later in our discussion tonight.

We cannot legally use those capital dollars to pay for our day to day operating expenses. Levy capital funds or permanent improvement funds must be used to improve our facilities.

I was very excited recently to go to Walnut Ridge for the opening of the new weight room for student athletes, the new academy spaces, and the manufacturing learning lab.

Check out that robotic arm station at the 4841 lab. This is one of the coolest things in CCS right now.

I've mentioned our academies before, and you'll be hearing a lot more about this new model for college and career connected learning in the coming years.

Today, we are working on the 1st 7 career academies in our high schools, and our goal is to have 10 established in the next two years.

One of my favorite projects was the complete refresh of Salem Elementary. Principal Pace and the families were so excited to start this new year with all the new spaces, classrooms, playground equipment, and outdoor spaces.

This is similar to the investment we did at Devonshire Elementary the summer before.

We all know that students don't just come to school to learn solely in the classroom. They also love recess.

That's why we've invested 8.3 million dollars in safe, accessible playgrounds in the past 3 years.

Athletics are also an important part of the student experience. They give our students opportunities to compete, build teamwork, and represent their schools with pride.

And we want to make sure they have safe, quality facilities.

We invested more than 18 million in athletic facilities over the past 3 years. That included work this past summer at Northland, Walnut Ridge, and Beechcroft.

We're just starting a project to replace the stands at Eastmore Academy. We're also adding pickleball and restoring tennis courts at several of our schools across the district.

And there's more ahead in 2027. Including renovations at Gables Elementary and Beechcroft High School, new gyms at Briggs High School and Medina Middle School, and additional improvements across the district.

There's a lot to celebrate across CCS. From stronger report card results and historic graduation rates to the investments we're making in our schools.

We, collectively, as a community, as a district, are making steady progress.

But now I want to talk about our financial realities facing our district.

These are harder numbers to celebrate. But families, community members, staff members, you deserve to hear them. Clearly and directly.

Across Ohio, public schools face rising costs and growing student needs, as state and federal funding support declines.

Representative Humphries shared up some context with us this evening from her perspective.

The current school funding system places significant responsibility on local taxpayers.

This is made even worse when rapid inflation is infecting families and schools. Especially because the state froze school funding at the 2022 levels.

The math isn't mathing. And that's why we're here.

Look at what has happened to the state's share of school funding. The data shows that it has declined over time, with even further and deeper declines projected.

As the state's contribution shrinks, local taxpayers must carry more of the burden. Even as the cost of educating and supporting students continues to rise.

This is a challenge for school districts across the country. It's a challenge for school districts across the state. Not just here in Columbus.

For the past two years, CCS has had to draw from its financial reserves to cover day to day operating costs.

As you can see, the dark line shows those reserves continuing to decline. And without additional reductions, they are projected to run out by 2030.

Just like a household budget, we cannot continue spending more than what we bring in in revenue. At some point, the money runs out. And we must address that reality.

As a district, we have already taken significant steps to address our financial challenges. And none of those decisions have been easy.

Every reduction that we make affects people, programs, and services that our school community cares deeply about.

We've reduced positions, contracts, and services. We've eliminated transportation for K-8 students attending certain non-neighborhood choice schools. A decision projected to save millions of dollars.

We've closed buildings; we've begun consolidating and realigning schools, and we've asked departments across the district to find new ways to operate with fewer resources.

And these have not been small reductions.

As you can see, reductions from 2025 through 2027 total 67.5 million dollars. That includes reductions in administrative and other staff positions, non-personnel spending, transportation, and school consolidation.

We manage many of those position reductions through attrition, retirements, and eliminating vacant positions. which allowed us to limit the number of layoffs.

I want you to understand what these numbers represent.

Behind every reduction is a decision, a very hard decision, that affects employees, our schools, our students, our families, and all areas.

But even after these steps, our financial challenges still remain. Which is why we are here tonight.

We still face difficult decisions, and we must make them carefully with a clear understanding of how they will affect our students and the future of Columbus City schools.

I want to give this conversation some national context, because Columbus is not the only school system confronting this reality.

And as I read more and talked with colleagues and educational foster country, I was struck by, unfortunately, how familiar these conversations sounded.

Different districts, different communities, but many of us wrestle with the same difficult questions. About staffing, buildings, buses, and student services.

Funding for public schools is stagnant or cut, while the cost of everything is continuing to increase.

In Minneapolis, the school district has faced a budget shortfall of nearly \$40 million.

In Louisville, Kentucky, the district approved \$115 million in budget cuts for this school year.

School districts across the country are being forced to make difficult financial decisions.

What matters now is how we respond and make choices that protect what our students deserve.

For the upcoming school year, 2027–2028, the Columbus City Schools Board of Education gave us clear instructions.

We are to identify at least 50 million in operational reductions for the upcoming school year.

When we talk about reducing spending, we're talking about decisions that could affect programming, services, buildings, transportation. Staffing, and ultimately the experience our students and families have with CCS.

And that is why we cannot approach this work casually.

It is also why I believe we must make serious changes to our buildings and transportation. Because that is one of the only ways to minimize job cuts.

We cannot afford business as usual.

But I also want to be clear about our approach.

These decisions will always be guided by data and our commitment to putting students 1st and supporting the whole child.

We will look closely at Central Office, administrative positions, how we use our school buildings, and how we provide transportation.

Our responsibility is not simply to reduce spending. It's to make sure the decisions we make today allow us to continue serving our students well for years to come.

At the end of the day, our goal is to protect what matters most. The quality of education that our students receive. The supports that they need, and the opportunities that they deserve.

And that commitment will guide every recommendation that we bring forward, even when the decisions are difficult and tough to make.

So when you hear us say that students come first, I want you to understand what that means in this discussion.

It means making decisions that protect strong instruction, essential student supports, and the programs and opportunities that help our students learn and prepare for their futures.

It means asking some difficult questions before we make recommendations.

How will this decision affect our students? What does it mean for the families who depend on our schools? And will this put us in a stronger position to serve students, not just today, but 5 or 10 years from now?

So how do we find or identify another \$50 million in reductions while continuing to provide the education and support our students deserve?

One of the biggest questions we have to ask is whether we should keep schools open when they're less than half full.

Right now, about 20% of the seats across our district are unused. In some of our schools, fewer than 30% of the available seats are filled.

Empty seats are costing us millions of dollars.

I'm gonna repeat that because it's worth reviewing. Empty seats are costing us millions of dollars.

We face challenges with aging facilities and uneven enrollment across our schools. We also recognize the need to provide more students with access to programs and services closer to home.

That is why school realignment is such a significant part of this conversation.

We need to look carefully at how we're using our buildings, where our students live, how our schools are staffed, and whether we can provide more opportunities within our neighborhood schools.

And transportation is another major piece of this puzzle.

Our transportation system serves students across a massive geographic area, often taking them well beyond their neighborhood schools.

That means more routes, longer travel times, and higher operating costs.

But I also know we're talking out, talking about more than buildings, buses, and budgets.

We're talking about our schools that our families love, have relationships with, and that have been built and transitions that span generations.

That's why we're looking at all of these areas together, enrollment, buildings, transportation, staffing, and programming.

Each affects the other, and we cannot make responsible decisions by looking at them separately or in isolation.

Our goal is to use our resources more effectively while strengthening our neighborhood schools and making sure students have access to the programs, services, and support that they need.

And that brings us to an important part of our discussion.

What school realignment could look like across Columbus City schools.

Our colleague, Dr. Brown, has been working with the treasurer and the facilities team to align passport actions with proposals for the future.

We recently presented these ideas to our board's joint committee meeting that happened the last month.

As you watch, please remember, proposals are not final decisions.

We are sharing this information because your questions and your feedback belong in the process.

And now, please cue the video.

Dr. Russell Brown

BUILDING REALIGNMENT STRATEGY • Recorded video

VIDEO START 41:30

Regional economic development experts, MORPC, the City and County, all tell us that Central Ohio is growing. It is a hot spot in the nation for new jobs.

And while Columbus is on the rise, CCS enrollment is stable, and State funding is not growing to keep up with expenses.

CCS is looking at strategies to make better use of our best facilities and put the District on the path to build new buildings where they are needed to match this City's growth and the needs of students for modern classrooms, labs, technology, and facilities.

These challenges can be met despite the need for budget cuts in the coming year.

By closing several older buildings and those with lower enrollments, we can serve our students in our most modern and more fully staffed buildings ...as we plan to build a better future with new buildings.

We get there by strengthening neighborhood schools. Ensuring that students receive the programs and services they need in their neighborhood.

We get there by moving our magnet programs closer to the center of the city, making them more accessible to all areas of our community.

We get there by planning for the future of the district – one in which we go from 20 under-enrolled high schools to 10-12 high-quality high schools with more robust offerings for our students.

This not only helps keep students in their neighborhoods; it means more equity for all students accessing classes they need to graduate. And it makes for a more accessible system with a reduced need for transportation.

Our students deserve modern schools;

And when we build new schools, we can guarantee them more access to quality programs and extracurricular activities.

We also can focus our college and career preparation programs with room for more students so we can avoid the waiting lists we have today.

Larger schools do not mean larger class sizes, but it does let us move students and teachers to better buildings where we can do more.

This supports teacher success by making sure we have the resources they need in the school instead of trying to share resources over multiple under-used sites.

Of our 109 academic facilities.. We have 13,000 unused desks. That's almost 23% unused seats for students.

This isn't just bad for students. It is a problem under a proposed state law that may pass this year.. Senate Bill 311.. Where the state could take or force us to sell our under-enrolled buildings.

If a building uses less than 60% of its seats, we could be forced to sell the school for less than the property is worth to a charter or non-profit.

Our commitment to families is to maintain the best of our existing buildings.. To move important programs to more modern buildings and to give students the best learning environments possible closer to their home neighborhoods.

The Board started taking some decisive actions in 2024 and 2025.

You can see from this list that we are already making some serious changes.

These moves worked, and now we have stronger enrollment at newer buildings like Eastgate, Livingston, and Ohio Ave.

These moves alone saved us an estimated \$5.1 million dollars.

Next is Como Elementary, which is scheduled to close at the end of this school year. As we prepare to establish a neighborhood attendance boundary for Oakland Park Elementary, we are examining nearby school boundaries as well. No boundary options have been finalized.

We held the first Public Information Session on September 16 at Oakland Park. Families have two more opportunities this week: October 14 at South Mifflin Elementary and October 15 at East Linden Elementary, both at 6 p.m. If your school or neighborhood is in the study area, I encourage you to participate.

We know that families are passionate about their schools. And we do listen, but we also need to make some changes, or we will lose buildings.

That is why we are proposing new uses for Franklin Middle School and Eastmoor Middle School buildings.

Currently, they are home to Prep for Girls and Boys programs. Serving less than 300 total students.

They do great work for their students, but enrollment is declining, and we need the space for other programs.

We will recommend to the board to move Columbus Gifted Academy to Franklin. And Adult Education to Eastmoor Middle.

These two moves will not only better use the spaces, but also save us \$4.1 million dollars.

This makes the programs more accessible and gives the programs more modern facilities for their students.

Gifted is another great program with great staff, and they will have a much better facility at Franklin Middle's building.

Our Adult and Community Education programs, as well as the Support Center moving to Eastmoor Middle, would fill that building so it is no longer threatened by the state.

Another proposal for consideration is moving the great Arts Program from Duxberry Park to the Sullivant ES building.

This is a stepping stone to one day building a new Elementary Arts Program at Fort Hayes, which is a long-term board goal.

The arts matter to Columbus and to CCS, and this would put the program in a newer building, closer to the center of the city – making the program more accessible to all.

It not only fills an underused building, it helps increase enrollment at Avondale and saves CCS \$1.2 million dollars.

By adjusting Sullivant and Avondale boundaries, we make the most of modernized space.

Families will understandably have questions about the program, transitions, and school community.

Those issues deserve careful review before any decision is made.

Additional proposals involve Siebert and Highland elementary schools. The recommendations being considered would close Siebert and serve students, including multilingual learners, through their neighborhood schools.

Another proposal would move Highland students to West Mound and Burroughs, creating the opportunity to use newer facilities and plan for a future West Broad elementary school.

This plan also opens Highland Elementary School to West Broad students as transition space as the Board plans to build a new, modern West Broad Elementary School.

Again, these are proposals—not completed decisions—and they require Board consideration.

The proposed savings matter, but so do continuity, student support, accessibility, and the practical realities families would face.

The next group of slides looks farther ahead, to the 2028–2029 school year. I want to distinguish these longer-term concepts from changes already approved.

One proposal connects the future of the McGuffey facility with moving Columbus Alternative High School programming to the Downtown High School setting.

This move would save \$3.1 million dollars

Another looks at Buckeye Middle, South High, and Marion–Franklin, with a goal of bringing students into modernized facilities and creating room for future construction.

This move is estimated to save \$2.8 million dollars.

This is a big move, but we believe that the South Side deserves a major, modern High School. And we can make great use of South High’s building for a new South Side Middle School.

It is a major investment in the South Side, and it protects several buildings.

At Mifflin, the recommendation shown would repurpose the high school building for middle school students and close the existing middle school facility. These are substantial changes, and they must be considered with the students, staff, and families they would affect.

This plan is expected to save the community \$3.7 million dollars.

Columbus City Schools owns great buildings, but we must protect the community investment of the past 100 years.

We must be very strategic to maximize the use of our best buildings and minimize losses to the State's new laws on underutilized schools.

One reason this matters is that CCS and its taxpayers have already invested heavily in several buildings now on the underutilized list. The presentation identifies \$97 million invested in six of those newer buildings. We have a responsibility to protect those investments while providing the learning environments our students deserve.

So what should families take from all these possibilities?

Our goal is to support stable school communities with stronger access to academic and extracurricular opportunities, and to provide the services students need and deserve closer to home.

This screen summarizes enrollment changes to protect more schools by making the strategic moves in this presentation.

I know a slide cannot answer every question you may have about your child's school.

That is why we are sharing proposals in public, inviting feedback, and bringing the options to the Board for consideration.

No one should hear a proposed change tonight and mistake it for a final Board vote.

There will be multiple future meetings to discuss these proposals; we will offer meetings at the schools as well to hear from parents, students, and teachers.

Thank you for listening. I'm Dr. Russ Brown, and I look forward to talking to you all as we continue this discussion.

Superintendent/CEO Dr. Angela Chapman

FINAL COMMENTS

VIDEO START 50:34

Well, that was a lot.

Thank you, Dr. Brown, for leading our team and working with so many groups to bring new ideas to the table for discussion.

To all the parents and staff here, I want to reiterate that these are proposals. No final decisions have been made.

To summarize that, CCS is looking at passport decisions and potential future realignments that would help protect the district and increase enrollment in newer buildings. And set us up for a future, set us up for future new school construction.

Under the plan, 10 schools and two non-school sites would close permanently. Seven schools would be refreshed and repurposed. West Broad would close temporarily and be replaced with a larger, modern elementary building on the same site.

We have not decided to make all of these moves, but I want to be clear. These proposals are about what's best for our students. Strengthening academics and improving engagement.

And yes, there are financial benefits. If we are looking to cut another \$50 million in spending, these proposals alone would generate nearly 20 million in savings across the 28 and 29 budgets.

That would certainly help reduce the impact on staffing and personnel across the district, and help us avoid losing quality school buildings because of bad state funding policies.

Now I want to spend a few minutes talking about transportation.

As a district, we route 32,000 students a day. Driving 39,000 miles a day. That's a lot. It costs us more than \$70 million this year alone.

Several options are being considered for high school transportation, including a combination of COTA passes and limited yellow bus service, or ending district-provided transportation for most high school students.

Each option offers potential savings, but we also recognize the impact these changes could have on our students and our families.

The estimated savings are \$ 6.5 million. Again, I want to be clear that this is a proposal. No final decisions have been made.

Yes, we are concerned how it would impact our students, the programming, school selection, and attendance. But our early research shows that most students like this plan and already have other ways to get to school.

That will give Eve get even easier, as more students return to neighborhood school locations.

I want to remind everyone that this budget process didn't just begin. We've been working through these challenges for more than a year.

Last year, we had to identify our first 50 million in reductions. And now we're facing another 50 million in cuts.

As you all know, costs keep rising, and we're being asked to meet our students' growing needs with fewer resources.

But I want you to understand something. We are not sitting back and waiting for things to get better. We are making real changes.

We're asking some tough questions about how we operate, where we're spending our resources, and what needs to change to better serve the students we have today.

And believe me, I would welcome more investment in public education.

I will continue to advocate to the state for the funding our students, our staff, and our schools deserve. But I also know that we cannot wait for someone else to solve our financial challenges.

As your superintendent, I have a responsibility to make sure Columbus City schools remain financially stable.

That means making decisions that may not always be popular. Having conversations that may be uncomfortable and being transparent with our community about why those decisions are necessary.

At the end of the day, we have to protect our classrooms, preserve opportunities for our students, and ensure the district delivers the education our families expect and deserve.

Even if the strategic building changes, say, about \$13 million, and transportation changes, say, 6.5 million, we still need to cut more than \$30 million from the operating budget.

That is the difficult part of the conversation. Every category we examine is connected to people, services, and students.

Our team will review departments and bring proposals to the board in December.

No final decisions have been made on school realignment, or high school transportation, and we remain open to other ideas.

If not this, then what?

We want to minimize the impact on classrooms while making the district financially sustainable.

Now I want to bring up our colleague and board president, Dr. Antoinette Miranda, to talk about next steps and to help lead our interactive activities for this evening.

Thank you all again for being here with us this evening. Thank you.

Board Leadership

BUDGET EXERCISE AND CLOSING

VIDEO START 56:30

Thank you, Dr. Chapman.

We recognize that the conversations we are having, and the decisions before us, are important to our students, our families, our educators, our staff, and a broader Columbus community.

We recognize that our community is diverse, and there will not always be agreement on every single issue. However, hearing those different perspectives is essential to making informed decisions.

Over the coming months, the board will hold joint committee and full board meetings throughout October, November, and December to review options, consider their potential impact, and hear directly from our community before making decisions.

We've covered a lot of information this evening, and thank you for your patience.

Now let's see what you've learned.

Don't worry. It's an easy true-or-false pop quiz about budgets. No grades, no report cards, just an opportunity to test what we know, see what might surprise us, and make sure we are giving you clear information.

So start by scanning this QR code with your phone. That's it up here. And you've got two minutes to show me what you have learned.

The clock starts now.

Everybody have the QR code? Yes.

Okay, has everybody answered all the questions?

No. Dr. Kline, did you get it?

Okay. What if I told you that every statement provided to you was true?

That state funding has dropped significantly over the last few decades since our school funding model was deemed unconstitutional.

And I think it's important to know that this has really kind of been gradual since the 1970s, and it should be noted that businesses paid more in the 1970s, and farms and personal property paid less, and it's actually flipped over since 1975.

The funding model was deemed unconstitutional. That's been found, I think, at least three times.

The problem is, they never told us how we should fund it, so it's been left up to the legislators.

And that CCS is responsible for the cost of transportation for our students, as well as for charter, non-public, and private schools.

The budget decisions we face are becoming increasingly difficult. And we want to give you an opportunity to step into our shoes and see what decision you would make.

I'd like to invite board member Jennifer Adair to explain the final activity of the evening.

And I will turn it over to board member Adair.

Board member Jennifer Adair
BUDGET EXERCISE

Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Miranda.

I wanna thank, uh, everyone for being here tonight and spending time out of your busy schedules.

Right now, we have something really exciting for you to do before you leave. And I'm going to ask you all to be a board member for just a minute. And I

promise I'm not gonna make you sit through a board meeting, okay? Just a minute.

All right, so on your way out, we're going to ask you to help us do a few things.

We've created an activity called Be a Board Member for a Minute. Fund it, value it, build it. Okay?

Um, and so what we're gonna have you do is you walk out. You're going to see some tables as you walk right out that door. And the 1st table you're going to encounter, there's actually two identical tables, so you could spread out. It's called Fund It.

You're going to see little cups on the table of 10 beans. Now, my five-year-old helped me count the beans. He is one of our proud CCS prekindergarten students, and so he is working on counting. So if you don't have exactly 10, please give him grace tonight.

The most important part is when you move to the second part, you have three beans. So I'm gonna ask you to do math, okay?

All right. So when you get to the funded bucket, what you're going to be doing is putting 7 beans in that bucket.

Now, that bucket represents the things that we are required to pay for. And before I talk about what's in that big, big bucket, I want to talk to you about the beans, because the beans represent our operating levy dollars.

When I say they're your beans, they are literally your beans. You pay taxes; that is your property, taxes in your hands. And we want to know how you want us to spend those resources.

So, you're going to put 7 beans in that 1st bucket. Now, that 1st bucket is the must-fund bucket.

Why? Do you have to do that? Because public school districts are legally required to provide specific services to our students.

These things include classroom instruction, our curriculum, special education, English language learner services, required services, transportation, our electric bill, lots of things are in that bucket.

Now, I'm also not saying that 70% is exactly the number, but for this exercise, we're gonna go with putting 7 in the bucket.

So after you do that, you're going to then head to the 2nd part, which is called evaluate. And now you should have three beans left. Okay?

And here is where it gets challenging. You are going to have to decide where you want to spend your 3 beans.

And I'm going to go over the categories. There's gonna be more information on the table as well.

So you get to decide there's no right or wrong answers, and it is completely your values. Okay?

So there's nine different jars on the table. And they are extracurriculars, which include student clubs, academic teams, leadership opportunities, activities beyond our classrooms.

Specialized programs, programs like STEM, are focused education, language immersion schools, for-profit, gender-based education.

Arts and music, band, choir, theater, dance, all of the music, visual arts, athletics, school sports, athletic teams, opportunities for our students to participate in all sorts of athletics, which means there are no pay-to-play fees.

College and career. So career, uh, and technical education, job preparation, advanced coursework, uh, college and career opportunities. This is where our career academies fall, too.

A pre, uh, kindergarten. So early childhood education. This is tuition-free. And we know that this, you know, preventing eliminating barriers for our families, making sure it's tuition-free.

Student support, which includes extra tutoring, counseling, mentoring, additional services beyond what is required, because we know coming out of COVID, our students need those things.

In transportation, looking at our high school transportation, you just heard Dr. Chapman explain that to you. So do you want us to keep high school transportation?

Library and technology, the last category. This is our school libraries, books, media centers, student devices, and classroom technology.

So remember, you only have three beans, and you can spend them however you want. You can put them all in one, you can put two in one, you can put three in three different buckets.

You also might truly value all nine of those. And I know, and this is the exercise. This is what makes it hard.

So I really want you to think about you, your family, your community, and really where you want us to make sure that we are spending those beans.

Now, the last part is called build it. And this is where we're going to shift our focus. And we're gonna talk about a different budget.

And so, in 2023, you, our community, graciously supported our levy and gave us something incredible that this district never had. And that was a dedicated fund for permanent improvements to our schools, including building new ones.

So I want to take that moment and thank you.

So, we're gonna be putting that hat on now. And I know that, you know, sometimes it can be hard to have conversations on both sides, where we are talking about prioritizing or operating, but then also looking at improving our facilities.

But we can do it, and we can have two different budgets and two different conversations.

So, build it. When you get to that part of the table, it's a 2nd table at the very end before you leave.

And I want you to, there's gonna be cards on the table, and I want you to answer the question, what should every student experience?

No matter the school they go to, the grade level they're in, the zip code they live in. What is one thing you would change to make school better, in CCS, for every student?

What should our schools look and feel like? What opportunities should our students have?

And for this part, we're not asking you how to figure out how to pay for it. We're asking you to imagine with us, to build it, to build the future.

So consider the future of our academic program, our facilities, and learning environments. We need to know what matters most to the people we serve, and that is you, and especially if our students are here.

If each can get your own beans and fill out your own cards, not just your parents.

So, you're gonna drop that card in the end. It's anonymous. You don't need to write your name on it. And you're gonna help us out by gathering this feedback. And we are truly going to use it.

So, as you leave, remember, you're going to help us fund it by grabbing that cup of beans and dropping your mandatory 7 into the first bucket.

You're gonna help us value it by casting those three beans that you have into what matters most to you, your family, and your community.

And then you're gonna help us build it. You're gonna tell us what you believe every CCS student should experience.

And at the very end, you're gonna get a board member for a minute sticker. Um, because we want to thank you for taking this time to do it.

Our academic facility alignment committee will be using this community feedback to help us inform our work as we consider the future of CCS.

So again, thank you so much for being here. Thank you for doing our activity.

Our team members will be out there. You can chat with us on your way out as well.

And I want to bring back Dr. Miranda to close us out.

Thank you.

**Board President Dr. Miranda to Close
BUDGET EXERCISE**

Thank you, Board member Adair,

Tonight, you heard about progress. You heard about investments. You saw updates on several of the difficult proposals being considered..

Our vision is clear, but bringing it to life requires the voices and perspectives of our students, families, employees, and community members. By completing our community survey, you help ensure your voice is heard and your perspective helps to inform the path forward. We are grateful for your continued engagement and for your shared commitment to putting our students—their needs, experiences, and success—at the center of every decision we make.

You can also find this QR code on your Take Action handout. Scan it to access a survey focused on key budget decisions, where you can share your feedback on topics such as transportation, school buildings, and other important District priorities.

Thank you for staying with us through all of it tonight. We know you could have spent your evening anywhere, and we appreciate you choosing to spend that time with us. Thank you for sharing your perspectives and being part of this conversation.

And to our families, I want to thank you for something even greater: the trust you place in Columbus City Schools every day.

You entrust your children, their education, their safety, and their futures with us. That is not a responsibility that we take lightly, and one that our entire District must continue to earn.

We know you have high expectations for your children's education. You should. And you deserve a school district that listens to your concerns, communicates openly, and makes decisions with your children at the center.

Your partnership is essential to the work we do, and your trust is something we must never take for granted.

Thank you for believing in our students, supporting our schools, and continuing to be part of the CCS community.

So, we ask you to please stay involved. Come to Board meetings, ask questions, follow the updates, and help other families understand what is happening and why it matters. When we leave this theatre, our team will be available for one-on-one conversations.

If you want something explained again, or you have an idea we should hear, please stay and talk with us. Thank you again for your support. Have a wonderful evening.